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## Our case for Excellence in the Teaching Excellence Framework 2017



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## Vice-Chancellor's Welcome

I am pleased to share with you our application to the first Teaching Excellence Framework which outlines our case for excellence in education. The submission recognises our talented people – both our students and staff – who work in partnership together to create the exceptional Exeter experience.

At the University of Exeter we want to make the exceptional happen. As a research-led university, Exeter is committed to promoting synergies between our research and education. The University's Strategy has an internationally excellent education at the heart of our mission.

We aim for all our students to be inspired by intellectual challenge and to acquire expertise within and beyond their chosen discipline and we want all of our graduates to leave the University embodying all of the attributes we aim to embed throughout their time at the University.

Steve Smith

*Professor Sir Steve Smith, Vice-Chancellor*



“We want our graduates to stand out from the crowd and be among the best in the world. That’s why at Exeter it’s a person’s ability that matters most, not their family circumstances or their background.

We are creating an internationally excellent education, which gives our talented students the ability to go on to make a difference in the world. To become graduates of real distinction we must stretch, challenge and engage with our students.

Our education is characterised by the partnership we have with our students in developing their own learning and helping them to become agents of change. We are working hard to create programmes which instil a life-long love of learning, stimulate creativity, a worldwide outlook, leadership, the ability to work with others, analytical skills, resilience and imagination.”

*University of Exeter Strategy, 2016–2020*





## Supporting Statement from Exeter Students' Guild President, Toby Gladwin and Vice-President (Education), Harry Reeve



**Toby Gladwin**  
*Guild President*



**Harry Reeve**  
*Vice-President (Education)*

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER  
**STUDENTS'**  
**GUILD**

The relationship between the University and the Students' Guild is a defining feature of the Exeter student experience. This is reflected throughout the structures of both organisations, with students represented as full members of all the major University Committees including Council, Senate, the Senior Management Group and the Education Executive and participating through constructive and active dialogue.

A significant demonstration of our partnership is the alignment of purposes in both the University's and the Guild's strategies, both of which had significant input from students, University Council and the Guild Trustee Board. This frames the student experience at the heart of our values.

We empower students to not only be active and engaged members of society with our activities and volunteering opportunities, but with our democratic structures, we provide them with the voice to nurture their development in becoming the exceptional leaders of tomorrow.

Furthermore, we encourage them to make change to any area of Exeter life through Student Ideas, enabling the community to actively shape the outstanding experience at university. In 2015/16, over 60% of students voted on 436 student submitted Ideas; the highest in the UK, representing 30.4% of the total sector student ideas submissions.

Most significantly, the student voice has had great impact on the academic system with the development of the 'Guild Visions for the Future of Education'. These outline our ideas and advise on priorities for education at Exeter based on our members' feedback and active consultation. The 2011-2015 Visions were overwhelmingly achieved with significant buy-in from the University to support their implementation, and contributed to the growth of Exeter's teaching excellence.

## Supporting Statement from Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union President Exeter, Tom Murray-Richards



**Tom Murray-Richards**  
*Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union  
President Exeter*

Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union (FXU) represents all University of Exeter students across the Penryn and Truro campuses, as well as students of Falmouth University. Working with two Universities allows best practice to be shared across, amongst other areas, academic representation and raising the profile of the student voice.

Our strategy focuses on the Unions' development, but is complementary to the strategy of the University. During consultation, we asked students what the Union should be doing, and over 90% of respondents told us to work with the University to enhance their study. Therefore, we directly respond to student and university feedback each year to agree annual priorities that are jointly reviewed by the University and FXU to evaluate progress. This year, the University has shared more information with us about progression and admission of students, which is helping us to tailor our activities to support our members during their studies.

We jointly host termly open sessions with University senior management, creating the opportunity for students to communicate their experiences directly with senior members of the Executive. These sessions allow staff to communicate the direction of the institution, and for students to respond to wider institutional objectives that affect their student experience. Our network of subject chairs meets bi-termly with senior education leaders in attendance. This gives students a direct voice, and a chance to respond to high level institutional decisions. It is a priority for FXU to continue to facilitate and enhance these conversations working with the University.

# TQI. Student Engagement

All our students will be inspired by intellectual challenge to acquire expertise within and beyond their chosen academic field. In addition the Exeter graduate will be;

- **An imaginative critical thinker and problem solver;**
- **An active global citizen;**
- **A creative and enterprising team player;**
- **An engaged and participative leader able to effect change;**
- **A confident resilient and adaptable individual.**

*The University of Exeter Education Strategy Graduate Attributes, 2014–2020*

5. In our partnership with students we have engendered exceptional student engagement. Here we outline our commitment to ensure appropriate levels of intellectual stimulation and challenge, the involvement of students in quality assurance and enhancement, and our sector-leading Students as Change Agents (SACA) programme.

## Academic Challenge

6. Our students are inspired and challenged by the subject-expertise of the academic staff who teach them, their world-leading research and their scholarly engagement with pedagogy. They are stimulated to engage through supported and directed learning in a diverse range of environments including seminars, laboratory practicals, flipped classrooms, performance spaces, field study, lectures, and problem based learning and independent research. The learning experience of students is further enriched by teaching delivered by business, industry and professional experts and by fully-supported and trained postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers (in total all of these colleagues deliver ca 5% of all teaching).

7. Our students are challenged by learning in a research-intensive environment, as evidenced by REF2014 when 98% of our research was rated as of “International Quality” and, amongst full-service universities, we were ranked 16th nationally when the proportion of staff submitted is taken into account. It is the normal experience of our students to be taught by the academics who contributed to REF2014 and our world-class research academics appointed since then.

8. Contact hours were reviewed across the University in 2013, and agreed levels of contact time reflecting differences in learning across HASS and STEM were established with the Students’ Guild and FXU. The distribution of contact hours and class sizes are designed to provide optimum support for the subject-specific progression of learning and the development of graduate attributes, including independent study and research, self-efficacy and resilience. We have subsequently seen an 89% reduction in negative NSS comments regarding contact hours between 2014 and 2016 following our review.

