

# WRITTLE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE: SUBMISSION TO THE TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2023

## PROVIDER CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC APPROACH

### 1.0 The University College

**1.1 Writtle University College (WUC) is a specialist provider of applied science courses for the land-based sector with a history spanning 130 years.** We are known for our heritage as an agricultural college and have used this substantial expertise to evolve into a sector-leading provider of FE and HE courses focussed on the integrated health of humans, animals and the environment. We play an important role in supplying skills for the green economy in our region and are committed to educating students who will contribute to the health and sustainability of the natural world. Most of our HE provision currently focusses on animal-based science awards: together our programmes in animal science, animal management, canine, equine and veterinary physiotherapy comprise 76% of our undergraduate provision. The remainder comprises horticulture, agriculture, sports science, landscape architecture & garden design and art & design. During the TEF period we withdrew our undergraduate courses in Landscape Architecture & Garden Design (teach-out completed 2022) and Art & the Environment (teach-out completing 2023) due to unsustainable student numbers. *Figure 1* below shows the balance of enrolments across our specialist portfolio and contextualises the subject-specific examples provided in this submission.

*Figure 1: Undergraduate enrolments by WUC subject area at beginning and end of the TEF period<sup>1</sup>*

Subject area	2018-19 UG enrolments		2021-22 UG enrolments	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Canine and Veterinary Physiotherapy	140	20%	247	32%
Animal Science	182	27%	211	28%
Equine	135	20%	125	16%
Agriculture & Horticulture	75	11%	87	11%
Sports Science	84	12%	74	10%
Art & Design	23	3%	10	1%
Landscape Architecture & Garden Design	45	7%	9	1%
<b>Total undergraduate enrolments</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>763</b>	<b>100%</b>

**1.2 We are one of the smallest higher education institutions in the country.** With an annual turnover of £17m, 51 FTE HE academic staff and around 750 higher education students, we are one of only five remaining university colleges, and one of the smallest degree-awarding institutions in England. The University College has a similar-sized cohort of further education students and a range of (FE level) apprenticeship programmes. Our small scale is intrinsic to the supportive learning environment and deep sense of community that makes WUC an outstanding place to study. Students develop strong relationships with their course tutors from the outset of their journey and academic staff will know all of their students by name. There is a strong sense of cohort identity not just within courses areas, but across the ~270 annual intake as a whole. Our small size allows us to be agile, focussed and student-centred. However, it also means that we do not have extensive resources to assign to exercises such as the TEF; though input has been wide-ranging, this document was compiled by a couple of staff alongside their busy full-time jobs. The University College has also supported our Students' Union to prepare a video-based TEF student submission.

<sup>1</sup> 'Count of 2018-19 and 2021-22 HESA Student individualised data', December 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's office.

**1.3 Our student body is characterised by its regional profile, the predominance of young, female students and a high rate of disability.** Over 30% declare a disability (compared to 17% across the HE sector), with around 42% of disabilities relating to mental health conditions, challenges or disorders, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety, and 28% relating to learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D<sup>2</sup>. Disability declarations are as high as 38% on animal science schemes. Meanwhile, between 34% and 39% of our young HE students are drawn from postcodes in POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 (compared to 28% across the HE sector<sup>3</sup>). Our portfolio of courses attracts a predominantly female intake (80%), with proportions as high as 97% and 96% respectively on our veterinary physiotherapy and equine programmes. Around 38% of students live on campus and 97% of undergraduates are enrolled on a full-time basis<sup>4</sup>.

**1.4 Though our student and staff body are small, our physical estate and teaching facilities are extensive.** Resources across our 170ha green estate include a dedicated equine campus with training and competition arenas, therapy barns, horse walker, equine water treadmill and 70 horses stabled at any one point; our farm includes a commercial 80 sow farrow-to-finish pig production unit, sheep flock, beef cattle and field cropping. Our Titchmarsh Animal Centre includes a small animal unit with over 250 species, canine hydrotherapy pool and underwater treadmill; on our main campus site we offer wide-ranging plant and tree collections, allotments, research greenhouses, scientific laboratories, sports performance and strength conditioning equipment, multi-use sports pitches, 3x3 basketball courts, reservoir, gym and community-facing health and wellness club.

## 2.0 Local and regional context

**2.1 Though students have all the benefits of an expanding city nearby, WUC is very much a rural campus, surrounded by a rural village community.** We are situated in the village of Writtle, to the west of Chelmsford, Essex. Around 50% of our students are recruited from within a 25-mile radius of the University College. Despite being situated little more than half an hour from the capital, only 4% of our students are recruited from London<sup>5</sup>. Our Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) data indicates that around half of our UK-domiciled UG graduates have remained in east/south east England for work. This proportion increases over the three-year period, from 38% of our 2017-18 leavers to 57% of our 2019-20 leavers<sup>6</sup>. Only 9% of those surveyed were working in London<sup>7</sup>.

