Submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework 2017
The University of Leeds has a long-standing commitment to excellent, research-based student education, evidenced this year through being named University of the Year 2017 by The Times and The Sunday Times. As such, we support the TEF’s core aims: to raise teaching standards, provide greater focus on graduate employability, and widen participation in higher education.

We are pleased that Leeds has been awarded Gold and included below are both the TEF’s Statement of Findings and the University’s original submission, which highlights the benefits of a Leeds education. This submission focuses on the powerful combination of a research-based curriculum with a broad range of extra-curricular activities, as well as our close, sector-leading partnership with Leeds University Union.

It is the hard work and dedication of our staff and students that drives the University forward, and that is reflected in the pages of this TEF application. I want to thank all those involved in writing the submission and in the work that it describes.

At the heart of our engagement with TEF is a desire to help future cohorts of students to make good decisions about their higher education, both now and into the future. That said, it is important to note that TEF is just one source of information, alongside a range of others such as Open Days, National Student Survey results, and other league tables. We take our duty to support applicants as they navigate through the wealth of information seriously, and want each individual to be well placed to make choices that are right for them.

Thomas Ward
Teaching Excellence Framework: Year two

Statement of findings
The University of Leeds

UKPRN: 10007795

This award was made in June 2017 and is valid for up to three years.

The TEF Panel reviewed the provider metrics and provider submission according to the process and criteria specified in the TEF guidance.

The provider metrics supplemented by the submission indicate that students from all backgrounds achieve consistently outstanding outcomes. There are very high levels of retention and progression to employment and to highly skilled employment or further study. Student satisfaction with teaching is notably above the University’s benchmark.

The Panel considered all the information in the University’s submission in relation to the TEF criteria and its judgement reflects, in particular, evidence of:

- an embedded ethos of the Leeds partnership with students that ensures that students take charge of their experiences with academic and co-curricular opportunities that can enhance their learning while preparing them for the world beyond the University
- a strong emphasis led from the most senior levels, placed on education that is inspired by discovery, global and cultural insight, ethics and responsibility, and employability
- students as active contributors to their education through initiatives such as LeedsforLife, which ensures and enables them to become subject professionals with transferable skills
- longstanding strategic interventions to facilitate widening participation for students from all backgrounds and modes of study, such as Access to Leeds, which is one of the largest contextualised schemes in the sector
- an embedded culture of reward and recognition that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching including through an annual event to celebrate excellent contributions to education by staff and students
- a creative approach to supporting students in their independent learning that typifies an embedded strategic approach to providing outstanding physical and digital resources.

Overall, the TEF Panel judged that the combination of evidence in the provider metrics and the provider submission best fits the descriptor for a Gold award.

For further information see: www.hefce.ac.uk/TEFoutcomes
MISSION AND STRATEGY

1. The University of Leeds is committed to providing an outstanding research-led education that attracts, excites and retains high-quality students from diverse backgrounds. This equips them to succeed in a competitive global employment market and to make a difference to the world around them. We fulfil this commitment through the following six strategic objectives:

   a. engaging students in all aspects of their education
   b. providing students with outstanding academic and co-curricular activities
   c. providing a programme portfolio which is responsive to the needs of employers and equips students to succeed in a competitive, global employment market
   d. recruiting and retaining high quality students from diverse backgrounds, thereby providing access to all who can benefit
   e. promoting and rewarding teaching excellence, and
   f. investing in facilities and services to support academic excellence.

2. The University works in partnership with our students to deliver an outstanding education and experience, with a particularly strong focus on research-based learning and support from personal tutors. Our structures put students at the very heart of decision-making processes. Indeed, we believe that our close relationship with our students is truly sector-leading. This is reflected in our low non-continuation rates (3.4% or 607 of 17,729 students), excellent employment outcomes (94.3% or 10,578 of 11,214, of which 8,701 have gone into highly skilled employment or further study) and high NSS scores both on overall satisfaction (Q22 was 90% in Leeds and 86% nationally in 2016) and within the individual questions. The positive performance on the core metrics is reflected across many of our split metrics, demonstrating that students from differing backgrounds (part-time, mature, BME, disabled and those from a disadvantaged background) also thrive and succeed within the supportive, inclusive, yet academically challenging, environment at Leeds.

3. This submission demonstrates excellence across the TEF criteria (the most relevant are referenced at each section and the end of each paragraph or related group of paragraphs). It is organised under the six strategic objectives listed above. Our evidence relates to both home and international undergraduate students and, unless otherwise stated, references to core and split metrics will be in regard to our full-time metrics, which represent our majority mode of provision.

4. We are proud to have worked with students in Leeds University Union (LUU) on this submission; LUU representatives are engaged in the University’s TEF governance structures and have provided a statement for inclusion in this submission (paragraphs 9-15).

SECTION 1: ENGAGING STUDENTS IN ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR EDUCATION [TQ1, LE1, SO1, 2, 3]

THE LEEDS PARTNERSHIP

5. At the University, staff and students work together to provide an exceptional learning experience. This is encapsulated through The Partnership – an agreement drawn up with Leeds University Union (LUU) which sets out a shared set of expectations, not only between staff and students, but also within these groups on a peer-to-peer level (Figure 1). It recognises that education is a participatory process, with students and staff assuming responsibility for making the most of the opportunities available. Introduced in 2011, it spans the academic community, with undergraduates and postgraduates (taught and research) having collective, clearly defined expectations. [TQ1, LE2]
6. The Partnership is embedded into the culture and governance of the University. The Vice-Chancellor and other senior managers meet regularly with the executive of LUU to share ideas and take forward initiatives that are of importance to the student body. Students are members of key University committees, participate in the appointment process of staff responsible for delivering education, and play a full and vital role in reviews of student education.