9. The following evidence from the last 3 academic years supports our contention that our approach to curriculum design with respect to student engagement is successful:

- a. Our students have submitted 97% of the assessed work that has been set;
- b. 1st year students, whose marks do not influence degree classification, submitted 95% of the assessed work set;
- c. Average module marks demonstrate high engagement across all years of study: 62.8% in first year, to 63.1% in second year, and 65.2% in third year;
- d. Our very low non-continuation rates of 2.3% (Core Metric).



### Academic Representation

**10.** The University, Students' Guild and FXU share a clear commitment to ensuring that academic representation is student-led. In addition to sabbatical officers, students elect 570 student representatives, including 58 Subject Chairs and 6 College Officers. Representatives are fully trained to undertake their roles and, in 2015/16, students chaired 247 Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). SSLC minutes and updates from student representatives are published on webpages hosted by the two Students' Unions.

**11.** We have also developed 'Accelerate': a suite of valuable new survey tools to elicit student feedback about their studies, often in real-time. The blueprint for Accelerate was established by a student-staff working group and it was launched in 2015. Staff are encouraged to use Accelerate to identify and respond to student concerns during module delivery. It is also used for universal end of module evaluation. Use of Accelerate has enabled us to give student representatives an enhanced role, alongside module leaders, in the analysis of data thereby enhancing the quality and visibility of the partnership between staff and students.

**12.** The University has also introduced schemes designed to increase face-to-face engagement between students and senior staff:

- a.** At discipline level, we have introduced whole cohort 'Student Feedback Sessions', co-delivered by student Subject Chairs and academic Directors of Education;
- b.** At University level there are opportunities to engage in dialogue directly with senior management. Informal 'Meet the DVC' sessions are held regularly on all campuses and biannual open meetings with the VC provide further access to the University's leadership.

### The Students as Change Agents (SACA) Programme

**13.** Our SACA programme is an innovative, student-led initiative now in its eighth year. It is a powerful model that has been widely recognised (Kay et al., QAA, 2010). It supports students in developing and leading research projects designed to effect change in their programmes and explore the impact of their learning. The several hundred SACA projects have included: student-run careers and module fairs; a buddy scheme for year-abroad students; resources for mental health; support for international students; and improved delivery of seminar teaching.

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"Change Agents has helped me to develop skills in communication, leadership and managing stakeholders which undoubtedly helped me to secure my graduate job. If I hadn't undertaken the challenge of [my project], and hadn't had the guidance and advice of Change Agents I would not have had the skills I needed on my internship to demonstrate my potential."

*Economics Student who ran a SACA VIP Event in 2013/14 attended by over 500 students*



## TQ2. Valuing Teaching

14. The institution-wide commitment to excellence in teaching and learning is evident from the University Strategy, human resources processes, distinctive student-led initiatives and the contribution to teaching made by staff across all grades from lecturer to distinguished professor. We highlight here support for educator development, the structures in place to reward teachers, and the roles played by our students in recognising excellence.

### The Exeter Academic

15. There are clear criteria for progression through to Professor in both the 'job families' that academic teaching staff join: Education and Research (E&R) or Education and Scholarship (E&S). These criteria include quality of teaching and a commitment to continuing professional development. Completion of the University's Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice (PCAP) is a requirement for confirmation in post for probationary lecturers, and brings Fellowship of the HEA. PCAP promotes cross-disciplinary thinking and best practice and supports the development of reflective academic practitioners as accomplished educators who create research-rich learning environments to enable our graduates to thrive in an international workplace. 413 academic staff have completed the PCAP since 2010/11.

16. Postgraduate Researchers engaged in teaching are required to complete Stage One of the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme (LTHE), and Stage 2 if they undertake marking duties.

LTHE inspires participants to think creatively about learning and teaching in relation to their specialist role and subject area. Through LTHE, the 1776 Stage 1 and 1059 Stage 2 completers in the last 5 years have also enhanced their employment prospects.

“Both programmes are a credit to the institution and offer clear examples of the importance of ensuring staff continue to be provided with appropriate opportunities to develop their academic practice in a supportive and nurturing learning environment... The University is clearly committed to delivering an excellent student learning experience which is underpinned by the expectation that all staff that teach and support learning will be active members of the research and teaching community and will engage with the opportunities for scholarship and CPD offered.”

*PCAP & LTHE External Examiner,  
2015/16*



### Accrediting Staff Professionalism in Research-Led Education (ASPIRE)

**17.** The HEA-accredited ASPIRE Framework, established in 2011, maps on to the UK Professional Standards Framework and accords recognition across the levels of Associate Fellowship, Fellowship, Senior Fellowship and Principal Fellowship. Since the launch of ASPIRE, over 1000 fellowships have been awarded including 83 Senior and 13 Principal Fellowships. The latter two groups have evidenced their leadership of education at the University and beyond and go on to support the development of colleagues, through mentoring and engagement in ASPIRE events.

**18.** ASPIRE also provides the framework for sharing innovation and good practice through seminars and the annual Education Conference, now in its 11th year, that brings together academics, professional staff and students. The conferences are integral to sustaining the academic community of practice and include national and international keynote speakers, workshops, panel sessions, oral presentation and posters. This culture of collaboration is reinforced by events and activities at College and Discipline levels, including education away days, seminars and informal ‘brown bag lunches’.

**19.** Peer-review of teaching is an element of Exeter’s ‘peer dialogue’ model of individual annual reflection on teaching and learning. Peer dialogue is mandatory for all staff involved in teaching and is important in identification and dissemination of best practice.

### Student-Led Teaching Awards

**20.** The Teaching Awards, initiated by the Exeter Students’ Guild in 2009, are now managed by the Guild in collaboration with FXU and are a vital aspect of our student-staff partnership. Awards are given to the most supportive staff member, for research-inspired and innovative teaching, and to those rated best in the categories: lecturer, postgraduate teacher, taught supervisor, research supervisor, employability support, feedback provider, research community and subject.

**21.** Since the Awards began, our students have written more than 1.3 million words in 13,700 nominations. After the ceremony, the commendations are sent to the nominees and their heads of discipline and often result in other marks of recognition including bonus-payments through our ‘Above and Beyond’ scheme. Award winners and nominees are also invited to speak at the Education Conference, and similar initiatives at College or Discipline level.

### Mirror Scheme

**22.** ‘Mirror’ is a shadowing scheme which pairs students with staff (including the Vice-Chancellor, Provost and DVC Education), fosters understanding, deepens collaboration and has brought about positive change. In the last two years over 140 students and staff have taken part.

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**“I am a very strong supporter of the Mirror Scheme. I have learnt a lot about how each of the students I have mirrored in the last three years saw the university and their education. But, more importantly, I also got an idea of the pressures they are under, as well as the extraordinary things they do to support fellow students and the community in which they live.”**

*Professor Sir Steve Smith,  
Vice-Chancellor, Mirror Participant*

## TQ3. Rigour and Stretch

23. We are committed to creating and teaching academic programmes that combine rigour and high levels of professionalism with cutting-edge pedagogies and opportunities for independent learning. We outline here our processes of quality assurance and educational enhancement, our engagement with Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies and some of our distinctive initiatives that stretch our students, enriching our educational offering.

### Course design, development and review

24. New programmes are subject to detailed approval processes with review by external experts (academics and partners in industry and the professions), students and recent alumni. Programme specifications and module descriptors are scrutinised to ensure that they articulate the expected development of students' independence, knowledge, understanding and skills, and fully embed the development of the target graduate attributes in the programme of study.

25. To ensure that we continually improve our standards, the Discipline-level Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) provides an opportunity for scrutiny of every programme based on all relevant data, including external examiner reports, student attainment data, Accelerate surveys, peer dialogue outputs and NSS and DLHE surveys. ASER includes student representation to ensure the student voice is heard throughout. This is integral to ensuring the success of all our students because performance and outcomes are analysed with reference to age, ethnicity and disadvantage and differences are addressed in action plans.

26. We expect high levels of attainment by our talented students; nevertheless, we also recognise that it is vital that we maintain the academic rigour and value of our degrees. Therefore, we monitor our proportion of 1st and 2.1 degrees, which is amongst the highest in the sector at 84%. In addition to careful triangulation with external examiners' reports, since 2015, Senate has commissioned an annual longitudinal statistical analysis of awards data. These analyses indicate no evidence for institutional or programme grade inflation.

27. Wherever possible, disciplines and programmes develop personalised learning in order to secure the highest levels of engagement and active commitment to learning and study from students. A research dissertation is a fundamental and compulsory constituent of most of our undergraduate degrees, while independent and research-based tasks are also worked into modules at earlier stages (cf. LE2 below).

### External Examiners

28. External Examiners are recruited on the basis of their discipline and pedagogic expertise and are vital partners in sustaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. They provide essential feedback to programme directors and module convenors to identify areas of excellence as well as areas for improvement. Their reports are considered at College and University level as part of the ASER process. The Academic Dean for Students scrutinises Discipline responses and disseminates University-wide recommendations and good practice.

29. As an example, in 2014/15 External Examiners recommended improvement of the University's mitigation procedure. The Students' Guild, FXU and Colleges were consulted for their views and we responded by making some changes, with resulting policy enhancements approved by the Taught Faculty Board in June 2016. These enhancements have greatly improved equality, consistency of application and transparency to all Exeter students and staff.

### Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

30. Several Colleges work closely with PSRBs to ensure that programmes achieve and maintain accreditation whilst also being able to quickly improve the curriculum in response to the needs of employers and advances in the discipline. Colleges with a large number of PSRB-accredited programmes run Employer Forums where alumni and employers are consulted on programme development.

“I used my Grand Challenges Week experience to help me secure an internship with PwC. They loved hearing about it in the interview – I used it as an example of group work, leadership skills, innovative thinking, overcoming a problem... it’s benefited me in so many ways.”

*Accounting and Finance student, 2016*

**31.** We have a long record of PSRB accreditation of our programmes. Accreditation of our healthcare programmes through the General Medical Council (GMC) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) are important requirements and expectations for students. Our Business School has been awarded EQUIS accreditation for five years, one of only 17 institutions within the UK to have gained this level of endorsement. The School’s teaching and quality was commended by the Peer Review team during the visit. We are also particularly proud of the consistent accreditation for over 30 years of our Engineering programmes.

#### **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)**

**32.** We have created research-inspired inquiry-led learning and discovery at scale through our partnership with FutureLearn since its launch in 2012. Over 100,000 learners from over 105 countries have enrolled on our courses. Crucially, MOOCs influence new curriculum design for on-campus taught programmes, with ‘flipped classroom’ models adopted within Geography and History and a blended curriculum design for a new MSc Genomics in the Medical School.

**33.** One example of a MOOC that has blurred the distinctions between educator and learner, and education and research is ‘Climate Change: Challenges and Solutions’ launched in 2013. This was shortlisted for an international Reimagine Education Award, in the 2016 Digital Content category.<sup>1</sup> Our undergraduates are engaged as facilitators and in posted videos and chat-rooms have created dynamic interaction with our leading researchers, bringing the dialogue of the tutorial within reach of global learners. One Geography student facilitator has taken the transformation further, creating new knowledge by producing a digital interactive map of learner stories from across the globe. This has brought richness to the experience for all learners and new insights into the lived experience of climate change for our research scientists which led to the student winning an ESRI ‘Customer Success Award’.

#### **The Grand Challenges programme**

**34.** Grand Challenges was established in 2012 and is an innovative education enhancement programme shortlisted for a Reimagine Education Award in the 2016 Cultivating Curiosity category. Students apply classroom learning to real-world, interdisciplinary problems (e.g. Global Security, Climate Change, Fashion Ethics and Social Justice and Mental Health) and build their capacity and confidence for the world of employment. They work with our leading researchers, visiting experts, practitioners and artists and, with freedom to design their own assessments, have collaborated to create a wide variety of outputs including climate apps, public health leaflets, and a fashion shop and show.