7. The University and LUU work together to ensure that the student voice is heard, supporting training for student representatives and organising meetings in advance of key University committees to ensure that issues of importance to students are highlighted. The University also works with students and LUU in developing the curriculum. The extent of student engagement and representation within the University is confirmed by LUU: “Our student academic representatives play a full role in the life of each School; via meeting structures and feedback mechanisms, including events and surveys” and “Students are engaged in influencing their curriculum and we are working together with the University on diversifying content and delivery” (Education Officer, LUU). [TQ1]

8. The success and effectiveness of the Leeds Partnership has been more broadly endorsed by LUU: “‘The Partnership’ between the University and LUU is sector leading: we will continue to work closely together to protect students’ access to, and experience of, higher education” (Union Affairs Officer, LUU) and is reflected in the LUU statement below.

LEEDS UNIVERSITY UNION STATEMENT

9. Leeds University Union has taken an oppositional stance to the development of the TEF within a context of promoting a funding model for universities grounded in the student contribution. This position has been made clear as part of the consultation on the Green Paper, which first suggested this link and continues as the new regulations are moved through Parliament.

10. This policy position has not held back our enthusiasm for and commitment to working in partnership with the leadership of the University of Leeds in order to ensure the very best experience for students. Our philosophy for partnership working is a deliberate effort to create a culture which is responsive to the needs of students and ensures the best opportunities for all students, regardless of discipline and background. LUU is able to state that the University of Leeds is open to the voice of students and takes The Partnership philosophy seriously and strategically in building performance in education; whilst also respecting the autonomy of the Union to set our own direction and govern ourselves independently of the institution to achieve the best impact. [TQ1, 3]
11. LUU’s vision statement is “Together, we’ll make sure you love your time at Leeds.” Our strategy for 2014-18 is based on key stakeholder consultation and includes four key programmes, which all demonstrate a diversity of objectives and relate to the University Strategic Plan:
   
a. inspire students to succeed (including partnership with University Services, including Careers, shared space and developing brand around student opportunities and employability)
b. enrich students’ experiences and activities (including joint work on the University residential experience and induction/transition to University life)
c. empower students to make change (including a joint Strategy for Sport, shared resourcing of the international student experience and key work on evidence-based change in academic schools)
d. drive our students’ union into the future (including partnership work with University sustainability, IT and digital teams).

12. The range of activity and initiatives across these four themes speak to the TEF criteria in a number of ways. Our success in engaging with our students and developing a relationship with them is demonstrated in recent achievements, such as achieving a Student’s Union satisfaction rating of 92% in the 2015/16 National Student Survey (Q23).

13. LUU manages a co-curricular programme (integrated with LeedsforLife, paragraphs 24-7) which includes more than 310 clubs and societies, with 21,581 individual memberships for 2016/17, as at January 2017. A programme of activity is promoted beyond the organised groups, which in Semester 1 of 2016/17 offered 304 individual sessions; including recreational activity, learning sessions and external trips. Additional opportunities are created through our student employment offering (more than 500 students employed by LUU in 2016), and a successful internship programme (15 interns currently employed 2016/17, 28 interns employed 2014-16, 92% of whom went on to further study or employment). [SO1, 2, 3]

14. LUU’s Strategic Plan includes a number of initiatives designed to develop our relationships with “harder to reach” members of LUU, including less well engaged members, students who face barriers to their engagement and students who for a range of reasons spend less time on campus. We offer services targeting all sectors of our student population, successfully launching initiatives such as our Advice Centre instant messaging service, which makes our service available to students who might not have immediate access to our facilities. This is particularly valuable to students who are not based within Leeds; part-time students, commuter students, or students studying from a distance. [SO3]

15. As a student voice organisation, LUU is constantly working to ensure that our members are empowered to bring about the change they want to see in their University experience, more widely across the city of Leeds and on a national stage. This is resourced by a number of our staff teams, working under our strategic programme ‘Empower’ which includes specific missions focussed on students improving their academic experiences and promoting positive change through prioritising students’ happiness and wellbeing, enabling students to improve their academic experience through student representation schema and motivating students to create positive change.

Union Affairs Officer and Education Officer, Leeds University Union

SECTION 2: PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES [TQ1, 3, 4, LE1, 2, 3, SO1, 2, 3]

16. At Leeds we place a strong emphasis on research-led education, combined with extra and co-curricular opportunities, to develop independent, critical thinkers, with broad intellectual horizons. This prepares our students for their future lives and careers.

17. The education aspects of this approach are delivered through our distinctive Leeds Curriculum, a University-wide programme which puts research at the centre of our students’ education. The Curriculum draws on Leeds’ research expertise (83% of our research was rated either “world leading” or “internationally excellent” in the 2014 REF). It is a shared framework across all undergraduate programmes, designed to capitalise on our strengths as a large research
intensive and disciplinary diverse university. The Curriculum has been informed by feedback from students and our Industrial Advisory Boards. The success of this approach is reflected in our high NSS scores for ‘The teaching on my course’ questions across all student groups (more than 90% in the TEF metrics, with positive flags for most splits). The principles of the Leeds Curriculum are encapsulated in figure 2. [TQ1, 3, 4, SO1, 2]

FIGURE 2, THE LEEDS CURRICULUM AND LEEDSFORLIFE

18. With the Curriculum in place, we have been working towards all programmes culminating in a major autonomous piece of research, which is embedded within programme approval and review. This has now been rolled out for the majority of courses. This Final Year Project, which can take a wide variety of forms, must be recognisable as research within the student’s discipline, making them active contributors to knowledge, and enabling them to become subject professionals with transferable skills. The distinctiveness of the Leeds approach is widely recognised. For example, Professor Mick Healey, one of the leading proponents of research-based learning, cites Leeds as one of the rare examples of an institution-wide approach to supporting research-based learning as an embedded component of all undergraduate programmes. [TQ1, 3, LE2]