**35.** In the 2016 survey of the 500 participants in Grand Challenges, 79% reported improvement in their abilities as independent learners; 79% said their confidence in demonstrating their skills to an employer had improved; and 87% said that Grand Challenges provided them with experiences they would not otherwise have had.



<sup>1</sup> The Reimagine Education Awards are organised annually by the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Quacquarelli Symonds. They recognise innovative higher education pedagogies enhancing learning and employability.

## TQ4. Feedback

36. We strive to ensure that feedback provided to students is effective and of high quality. Following a sustained focus on assessment and feedback in 2013, when a series of programmes across all Colleges were scrutinised using the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) methodology, we made significant changes to practice. These included: a commitment to providing feedback within three weeks; systematic consideration of the spread of different types of assessment across programmes; minimising the bunching of assessments for students; promoting online marking; and improving communications with students about marking criteria and assessment policies.

37. A series of staff development workshops on assessment and feedback, including support with new technology, have since then been held across the Colleges. Assessment and feedback are regularly reviewed at College Education Strategy Group meetings and at discipline education training days. We continue to promote sharing of best practice in assessment and feedback; as is reflected in a 2016 workshop with discipline Directors of Education.

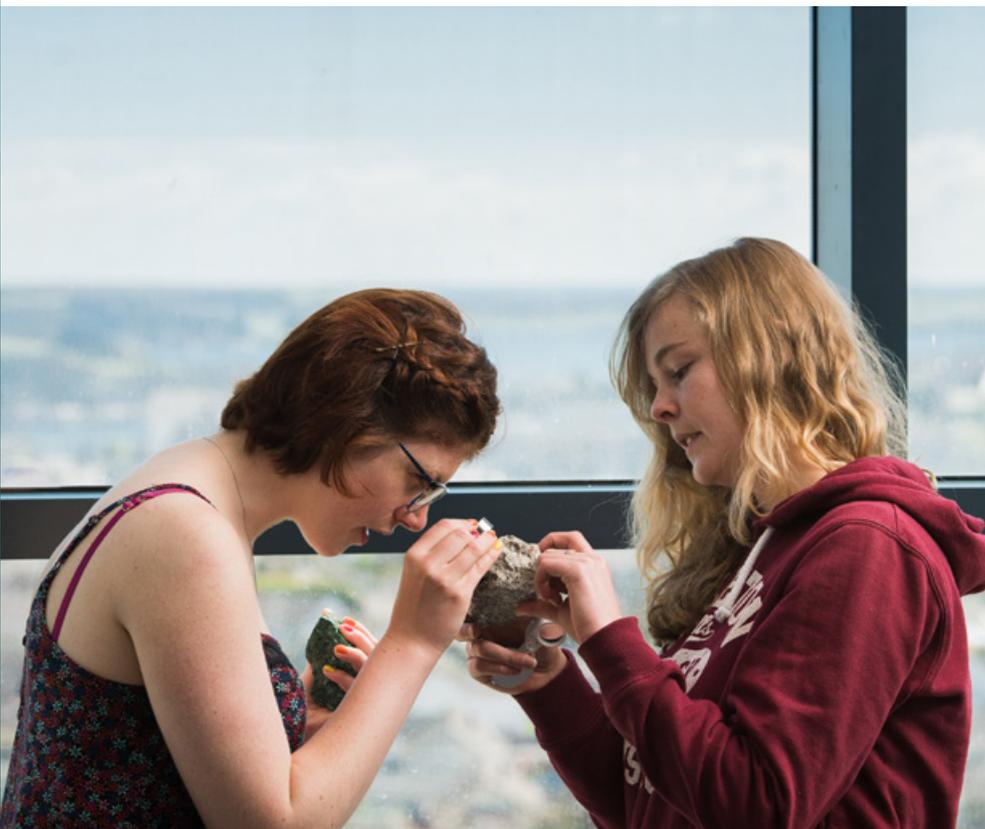
38. Best practice includes helping students to understand and, where appropriate, interrogate assessment methods and criteria. Within the College of Humanities, for example, some modules include formative and summative assessments that involve students in reviewing both their peers' work and staff members' own pre-published writing. This has enabled students to occupy the 'assessor's' worldview and think about what good and constructive feedback involves.

In a Sports and Health Sciences SACA project, students demystified the marking process by working with academic staff to produce a YouTube video entitled "The journey of your assessment". The video allows the student to see the steps taken to ensure a fair and justifiable grade and the time required to achieve this.

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**“This is a very strong and innovative scheme which produces excellent results among students. I would particularly like to commend the diverse range of assessment methods that creatively engage students through the use of blogs, grant writing, policy-oriented reports, and film-making. The students really appreciate the skills development aspects of assessments and realise how useful they are in building their employability profiles. It was very pleasing to see the phasing-in of bespoke marking proforma, and detailed feedback grids for oral presentations”.**

*BSc Geography (Penryn Campus)  
External Examiner 2015/16*





# LEI. Resources

**39.** Exeter is a dynamic and fast-growing university. We recognise that high-quality physical and digital resources are necessary to support students' learning, including independent study and research skills. We consider here all relevant aspects of resources to support learning.

## The Learning Environment

**40.** Our students and staff enjoy some of the finest campus environments in the UK and have benefited from a number of major capital projects to enhance the teaching and research experience. We have invested £388M over the last decade across our four campuses, in addition to buildings on partners' campuses such as the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust. Teaching and learning spaces developed during this programme included a 400-seat auditorium in the pioneering Forum building, alongside new seminar rooms and technology-rich exploration laboratories and new teaching rooms for all disciplines.

**41.** In order to enhance accessibility, flexibility, quality and depth of learning we have developed an institution-wide opt-out policy for lecture capture alongside significant continuing investment in equipping learning spaces for recording. Forty two of our main lecture theatres are equipped for recording and in the first term of this academic year we recorded 6846 lectures. These recordings have been accessed more than 330,000 times and have directly enabled more than 86,000 hours of independent study.

**42.** In response to student demand for more spaces for independent study across all of our campuses we have introduced an additional six study centres with 915 study spaces. In particular our Forum Library has increased commitments of space by 82% over the five years since it opened, from 702 spaces in 2011 to 1276 spaces in 2016.

**43.** We have also invested to support student transition and mental and physical wellbeing. We spend ca £1M annually on our Student Wellbeing and Accessibility Services, which have developed a sector-leading evidence-based approach to mental health support, in close collaboration

with the Mood Disorders Centre in Psychology. Over the last decade we have invested £15M in sports facilities and £5M in the provision of music and dance rehearsal and performance spaces. We were named the Times and Sunday Times Sports University of the Year in 2016 in recognition of excellence in sports performance, education and research.

**44.** Our commitment to ongoing investment has been supported, in December 2016, by Council (governing body) endorsement of the next Capital Strategy. This amounts to £428M over the next decade, with around £111M set to be invested directly into teaching, learning and the student experience. It includes investment of £79M in teaching and learning spaces that will include 34 new Problem Based Collaborative Learning (PBCL) Spaces, a 220-place PBCL STEM teaching laboratory and more than 500 additional study spaces to support independent study.

## The University Science Strategy

**45.** Since its launch in 2010, we have invested in excess of £230M in our interdisciplinary science strategy on academic staff and physical resources. This has enabled planned growth, with high entry standards, in STEM student numbers between 2013/14 and 2015/16 of 19%, including 21% increase in BAME students, and 4% increase in female students.



**46.** To support our commitment to STEM education, we secured £5M of investment from HEFCE in 2014 (matched to provide a total £10.4M) as part of the HEFCE STEM Teaching Capital Funding. The project ensured that our STEM education infrastructure can accommodate growth in student numbers and the requirements of research-led and industry-facing science education. The project delivered three key elements:

- a.** At a cost of £2.2M, we equipped teaching laboratories in Engineering, Physics, Biosciences and Renewable Energy, so as to enable training with industry-standard technologies and research-led inquiry-based learning and discovery;
- b.** We invested £5M to convert non-laboratory space to meet demand for small group and individual project spaces. These spaces were designed to encourage collaboration between students and industry;
- c.** We created Virtualisation and Simulation Laboratories (VSL) through the investment of £3M. The VSLs enable innovative pedagogy and are configured to promote collaborative and active learning through small-group, staff-student, student-student and student-employer interactions in a large class setting.

**47.** In parallel with the development of VSLs, since 2015 we have been in partnership with the leading laboratory simulation design company, Labster, to enhance the educational experience and laboratory preparation of our STEM students. Used in conjunction with conventional labs, Labster simulations combine high-quality science with gamification elements in an immersive 3D environment and have been shown to improve student learning. Our collaboration with Labster extends to the participation of final-year undergraduate students in the design and development of new, bespoke simulations, including the creation of a virtual Category 3 Laboratory, which would not normally be accessible to students.

### **Exeter Learning Environment (ELE)**

**48.** In recognition of the fact that much student learning takes place online, in 2010 we launched the Moodle-based Exeter Learning Environment (ELE). All modules taught in the University are required to have an ELE virtual learning site, and a code of practice stipulates not only minimum requirements but also examples of good practice. In 2015/16 over 5150 ELE module sites were operative, making available over 189,000 curriculum-related resources.

**49.** ELE is now accepted by students as the go-to source of information and support. It also provides, among other things: links to lecture materials, recordings of lectures, assessment details, discussion fora, and links to digitised reading lists. ELE is now also available to students via the smart-phone app, 'iExeter'. Usage of this app, which was co-developed with students, has grown from 4M hits in 2012/13 to more than 45M in 2015/16.

### **Library resources**

**50.** Decisions on library purchases are heavily determined by student needs. The Library has switched to an 'e-first' policy, which helps with the distribution of in-demand items. Use of e-books has increased by more than 100% per year for the last 3 years, from 1.4M e-book section requests in 2013/14 to 5.9M e-book section requests in 2015/16.

**51.** The innovative student-led Library Champions scheme, running since 2011, puts a proportion of the library's purchasing decisions directly into the hands of student Library Champions. They are given purchasing budgets, and become points of liaison for other students within disciplines. Over the last two years improvements in digital resources have been informed by Library Champions focus groups. They have examined the way students use e-books and the platforms they find deliver the most effective interfaces for learning.

## LE2. Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice

52. As a research-led university, Exeter is committed to promoting synergies between research and education. We recognise that an understanding of research and the creation of knowledge will become increasingly important in the knowledge-based economies of the twenty-first century. Therefore, we immerse students in our research culture and environment. We focus here on our major initiatives to refresh our approaches to research-led teaching, while outlining also two further schemes that bring students into contact with world-leading research.

### Research-Inspired, Inquiry-Led Learning and Discovery

53. The University used the Education Strategy, 2014-2020, as an opportunity to co-create a refreshed and distinctive approach to Research-Inspired Inquiry-Led Learning and Discovery (RIILLD), and this approach has now been integrated as a pillar of our new Research and Impact Strategy (2015-2020). While integral to this is learning alongside world-class researchers and expanding opportunities for research throughout our programmes, there are more facets including development of students as Research Apprentices and exploring the international dimensions of education-research synergy in the '4th Age of Research'.