19. Under the Curriculum, students are exposed to three ‘core programme threads’ represented in every programme in ways appropriate to the particular discipline. These are: ethics and responsibility, global and cultural insight, and employability. These ‘threads’ help students become ethically aware and informed decision makers, conscious of the implications of diversity and context. This makes them more employable and more effective learners in the workplace. LeedsforLife (see paragraphs 24 – 27) supports students to develop, record, and reflect on these attributes. [TQ1, 3, SO1, 2]

20. Capitalising on our strength as an institution with many disciplines⁴, students are enabled to ‘broaden’ their educational study, either through opportunities within their discipline, or through modules outside it, grouped into thematic areas. These ‘discovery modules’ challenge, complement and contribute to the students’ main discipline(s). They have been developed (and are now managed) to resonate with student, societal and labour market needs and are grouped into the 10 thematic areas outlined overleaf, each led by a senior academic: [SO2]

⁴ We have students studying across 17 of the 18 TEF subject areas
21. More than 4,800 students (approximately 20% of students) elect to take discovery modules each year, while others ‘broaden’ within their disciplines by being exposed to one or more of the 10 themes through their programme content. This develops higher skills and intellectual flexibility, which enhances academic outcomes and enables our graduates to reflect their full potential and compete and contribute in the workplace and in wider society. The success of the Leeds Curriculum is reflected in our TEF metrics for ‘The teaching on my course’, where we have a positive flag with an indicator of 90.9%, underpinned by green flags across most of the split metrics for this measure. This sits alongside a positive performance on the ‘Highly skilled employment or further study’ indicator, where we score 77.6%, which is above benchmark with a z-score of 4.0. [TQ3, SO2]

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

22. We recognise that assessment and feedback on students’ work is essential in supporting the development, engagement and effective learning of students, and in upholding standards. Under the Leeds Curriculum we reviewed our approach to assessment at programme level by mapping assessment strategies against learning outcomes to identify areas for improvement. This has led to the ‘Expectations for Assessment and Feedback’ policy which sets out an holistic approach based on the Higher Education Academy’s assessment transformation framework. This sets out expectations which are grounded in principles that consider, amongst other matters: the nature of our assessment regimes, structures and processes; how we measure achievement; our assessors and the expectations we place upon them; the understanding and confidence our students have of our assessment; the promotion of the intellectual curiosity, creativity and ambition of students. Faculty Assessment Groups help oversee and lead on this work, which is co-ordinated by an institutional level Assessment Strategy Group. [TQ4, LE3, SO2]

23. The positive impact of this approach is reflected in our Assessment and Feedback core metric, which is above benchmark with a z-score of 2.0.

LEEDS FOR LIFE

24. As mentioned above, the Leeds Curriculum is complemented and enhanced by the LeedsforLife programme, which gives students access to a wide range of co-curricular opportunities: volunteering, placements and study abroad. It facilitates students receiving structured advice and guidance to help them make the most of their opportunities throughout their programme. [TQ1, 4, LE3, SO2]

25. LeedsforLife encapsulates our belief in the importance of using co-curricular opportunities in the development of graduate employability and transferable skills. Figure 3, for example, demonstrates the broad range of volunteering activity undertaken by our students. [SO2, 3]

26. LeedsforLife is delivered through a structured programme of one-to-one meetings with a personal tutor. This is supported by a dedicated website that provides tools to assist individualised learning, including online forms tailored to the purpose of each meeting. At these meetings, in addition to discussing academic progress, students are encouraged to broaden their experience, through participation in co-curricular opportunities. Activity within the website is presented as a Personal Development Timeline, alongside the LeedsforLife Higher Education Achievement Record (LfL HEAR). Personal tutors encourage students to reflect on and engage with achievement and challenges across the broad spectrum of opportunities available. The LeedsforLife framework is available for five years after graduation. [TQ1, 4, LE3, SO2, 3]

4 HEA, 2015

5 These include a database of more than 175 skills development opportunities such as volunteering in schools; access to over 900 Leeds alumni career profiles, with the option to contact them to help with career planning; and an academically-led tool to help students to explore and refine their choices of discovery modules.
FIGURE 3, EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY

27. The success of LeedsforLife is reflected in our NSS academic support core metrics; where we are 1.5 percentage points above benchmark with a z-score of 4.6, which translates through to all student groups, including positive split metrics for mature, BME and disadvantaged students.

STUDENT SUPPORT

28. The University has a well-developed framework for student support, removing barriers so that all students can engage with all aspects of University life and achieve their goals and ambitions. This framework ensures a proactive approach to meeting students’ needs by aligning professional service teams with academic school teams to provide the best possible support.

29. We enable students to access support and guidance, and staff to escalate matters in cases of concern, for example in instances of non-attendance. The framework also helps support reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. The personal tutor plays a pivotal role in this, linking the academic focus of students with their development and the support services. [LE1, 3]

30. The professional support teams also link with other services across the University to ensure comprehensive student support, for example through our residences and wardens system and the Chaplaincy. In this respect, as in many others, the University works in close partnership with LUU. The LUU Student Advice Centre provides impartial advice and advocacy for students and its student societies provide valuable peer-to-peer support. We also work together on a range of strategic projects, which actively promote wellbeing and a healthy lifestyle, such as through our commitment to the NUS Alcohol Impact Project.

31. Our TEF non-continuation metrics further demonstrate the support we give to students to maximise rates of retention, attainment and progression. Our non-continuation rate is 3.4% in the TEF metrics, above our benchmark, with a z-score of 3.6. A green flag would need a non-continuation rate of 2% = 355 students out of a population 17,729 (as opposed to 607). It is also above benchmark in the HESA Performance Indicator table for 2014/15 (UK domiciled full-time first degree): the figure for Leeds is 3.7%; this compares to an HEI sector average of 7.2%. [LE3]

SECTION 3: A PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO WHICH IS RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS AND EQUIPS STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN A COMPETITIVE GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT MARKET [TQ1, 3, LE2, 3, SO1, 2, 3]

32. The University offers students sector-leading opportunities in enterprise and work experience which complement their studies, alongside exceptional opportunities to study abroad.

ENTERPRISE

33. We harness our position as a civic university, in the heart of a vibrant city and region, to create opportunities for our students in culture, enterprise and business. Our rapidly expanding ‘With Enterprise’ degree programmes link disciplinary knowledge, enterprise and entrepreneurship within a regional context. [TQ3, LE2, 3, SO2]
34. Each year more than 1,200 students study enterprise through a combination of discovery modules, ‘With Enterprise’ degree pathways and our MSc Enterprise. These activities are complemented by our ‘Spark’ business start-up services, which provide business advice, scholarships and start-up funds to a further 1,200 students. We support around 50 student business start-ups each year.

35. Our success is evidenced by the suite of enterprise awards won in recent years:
   • The Times Higher Award for Entrepreneurial University of the Year (2015)
   • The Duke of York National Business Award for University Enterprise (2015)
   • The Guardian Award for Entrepreneurship (2016)
   • The Enterprise Champion Award from the National Centre for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (2015). [LE3, SO2]

EMPLOYABILITY

36. The University is committed to helping our students move into rewarding, graduate-level work. We enjoy considerable success: for example, we have just been named the fifth most targeted university by graduate employers in the annual High Flyers survey, up from 10th the year before.

37. Extensive engagement with graduate employers is at the core of our approach, and our Industrial Advisory Boards, inform curriculum design. An example of this is our new High Performance Graphics and Games Engineering programme, which has been directly informed by the needs of industry. Employers are actively involved in the delivery of curricula through guest lectures, mentoring and applied projects. [SO1, SO2]

38. Employability is embedded in all undergraduate programmes through the Leeds Curriculum. Our Personal and Professional Development Discovery Theme provides further opportunities for students to carry out their own projects, pursue research, gain work experience and present their thinking to external audiences with partners as diverse as Leeds City Council, Opera North, the Department for Work and Pensions, and Unilever.

39. Our strategic partnership with Marks & Spencer embodied by the M&S company archive, on our campus, demonstrates how we bring together research, employability and public engagement to benefit students. For students of the arts, the University’s new ‘Cultural Institute’ forges research collaborations with regional partners and sets the foundation for joint curriculum design and co-delivery supporting their employability and transferable skills. [TQ1, LE1-3, SO2]

40. The University’s Employability Strategy Group is responsible for an institutional Employability Strategy and oversees KPIs for institutional and faculty performance. Each faculty has its own employability team which is responsible for taking action to further improve graduate outcomes for its students. [SO1, 2]

41. We are one of the largest providers of study abroad opportunities in the sector, with more than 700 students benefiting from a Study Abroad year, and many more participating in other international opportunities (for example 200 work placements and 130 subsidised summer school places with more than 400 global partner universities). Only SOAS had a higher percentage of students studying or working abroad in 2014/15. More than 20% of eligible students have an international experience through our global opportunities, which include summer schools, research exchanges, leadership programmes and international volunteering. International experience further enhances employability for those students who participate.

42. In addition to study abroad, we have strong links through alumni and corporate relationships with employers across the world. We recently instigated a flagship Leeds to New York student leadership programme, in partnership with our alumni and the charity Common Purpose; and our enterprise scholars receive international acclaim. For example, a student was awarded one of ten prestigious fellowships to attend the MIT global start-up workshop in Guatemala. Our students also develop transferable skills whilst supporting a number of humanitarian causes and have, for example, been engaged over many years in an educational project in Cambodia. [SO2]
43. Other measures to support employability include a range of work and study placements, a dedicated University Careers Service and Higher Education Academy funded online resources to support students completing placements. In 2015/16, 925 students undertook an optional accredited full-year in industry – an 18% increase on the previous year\(^7\). We also manage a programme of more than 150 exclusive shorter internships with public, private, voluntary and alumni linked organisations. The success of this is reflected in NSS scores of 95% and 94%, for 2015 and 2016, respectively for the value of placements in helping learning. Students completing placements are more likely to achieve high quality outcomes after graduation (Graduate Prospects 84.7% compared with 81.0% for those who didn’t in 2014/15\(^8\)). [TQ1, LE3, SO1, SO2]

44. Staff source new opportunities and promote established schemes through our employability network. We support this through blended learning, including extensive online resources. [TQ1, LE2, 3, SO2]

45. The University requires students to assess their career readiness at each registration and this data is then analysed on an annual basis to inform tailored support at faculty and school level. We were the first in the sector to develop this approach. Each year, the Student Careers team delivers more than 11,000 student appointments, which have a positive impact on graduate outcomes (in 2014/15, the Graduate Prospects\(^9\) indicator for students interacting with Student Careers was 85.8%, compared with 80.5% for those graduates who didn’t interact with the service). [SO1, SO2]

46. We also work to meet the needs of students who may be disadvantaged in the graduate labour market. For example we provide well-received networking events for students with disabilities in advance of the Careers Fair, and for those who are part of our Access to Leeds / Plus Programme or Lifelong Learning Centre (paragraphs 57-63). Our Student Employability Inclusion Group helps to identify, propose and implement ideas and interventions to address differences in outcomes between students from different backgrounds, drawing on evidence of success across the sector and good practice. [SO2, 3]

47. As a result of our approach, the University has seen a-year-on-year improvement in the annual DLHE Survey of our graduates. The TEF Metrics show an Employment or Further Study rate of 95.8% for year three; in the HESA Performance Indicator table for 2014/15\(^10\), the figure for Leeds is also 95.8%, compared with an HEI sector average of 93.9%.