54. RIILLD runs as a vein throughout all of our programmes and is by definition subject and context-specific. Therefore, the following examples can only offer a glimpse of student engagement in research and the creation of new knowledge:

a. In 2014, 2015 and 2016 teams of students from the Colleges of Life and Environmental Sciences and Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences collaborated under the guidance of several of our leading synthetic biologists (Prof John Love, Dr Paul James and Dr Chloe Singleton) to win Gold medals at the iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine Foundation) 'Grand Jamboree', which educates the next generation of scientists and develops the field and public understanding of synthetic biology;

b. In the College of Humanities, first year drama students in 2015 explored the stage work of the Bauhaus in 1920s Germany with Prof. Cathy Turner. Their performance, based on Bauhaus principles, gave Prof. Turner new insights that she presented with a video of the student performance at the Prague Quadrennial in June of the same year;

c. In Prof. Claire Saunders' 'The Politics of Protest' module on the Penryn Campus, second year students directly contribute data to the pan-European 'Caught in the Act of Protest' project. Students' in-class study of social movement theory and the methodologies for its investigation is enriched through learning about and engaging in protest surveys and face-to-face interviews. Their exploration of hypothesis definition, survey design and data collection in the act of protest creates deeper understanding of both the politics of protest and the underpinning social science methods;

d. In 2015, two first year students on the BSc Natural Sciences programme joined Prof Geoff Nash's research team to create an innovative type of gas sensor using a sandwich of different materials, each only a few atoms thick, that is similar to a nanoscale light-bulb where the filament is extremely hard to break. These sensors have potential for pollution monitoring. The contribution of the students to the research was recognised as they became co-authors when the work was published in *Applied Physics Letters* in 2016.

### Research Uncovered

55. The annual 'Research Uncovered' lecture series is a student-driven initiative designed to bring some of the University's most engaging research to a wider student audience. Students nominate their teachers, form a judging panel and host the high-profile events to recognise and celebrate high quality research-led teaching. In 2015/16, 245 nominations were received and from these six open lectures were selected including: "Beyond the Glass Ceiling: the glass cliff and the precariousness of women's leadership" (Prof. Michelle Ryan); and "The History of Sexuality" (Dr Sebastian Matzner).

### Research internships

56. In 2015/16 100 students took part in our growing 'Research Internship' programme. They gained valuable employment and research experience as paid members of research teams becoming co-creators of research by working alongside professional researchers. Internships are funded either by Colleges or through research grants. Students are given specific tasks and are recruited through open competition, including interviews, an experience that benefits all candidates in terms of their employability.

## LE3. Personalised Learning

57. We recognise the many ways in which students learn, and the different needs of individual students. We outline here initiatives and approaches that we believe make Exeter distinctive and evidences our excellent practice.

### Effective Learner Analytics

58. Led by the Academic Dean for Students in partnership with our students, we have invested in a three-year effective learner analytics project to identify and present descriptive data and prognostic assessments to students and staff. Using sophisticated student dashboards delivered through the University smartphone app, 'iExeter', students can track and monitor their own progress and development. Academic tutors and support services have a valuable decision-support tool which is helping them to target extra support to those who need it most.

59. Our approach to learner analytics is unique as the project team is undertaking academic research to mine our own engagement data in order to better understand what drives success for our students. This is especially motivated by our commitment to ensure that our disadvantaged and other under-represented students are supported to succeed and that a pre-University attainment gap does not propagate through to diminished academic or professional success. This interdisciplinary research is focusing on identification of staff interventions that can support students' self-management, retention, attainment and progression. The ultimate goal will be the development of dynamic, personalised, adaptive learning plans.

60. While still in the early stages, the project has already had real impact on our students and staff. Almost 25,000 dashboard views in the first four weeks after launch, as well as positive student feedback, have demonstrated its value to students. We are also exploring the potential of applying learner analytics to support the measurement of learning gain and to aid students in documenting their own progress.

### Multidisciplinarity

61. A key feature of our educational philosophy is to encourage our students to engage in multidisciplinary learning. Our commitment to multidisciplinarity is

embedded in our Education Strategy, with its aim to "provide all students with the opportunity to explore the relevance of different disciplines to contemporary challenges facing the world". The majority of our students are able to take 30 credits outside their main discipline each year, and the proportion of students taking a module outside of their home discipline has increased during recent years, from 13.9% in 2010/11 to 21.2% in 2014/15.

62. In addition, we offer three highly successful programmes which have multidisciplinary at their heart: Flexible Combined Honours (FCH); Liberal Arts; and Natural Sciences. The FCH Programme is distinctive for its number of subject combinations, offering almost 2000 possible different two-subject combinations, three-subject combinations, and student-created specific thematic pathways, meaning we have the largest provision of subject combinations in the UK.<sup>2</sup> Our Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences programmes attract high-tariff students who wish to experience a curriculum that offers a breadth of study across the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences, including bespoke interdisciplinary modules. Both programmes align closely with our research strategies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, on the one hand, and in the Sciences, on the other hand, and each addresses themes and priorities in line with our most cutting-edge research.



<sup>2</sup> The provider with the second greatest provision on a like-for-like course offers around 460 combinations.

# SO1. Employment and Further Study

**63.** The success of our graduates in an increasingly competitive market is a continuing major focus of our attention. This focus is reflected in our upward trajectory in all relevant metrics. Here we outline our core activity, delivered through our Careers and Employability Service, as well as our partnerships with employers and our sector-leading volunteering activities.

## Careers and Employability

**64.** The University Employability Programme was introduced in 2011 to provide a framework to encourage students to maximise their employability gain from their time at University by increasing their engagement with the range of careers and employability services available. At both Streatham and Penryn, we have situated the Careers service at the heart of the campus for maximum visibility. This has been reflected in a 320% increase in engagement with the service since 2010, with 61,000 interactions in 2015/16. The physical space is complemented by the online 'My Career Zone' that provides all students and graduates with information and support throughout and beyond their time at the University.

**65.** Since introducing the programme, use of the careers service has increased from 81% of students in 2010 to 98% in 2016. Similarly, the proportion of students searching for graduate jobs before their final year rose from 28% to 80%, demonstrating students are considering their employability options earlier and seeking necessary support from the University. This has resulted in extremely high student satisfaction with the careers service, with an externally verified rating of 4.69/5 and 5th place in the UK Student Crowd Best Careers Uni Awards 2015.

## Partnerships with employers:

**66.** The University works closely with employers and alumni at a local, national and international level. Notably, our Employers Forum made significant contributions to our Employability strategy. This included embedding the Graduate Attributes into the Education Strategy, implementing the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), and contributing to the creation and support of the Professional Pathways portfolio.