48. In 2014/15, 81.4% of the graduating cohort entered graduate-level work or further study – an improvement of three percentage points from 2013/14. Over the TEF period, TEF metrics show Highly skilled employment or further study at 77.6%; Graduate Prospects\(^11\) over this period was 78.1%, compared with an HEI sector average of 69.9%. The University has seen the third highest improvement of Graduate Prospects across the Russell Group between 2012/13 and 2014/15. [SO1]

49. The concerted effort we put into supporting the full range of our students is demonstrated by the increasing positive difference from our benchmark for both employment and highly skilled metrics over the last three years, alongside which the z-scores have also increased. Within these data, the increasing success of our students in entering highly skilled employment or further study is demonstrated by a significantly positive flag in year three, with z-scores increasing from 0.6 to 3.9 over the three years. Our split metrics also demonstrate the highly positive outcomes for all groups of students, for example we are above the highly skilled and further study benchmark for students with a disability. [S1, O3]

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\(^7\) Note that medicine, dentistry and healthcare students undertake compulsory placements as part of their course and are not included in this figure.

\(^8\) Source: Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey data

\(^9\) Source: Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey data

\(^10\) UK domiciled leavers obtaining first degrees from full-time courses 2014/15

\(^11\) Source: Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey data
SECTION 4: RECRUITING AND RETAINING HIGH QUALITY STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS PROVIDING ACCESS TO ALL WHO CAN BENEFIT [TQ1, 3, LE1, 3, SO1, 2, 3]

50. The University’s Educational Engagement Strategy provides an inclusive approach to supporting learners from all backgrounds and of all ages. Our commitment and success in recruiting and retaining high quality students from diverse backgrounds is amongst the strongest in the Russell Group; Leeds is also distinctive amongst Russell Group peers for the extent and depth of our engagement with part-time and mature students from widening participation (WP) backgrounds. Success is enabled by an annual investment of £16.9m, of which £14.7m is student financial support, £1.98m is access expenditure, and £193k is student success and progression.

ACCESS TO LEEDS

51. In 2002, the University launched ‘Access to Leeds’ which has grown to become one of the largest contextual admissions schemes in the country. Access to Leeds recognises that prospective students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not be able to evidence their potential through grades alone. Students who meet the criteria participate in a module designed to prepare them for university study, by developing their competence in areas such as referencing, academic writing and conducting academic searches. They also complete a piece of work set and marked by an academic member of staff from the subject area they intend to pursue. Successful completion of both elements secures applicants an offer that is two grades below our standard three A level offer.

52. In 2016, 791 students were recruited via this route, with many students exceeding their predicted grades. The engagement and support provided prepares applicants to become students, increases confidence and contributes to a successful transition to University study. This is reflected in attainment, with 79.4% of graduating Access to Leeds students achieving a first class or 2:1 degree in 2016, compared with 80.2% of undergraduate Home/ EU students. [LE3, SO3]

SUPPORTING RETENTION, ATTAINMENT AND SUCCESS

53. The University recognises the importance of continued intervention to close the gap in differential outcomes for some groups of students. Alongside financial support, the ‘Plus Programme’ is designed to support the attainment, retention and employability of students from under-represented or widening participation backgrounds. It does this by addressing common barriers such as lack of social and cultural capital, a sense of belonging and psychosocial and identity factors. Students on the programme had retention rates of 94.3% in 2014/15. The Plus Programme has received additional investment in 2016/17 to ensure that we can provide a strategic and sustained programme of non-financial support for all students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The indicative retention rate for students on this programme is 97.5%. [TQ3, LE3, SO3]

54. The University has been sector leading in its approach to progression to taught postgraduate study. Leeds was part of the largest HEFCE-funded Postgraduate Support Scheme project collaboration, led by the University of Sheffield. We launched a scholarship to support progression to taught postgraduate study for disadvantaged students and on-course support. In addition, the University of Leeds led on the Information, Advice and Guidance strand, mapping the needs of this cohort of students and testing support interventions.

55. Since the scheme ended, we have continued the scholarships and on-course support and developed activities to target under-represented potential students in or out of education. In 2016, 46 students were awarded a postgraduate scholarship. Of those, nearly half (46%) had completed their undergraduate studies at a non-Russell Group university. All experienced financial difficulty and/or social disadvantage and could not have continued their studies without the scholarship or access to the postgraduate loan and additional sources of funding. Two thirds of the scholars were in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance at undergraduate level, and one third participated in an alternative admissions scheme when entering higher education. [SO1, SO3]
56. The effectiveness of this support is reflected in our split metrics for disadvantaged, BME and mature students – across all three cohorts we have green flags for both ‘the teaching on my course’ and ‘academic support’. Furthermore, most of our student groups have higher levels of continuation than our benchmarks. The University also supports students to return to their studies after a break. HEIDI\textsuperscript{12} data indicates that an average of 38% of our 12/13, 13/14 and 14/15 entrants returned to study after a year out, compared with 25% across all institutions. [LE3]

**LIFELONG LEARNING**

57. Our commitment to lifelong learning is reflected in the investment in and outcomes of our sector-leading Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC). With an annual spend of £3.8m; the LLC draws 60% of its students from low participation neighbourhoods. It provides sustained engagement with communities, learners, professional settings and partners to promote participation in HE amongst target groups of widening participation adults; systematic support for part-time and mature undergraduates across the University; and programmes that provide an outstanding and flexible experience and equip students to progress to further study.

58. We deliver a number of University foundation year programmes, which provide a route into undergraduate programmes. These target students from widening participation backgrounds (63% of entrants from POLAR 2 quintiles 1 and 2\textsuperscript{13}) and provide intensive support in the development of academic skills in order to address shortfalls in prior attainment. We engage with 153 students each year\textsuperscript{14} through these programmes, delivering progression rates for those completing the year of 85.6% to the University of Leeds with a further 4.4% to other HEIs.