**67.** Our Career Mentor Scheme matches students with professionals in mutually-beneficial mentoring partnerships. The scheme has been hugely successful, with mentoring partnerships rising from 228 in 2013/14 to 430 in 2015/16 and DLHE data demonstrating a significant improvement in graduate outcomes (3.6% higher in 2015) for student participants in the scheme.

**68.** At a discipline level, we work with employers to enhance students' employability post-graduation. The following examples demonstrate such opportunities:

**a.** In our Business School in addition to the option of a year-long industrial placement, students may choose from many modules that have direct interaction with employers including 'Business Practice and Analysis' where students learn from JP Morgan on a Sustainability Challenge and "Workplace Wellbeing" where students draw upon the work place setting to capture practitioner experience of how wellbeing affects productivity (both modules led by Stephen Hickman);

**b.** Sport and Health Science students work closely with Exeter City Football Club (led by Prof. Craig Williams). This partnership involves students undertaking internships with the Club and delivering the 'Strength and Fitness' programme for the Youth Team. Regarded as one of the most effective partnerships of its kind, the University and the Club were awarded 'Best Employer Partnership' by the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services;

**c.** Our 'Theology and Business Ethics' module (led by Dr Esther Reed) involves students working with local businesses and contributing to a conference at the St Paul's Institute (specifically hosted for Exeter students) to examine the values, ethical standards and practices of the companies to which they might want to apply.

## Progression to further study

**69.** In 2014/15, 28% of all finalists progressed to further study, and of these 95% went on to graduate-level study. Our Careers Teams provide support and guidance to students considering further study through Postgraduate Fairs and a dedicated webpage on "Choosing Further Study". We offer graduates progressing directly from undergraduate to postgraduate study at Exeter an automatic Scholarship of £1,000 towards the cost of their tuition.



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Our hugely successful Career Mentor Scheme matches students with professionals

## SO2. Employability and Transferable Skills

70. Development of Graduate Attributes are integral to the Education Strategy (TQ1) and our focus on this is demonstrable across a number of distinctive and effective initiatives.

### The Exeter Award and Exeter Leaders Award

71. The Exeter Award is open to all students and is designed to give formal recognition for extra-curricular activities and to support development of skills relevant for the world of work. Over 5000 students are enrolled with the Exeter Award and ca 600 complete each year with many more taking advantage of more than 800 events and activities that contribute to the award. The Exeter Leaders Award, established in 2008/09 on the foundation of the Exeter Award, focuses on the development of leadership skills through extra-curricular workshops and presentations. Over 80 students completed the Award in 2014/15 and were 7.4% more likely to be in a graduate-level destination 6 months after graduation than those who did not.

### eXfactor:

72. eXfactor is a day-long training programme undertaken by all first-year students to encourage them to start their career planning. It helps students to understand the range of graduate attributes and skills they will acquire at university, and how to articulate these competencies to employers. In 2012, this programme was the first university-led initiative to win the Association of Graduate Recruiters' 'Best of the Best' award in its 34-year history.

73. Students learn to create and curate their online profile to increase their professional networks and promote their extra-curricular achievements and professional profiles (5000 per year create LinkedIn profiles). They also gain an increased understanding of the importance of actively building their profile with over 70% reporting their first priority after the programme is securing high quality work experience. The effect of this is realised in 66% of 2016 finalists having done so before their final year compared to 23% in 2011.

### Volunteering:

74. Volunteering, including very active student-led Community Action, is one of our defining characteristics and 13% of final year students report their preference to work in the charity or voluntary sector. In this respect, LinkedIn ranked our graduates the second most proactive in the world based on activity recorded in the 'Volunteering and Causes' section.

75. A successful volunteering initiative, meaningfully embedded within a discipline, is The Exeter Care Homes Reading Project. This began as a collaboration between Dr Johanna Harris and English students in 2011 and has become one of our most successful student volunteering initiatives, regularly attracting more than 100 volunteers per year. In September 2015, the project was given a 'Points of Light' award by Prime Minister David Cameron.

76. Another example is CoachBright, a student start-up founded by two alumni (Robin Chu and Amelia Jenkinson), which addresses university access for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds by pairing each pupil with a university student coach. Pupils improve their prospects of entering top universities in three ways: grades, confidence and expectations. The latest impact report showed 95% of pupils strongly agreed they had become harder workers as a result.





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“Exeter has the most successful volunteering programme of any university in England, and the administration of this is housed in the Employability Centre. The university has understood that an undergraduate degree on its own is simply not enough to guarantee employment on graduation”

*IPPR Report: An Avalanche is Coming:  
Higher Education and the Revolution Ahead*

“This University of Exeter programme is very well run and from our experience the calibre of students is excellent. We utilised a student for a foreign market research programme and taking that he had no industry experience he did a very good job of identifying potential customers as well as providing excellent background information on the markets.”

*International Employer on the Pathways to International Trade Programme (2015)*

#### Student societies

77. Societies are an integral part of campus life and 72% of students are active members of at least one of over 305 societies across our campuses, with 59% holding positions of responsibility. These figures are “higher than average” amongst universities most targeted by employers.<sup>3</sup>

#### Professional Pathway programmes:

78. Since 2011 we have delivered a series of Professional Pathway programmes, to help students gain work experience and understand the skills required to progress into specific employment sectors. Two examples that were both shortlisted in the 2016 Reimagine Education Awards in the ‘Nurturing employability’ and ‘Sustainability’ categories, respectively, are detailed below:

a. ‘Pathways to International Trade.’ Based on a growing number of students showing an interest in international trade, we collaborate with UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) to deliver a week-long training course followed by a paid internship. The programme involves Exeter student interns working with SMEs on real-life business projects;

b. ‘Green Consultants.’ Climate Change and Sustainable Futures is one of the principle themes in the University Research and Impact Strategy and this expertise underpins Green Consultants. This programme gives students the opportunity for work-experience focused on sustainability either within the University or with our partners or SMEs in the region. Green Consultants received a Taylor Woodrow VINCI award for ‘Management Innovation’ in 2015 and won the Reimagine Education Sustainability Award in 2016.