59. Free, open, online courses on the FutureLearn platform provide prospective students with a taster of higher education. Our portfolio of 17 ‘Going to University’ courses, covering a wide range of disciplines, have attracted more than 440,000 joiners in the last 12 months, with around 50,000 fully completing.

60. The impact of the LLC is broadly evidenced across the TEF metrics, student feedback and wider sector recognition.

61. Leeds core and split metrics for part-time and mature students are very strong. Across the mature full and part-time cohorts the University has six green flags including, for both cohorts, for ‘the teaching on my course’ and ‘highly skilled employment or further study’ split metrics. Similarly, all the part-time core metrics are above benchmark, five of six are more than four percentage points above benchmark, four of these have ‘z scores’ above 2. [TQ1,3, LE3, SO1, 3]

62. The positive performance evidenced in the metrics resonates with individual student feedback, for example: “the knowledge I’ve gained from the course helped me find a better job, which increased my confidence and improved my family’s standard of living, I now feel much happier and more satisfied with my personal development. My children say they are proud of their mother”; “the study skills I gained from the Foundation Year… really helped set me up well for my current degree course. I would definitely recommend this course to others. It basically changed my life and gave me the chance to achieve my dreams.” [LE1, 3, SO2, 3]

63. UUK’s Social Mobility Advisory Group published its final report earlier this year, citing the LLC’s Jumpstart adult learning programme as an example of best practice (p.67, para 196). This provides adults from under-represented groups with a taste of university study as well as the requisite advice, guidance and support to consider progress to higher education.

**SECTION 5: PROMOTING AND REWARDING TEACHING EXCELLENCE [TQ1, 2, 3, LE1, 2]**

64. Promoting, supporting and rewarding teaching excellence is at the heart of our mission and is reflected in our structures. Our commitment to student education is advocated and led at the most senior level of the University by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Education).

\textsuperscript{12} Higher Education Information Database provided by HESA

\textsuperscript{13} Participation of Local Areas data, where quintiles 1 and 2 have the lowest participation; average participation rates across 2013, 2014 and 2015

\textsuperscript{14} Average across 2013/14, 14/15 and 15/16
Each faculty has a Pro-Dean for Student Education, who reports to the Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Pro-Deans have leadership responsibility for the student education strategy and quality of the student experience, working in partnership with School-appointed academic Directors of Student Education (DSE), Heads of School, Module Leaders, and Programme Leaders and Faculty Student Engagement Managers. Operating within institutionally prescribed and specified roles the DSEs run a self-managed network which is used to share effective and innovative practice across the University. [TQ2]

INDUCTION AND CAREER PROGRESSION

65. Our approach to education is embedded within our induction, training and support for academic staff. The Leeds Curriculum forms the basis for our introductory session on learning and teaching for new appointees and our continuing professional development provision is also explicitly centred on it. Training is also provided in personal tutoring to support LeedsforLife [TQ2]

66. We offer an introductory programme in learning and teaching, followed by a programme centred on developing practice. In 2015/16, 1,243 colleagues and PGRs who teach engaged with the 230 events to support learning and teaching that were delivered through our Organisational Development and Professional Learning centre. This is in addition to support and CPD provided within Schools and Faculties. [TQ2]

67. We also articulate the impact of teaching activity in our probation and staff appraisal processes and in promotion applications, supported through peer observation and review, as encapsulated in figure 4. Teaching staff are rewarded for outstanding contributions through our reward and recognition schemes, through the professorial salary review. [TQ1, 2, 3, LE2]

PEER OBSERVATION AND REVIEW: AN INTEGRAL ELEMENT TO OUR INTERNAL CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD AND PROMOTIONS PROCESS)

FIGURE 4, CPD AND STAFF APPRAISAL

68. Our promotions criteria reflect parity of esteem between teaching and research and offer pathways that take account of excellence in student education and scholarship, in research and innovation, or in academic leadership. We reviewed the criteria in 2015/16 and, informed by statistical analysis and a series of open meetings, updated our definitions of excellence to align with our strategic plan and provide opportunities to reward all forms of excellence. No member of academic staff is confined to one route, rather, a blended approach is taken in the reward and recognition of excellence across the full spectrum of an academic career. Between 2013 and 2016, 122 colleagues applied for promotions using teaching criteria, 97 were successful. We have also worked to ensure the effectiveness of the route to Chair to provide a full career progression route for those involved in leading excellence and spread effective practice in student education and pedagogy. [TQ2]

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

69. The University has been awarding University Student Education Fellowships since 2001 (originally named University Teaching Fellowships). Since then, a diverse range of education projects have been funded and 129 University Fellows have been created in a celebration of teaching excellence and innovation. 24 colleagues (20 University Fellows) have since gone

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For example, The Leeds Curriculum: designing programmes and modules for research-based learning’, ‘The Leeds Curriculum: assessing learning outcomes and feedback for learning’
on to be awarded prestigious National Teaching Fellowships (NTFs) by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), at the time of writing, the highest total of staff at any English institution. These awards are celebrated at our Annual Student Education Conference which attracts more than 400 participants each year and provides an opportunity to showcase teaching excellence at Leeds. The conference is complemented by the Student Education Bulletin, which gives staff a catalyst for disseminating teaching ideas, opinions and achievements throughout the year. [TQ2]

70. Following the successful pilot of an HEA-accredited CPD framework, we are in the process of developing a scalable scheme for accreditation by the HEA this year, which will enable us to support the achievement of HEA fellowships by a greater number of colleagues. [TQ2]

71. The Leeds Partnership supports our approach to recognising and rewarding teaching excellence. An annual event hosted by LUU celebrates the Partnership by recognising staff and students who have made an outstanding contribution to education. Each year more than 500 staff members and students across the University are nominated for Partnership Awards, which include, amongst others, awards for the Best Feedback and the Most Inspirational Teaching. [TQ2]

INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING EXCELLENCE

72. To further our achievements in teaching excellence and innovation, we have recently invested £3.5m over four years to establish the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence (LITE), located in the heart of campus. LITE co-ordinates the activity of 16 centres for teaching scholarship and innovation, some established for over 15 years and some recently formed to inspire innovation and pedagogy in emergent themes and disciplines. The Institute promotes a culture that gives full credit, prestige and visibility to the staff who inspire and support our students and who foster our wider reputation for student education and pedagogy. It does this by offering secondments (five full-time fellowships and ten 0.2 FTE project secondments) each year to allow staff to dedicate time as well as funds to teaching scholarship. [TQ2]

73. Acting as a vibrant community of student education innovators, LITE also brings together our National Teaching Fellows and University Student Education Fellows. The institute provides a showcase for student education innovation and a site for international debate, discussion and exchange. Pedagogical research funded by LITE must involve students, enhancing an ethos of co-creation, not just in research, but also in curriculum design, for example. LITE acts as an experimental research and innovation initiative and aligns with our promotions criteria in nurturing and rewarding teaching scholarship. [TQ2, 3, LE2]

SECTION 6: INVESTING IN FACILITIES AND SERVICES [TQ1, 4, [LE1, 2, 3]

74. We are investing £520m over the five year period to 2020 in our academic and physical infrastructure providing a state-of-the-art environment for study and research. Recent projects included the refurbishment of physical space for a number of our academic schools, carefully designed to accommodate discipline specific requirements and to provide an improved learning environment for staff, students and industry partners. We have also completed an innovative, sector-leading redesign of our lecture theatre space; three tiered lecture theatres have been remodelled to allow group discussion, alongside the use of installed technology for group work, interaction, communication and recording. This combination of re-modelling physical space and innovative use of digital technology is sector-leading in the way it supports independent and peer learning and sets a model for future investment. [LE1]

DIGITAL LEARNING

75. Our Digital Learning Strategy aims to integrate digital technology into all aspects of education. Significant investments in physical and digital resources ensure that students are able to learn effectively, flexibly and in line with our inclusive teaching strategy, to support learning and the development of independent study and research skills.

76. The University portal (accessed one million times per month on average), is an entry route to student-facing services, providing access to a range of digital resources and services to support the experience. We have a single Virtual Learning Environment (VLE; approx. eight
million log-ins per year), with a wide range of tools that allow staff and students to create engaging, interactive and collaborative digital learning activities and formative assessments.

77. The majority of Schools use the VLE for electronic submission of coursework to provide flexibility to students (200,000 submissions per year), and an increasing number of Schools are using our online marking system to provide students with digital feedback (70,000 assignments marked online per year). [TQ1, TQ4, LE1, 3]

78. A wide range of online content, including interactive tutorials, webpages, videos and downloadable guides, is available for students through our Virtual Learning Environment module areas. These cover academic skills topics, including searching for information, critical thinking, academic writing, referencing and preparing for exams. The University provides online resources that support specific student transition points: Flying Start (arriving at University), Library QuickStart (new students), Studying in a Digital Age (new students), Second Year Success (transition to second year of UG study), Final Chapter (skills for final year projects / dissertations) and Skills for Success (transition to taught postgraduate study). [LE1, 3]

79. The University has also invested £3m in the largest automated lecture capture system in Europe, installed in all central teaching spaces. Desktop capture is available for all staff and students to create high quality multimedia content for education, and for students to create multimedia assignments, in line with our assessment strategy to deliver authentic real-world assessments and develop students’ skills. In 2015/16 the lecture capture system recorded 72% of all lectures, with around one million views of the content per year. The majority of respondents to our staff survey in 2015 indicated that student feedback had been positive about the value of lecture recordings for improving their learning opportunities. [LE1]

80. The University’s innovative approach to digital learning is reflected in the 48 online courses available on the FutureLearn platform both for external learners, and Leeds students. Increasingly, our modules are taught using digital resources, allowing our students to interact online with learners from around the world, raising their cultural awareness. Leeds was the first Russell Group University to offer a credit-bearing undergraduate online course on the FutureLearn platform, supporting the aspiration to widen access to University. [LE1, 3]

81. The innovative nature of our digital developments is also reflected in a number of awards for digital innovation: ALT Learning Technologist Team of the Year (2015) to the Digital Learning Team; THE Outstanding Digital Innovation in Teaching or Research Award (2016) to the School of Earth and Environment and the Leeds College of Art; THE Most Innovative Teacher of the Year Award (2014) and ALT Learning Technologist of the Year Award (2014) to a colleague in the Leeds Institute of Medical Education. [LE1]

LIBRARY FACILITIES

82. Leeds University Library is one of the largest and most distinguished university library systems in the UK, attracting students and scholars from around the world to its rich and extensive print, online and manuscript collections, gathered during its 100-year history. Leeds is the only library to have five of its premier Special Collections awarded Designated status, recognised as collections of outstanding international importance by the Arts Council.

83. The service is provided across five library sites, including the recently-opened and award-winning Laidlaw Library. We have invested more than £54m on capital library developments and invest more than £12m per annum in our library service. Our staff provide specialist support, information literacy and academic skills teaching, so that students find, use and apply the information they need effectively. The Library offers a variety of study environments, with more than 4,800 study spaces across its campus buildings, from silent individual study to vibrant and flexible group work areas employing the latest technology. The Library has extensive computer facilities and is wireless enabled throughout for laptop use. 2015/16 saw more than two million visits to our five library sites, 37,000 visits to our two galleries.