#### The HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record)

79. We were an early adopter of the HEAR standard to provide a record of students’ performance during their course, as well as their participation in extra-curricular activities. The HEAR transcript also provides students with validation that assures employers that activities cited in the HEAR are of high-quality and deemed relevant for the graduate labour market.



<sup>3</sup> High Fliers Ltd., 2016

## SO3. Positive Outcomes For All

**80.** The University has a longstanding commitment to working at the forefront of the widening participation agenda, particularly in terms of the use of contextual data for admissions and engaging young people in rural communities. In relation to student success and progression activity the University spent ca £2.7M in 2015/16 and provided over 4100 students with financial support University through fee waivers and bursaries (£7.8M).

**81.** As was stated in paragraph 3, we are fully committed to ensuring the academic and professional success of all of our students and we see the recruitment and support of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and other under-represented groups as a strategic priority. The success of current measures to achieve this success is reflected in the statistics cited in paragraph 3. Nevertheless, we are determined to do more to support academic and professional success for our disadvantaged students and we recognise that our under-represented groups do not yet universally see the same level of outcome as others.

**82.** We are therefore pursuing a research-based approach to supporting success. For example, we have identified that, while disadvantaged students gain 1st class degrees in the same proportions as others, a lower percentage obtain 2.1 degrees. We see no variation in achievement of graduate level outcomes by social background amongst students with the same degree class. Therefore, we recognise that we must address and support both academic attainment and employability to achieve our ambitions for our students. The Effective Learning Analytics Project (paragraphs 58-60) is a major investment to address the academic success, here we address direct support for employability.

**83.** Students from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to a growing and comprehensive range of student success and progression support, for instance, peer mentors provide pastoral guidance and advice in relation to the transition to university life. Enhanced services are available for skills development opportunities; internships and international experiences, and enhanced careers guidance. We have invested significant resource to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access work experience placements and internships, with 190 widening participation students securing an internship or placement in 2015/16. Our 'Access to Internships' scheme allows students to secure their own paid internship. There are two different funding streams, one specifically for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which provides funding of up to £1,500 to support them to arrange their internship.

**84.** In 2013 we provided seed-funding and professional support for two alumni (Dale Potter and Henry Morris) to create UpReach, a social enterprise that assists undergraduates from less-privileged backgrounds who face significant barriers in accessing the professions. The programme involves a comprehensive professional development programme that provides career coaching, internships with leading employers and support from a personal mentor working in the industry. The scheme has now created and filled over 400 Student Associate positions, with 91% of the first graduating cohort securing graduate-level employment or study.



85. Recognising the prestige placed on international experience by graduate employers and the reduced likelihood of disadvantaged students to have such experience, since 2016, we have provided explicit, targeted support for disadvantaged students to gain international study and leadership experience through partnering with 'Common Purpose'. To date, 50 current students have leadership experience through partnering with 'Common Purpose'. To date, 50 current students have benefited from experiences on the programme in Kuala Lumpur and Chicago.

#### Learning Gain

86. We are participating in two employability-related Learning Gain projects sponsored by HEFCE, which aim to measure the improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development made by students during their time at university. We see these as having significant value in supporting disadvantaged students and identifying those at risk of not fulfilling their potential:

a. 'Career Registration.' All students at the point of registration indicate their progression against career development milestones to assess their 'career readiness'. For the second year running, in 2016 over 20,000 students reflected on their career planning status. This self-assessment is now being used to target the offer of personalised support to students deemed to be most at risk of unemployment or underemployment;

b. 'Learning and Employability Gain Assessment Community' (LEGACY). As part of the LEGACY Project Consortium, we are involved in two strands. The first of these is University of Cambridge-led development of a new instrument to measure learning gain, which will inform the continuing development of our effective learner analytics tool (58-60). The second is the 'International Experience and Employability', which measures the impact of international experiences on a student's employability. This is already informing our partnership with Common Purpose (paragraph 85 above).





# Appendices

## Core Metrics

Areas Assessed	Indicator (a) %	Benchmark (b) %	Difference (a)-(b)	Z-Score	Flag	Years 1	Years 2	Years 3
Full-time headcount: 15,031								
Teaching on my course	90.7	88.3	2.3	7.1	+	++		+
Assessment and Feedback	75.5	72.0	3.5	7.6	++	++	+	+
Academic Support	83.9	81.8	2.1	5.3	+	++		
Non-Continuation	2.3	3.4	1.2	5.7				
Employment or Further Study	94.5	94.0	0.5	1.8				
Highly Skilled Employment or further study	79.3	75.3	4.0	7.9	++	++	++	++
Part-Time headcount: 122								
Teaching on my course	99.2	SUP	99.2	SUP	SUP	SUP	SUP	N
Assessment and Feedback	72.0	SUP	72.0	SUP	SUP	SUP	SUP	N
Academic Support	84.4	SUP	84.4	SUP	SUP	SUP	SUP	N
Non-Continuation	21.1	37.3	16.2	1.7		N	N	N
Employment or Further Study	91.1	91.8	-0.7	-0.3		N		
Highly Skilled Employment or further study	88.9	69.0	19.9	4.1	++	N	SUP	++

Core metrics and benchmarks for The University of Exeter.

# TEF Steering Group Membership

The University's TEF Steering Group, under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Professor Tim Quine, oversaw the development of the University's TEF provider submission and the University would particularly like to thank these colleagues for their hard work and commitment to the University's submission.

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The University would like to thank all colleagues who contributed to the development and evolution of the Provider Submission. Particular thanks are due to Roscoe Hastings, Professor Andrew McRae, Catherine North, and Abi Wooding for their efforts in the drafting.

## Disclaimer

All details correct at the time of submission, January 2017. For the latest information, visit our website [www.exeter.ac.uk/teaching-excellence](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/teaching-excellence)

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