For example, the Laidlaw Library was one of six Yorkshire buildings to win a 2016 Royal Institute of British Architects regional award for architectural excellence; the judges praised the “complex but rigorously executed” design.
more than 400,000 physical items borrowed, 6.5 million electronic items downloaded, six million website hits and a monthly average of 38,000 student portal users. [LE3]

84. Our award-winning Skills@Library service provides tailored inclusive learning and teaching support, embedded in the curriculum, that is developed with academic staff to meet specific learning outcomes. Our blended learning approach is designed to be contextualised, timely, appropriate to need, in support of the Leeds Curriculum, and to underpin the whole student experience (from transition into University through to postgraduate study or future employment). In the 2015/16 academic year, a total of 22,348 students were reached through the Skills@Library blended learning activities. [LE1, 2]

85. The Library delivers tailored learning support for specific student groups, for example those with a disability, international students, mature students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It also provide an enquiries and consultation service for students via email, phone and face-to-face at all sites including the Laidlaw Library’s Skills Zone. If a student identifies a specific need or area for development, for example via feedback they have received from a tutor on an academic assignment, they can book a 30-minute consultation with a Learning Advisor and receive help with developing appropriate academic skills and strategies. Tutors also refer students directly to these Skills@Library’s services and to our comprehensive website of information and activities linked to specific assignment types and skills topics. [LE1, 2, 3]

86. The University scores extremely highly on the NSS for Learning Resources - 91-92% over the last three years, compared to the sector average 87%. We have positive flags for teaching across virtually all groups in the TEF metrics, and, on average, 93% of respondents in 2015 and 2016 felt that ‘Learning Materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.’ [LE1]

SECTION 7: CONCLUSION

TEACHING QUALITY

87. Teaching at the University of Leeds actively engages and stimulates students through their core undergraduate programme of study, and through the large range of optional and co-curricular elements available. Different forms of learning (for example discovery themes) and delivery (from face to face to online, on campus and on placement) encourage students to engage and actively commit to their studies. Student engagement is real and meaningful, including co-creation of the curriculum, its content and delivery – as reflected in the Leeds University Union (LUU) statement.

88. We value all who contribute to teaching at Leeds and our well-developed institutional culture facilitates, recognises and rewards teaching. This is reflected in the longevity of University Student Education fellowships, our academically balanced promotions criteria and establishment of Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence (LITE) as a beacon of teaching excellence culture.

89. An effective approach to course design provides rigour and stretch through research-based learning, disciplinary breadth and embedded core programme threads. This supports the development of students as globally responsible, informed decision-makers. Students are challenged academically and, through the development of independent research skills (culminating in a final year project), develop the skills and knowledge necessary to reach their full potential.

90. Concerted action links assessment and feedback with outcomes, supported by Faculty and institutional oversight arrangements. Our approach promotes students’ understanding and confidence in our assessments, developing intellectual curiosity, creativity and ambition.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

91. The University of Leeds has a student-centred approach to developments, leading to physical space that is sector-leading in the way it supports independent and peer learning. Our use of digital technology is integrated into all aspects of education. Students are able to learn effectively, flexibly, and in line with our inclusive teaching strategy, to support learning and the development of independent study and research skills. Digital infrastructure sits alongside the well utilised

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library facilities and staff who provide specialist support, information literacy and academic skills teaching, so that students find, use and apply the information they need effectively.

92. The benefits of a research-intensive institution are fully realised through the Leeds Curriculum which has research-based learning at its core. The involvement of students in pedagogical research funded by LITE is a further example of students’ involvement in research. Individualised learning is supported through personal tutors and LeedsforLife. The approach taken within the Leeds Curriculum means that, within any boundaries set by professional associations, students can make a journey through higher education that is unique to them.

93. Support for students from widening participation backgrounds is tailored through Access to Leeds, the Plus Programme and the Lifelong Learning Centre. Students are supported through a contextual admissions process that prepares them for university life and throughout their student careers. Support extends beyond the financial to address barriers to success such as cultural capital and a sense of belonging.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

94. University of Leeds students are equipped with the education and skills to succeed in a global context – Leeds Curriculum ‘core programme threads’ promote informed decision-makers in a global context; alongside skills relevant to employers enabled through a range of activities, such as work and study abroad and engagement with employers. We are committed to helping our students move into rewarding, graduate-level work or study and enjoy considerable success: for example, we have just been named the fifth most targeted university by graduate employers in the annual High Flyers survey.

95. Support for entrepreneurship is provided, alongside support for progression into further study and highly-skilled employment. Students can study enterprise through a combination of discovery modules, ‘with Enterprise’ degree pathways and our MSc Enterprise. These activities are complemented by our ‘Spark’ business start-up services, which provide business advice, scholarships and start-up funds to students.

96. We ensure that students are equipped with the professional skills necessary to succeed through the Leeds Curriculum and through the engagement of employers in curriculum design, work placement opportunities and other activities. Employability is further supported through requiring students to assess their career readiness at each registration and using this data to inform tailored support. Additional support is provided to widening participation students through the Plus Programme and interventions to address differences in outcomes between students from different backgrounds, drawing on evidence of success across the sector and good practice.

97. The award of The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2017 provides external recognition of our commitment to Teaching Excellence. This noted an enlightened approach to education and an outstanding approach to the student experience. Commenting on the decision, Alastair McCall, editor of The Sunday Times Good University Guide, said: “The University of Leeds thoroughly deserves our University of the Year for prioritising students’ needs first to last. Outstanding student satisfaction levels do not happen by accident and reflect the emphasis placed here on getting the student learning experience spot on. Heavy investment in campus facilities has gone hand in hand with a strong pastoral system of student support, the introduction of a final year research project as the centrepiece of students’ academic activities, and the LeedsForLife scheme that helps prepare students for life after university. It is no wonder that Leeds’ graduates are so sought after by employers.”