**2.2 We are an important supplier of green skills and life science graduates in our region.** We seek to explicitly meet the needs of our local and regional economies; for example, the 2022 Green Skills Infrastructure Review for Essex<sup>8</sup> predicts a 96% increase in demand for green skilled jobs by 2030, whilst the Chelmsford City Local Plan<sup>9</sup> cites 'life sciences and health' as one of six key areas expected to see significant economic growth in the next 20 years. We have a long-standing relationship with Agenda Life Sciences<sup>10</sup> who place WUC graduates in the sector. Elsewhere in the east of England, provision of practice-led courses for land-based industries and the green economy is limited and no other institution is able to offer the same breadth of specialist provision.

<sup>2</sup> 'Analysis of 2021-22 HE student disability profile data', January 2023. Unpublished. Held by the MIS team.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

<sup>4</sup> 'Analysis of 2021-22 HE profile and address data', December 2022. Unpublished. Held by MIS team.

<sup>5</sup> 'AY 2021/22 home postcode and district level data of UK domiciled PG/UG and FT/PT', January 2023. Unpublished. Held by the MIS team.

<sup>6</sup> 'Analysis of GOS provider delivery data 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20\_UG/UK/FT respondents', December 2022. Unpublished. Held by the MIS team.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> <https://assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/2boS3yEpHGwgLnZMXqRFfp/1918c6857a4f61ed7a73a1b100c730aa/Essex-Green-Skills-Infrastructure-review-2022.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/resources/assets/inline/full/0/4671682.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.agendalifesciences.com/about-us/>

**2.3 We actively collaborate with a wide variety of external partners and use our extensive network of industry connections to the benefit of students.** As a provider of HE and FE, including FE-level apprenticeships, we have an extensive and established industry and employer network across our portfolio. We work with hundreds of external organisations to contribute professional and industry relevance to course design, delivery, assessment, ongoing professional development for our students and progression opportunities for graduates.

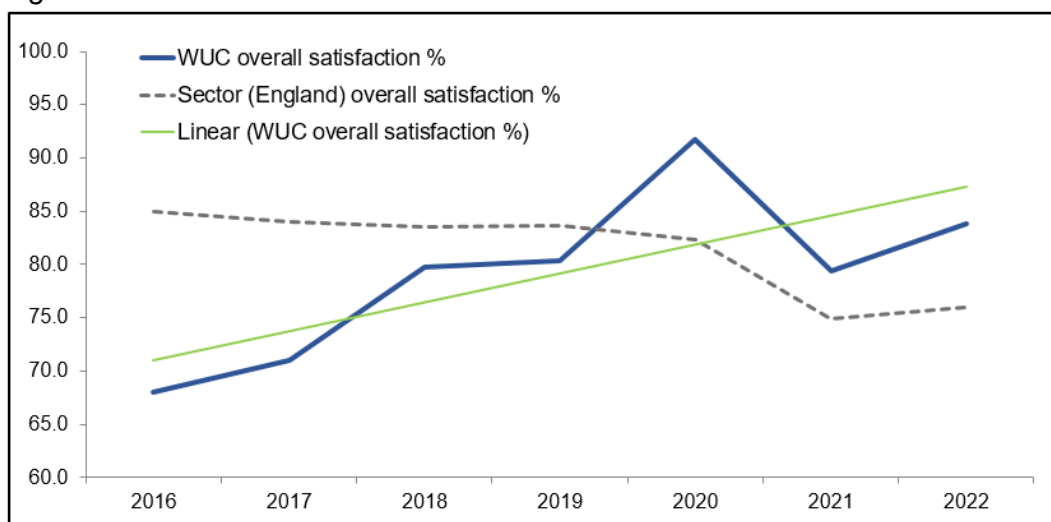
**2.4 As a proudly applied and vocational teaching institution, supporting students into meaningful employment in our region and beyond is the most important thing we do.** However, in the context of our student and graduate profile, our geography and our academic portfolio, we believe that the single measure of graduate outcomes used in TEF does not provide an appropriate assessment of our graduates' progression outcomes. This is explained further in the student outcomes section of this submission, along with our own evidence of graduate success.

### 3.0 WUC's journey 2018 to 2022

**3.1 Since the 2017 TEF, the strategic direction and management of WUC has changed.** A wholly new senior leadership team took management of the institution in 2017-18 and set about implementing a new approach to student academic support and student engagement which has materially benefitted the student experience and contributed to dramatically improved student outcomes. During this period, we also transitioned away from our relationship with the University of Essex, which validated all WUC HE courses prior to WUC achieving TDAP in 2015. The last significant cohort of students validated by Essex completed their awards in 2019-20.

**3.2 A step-change in the quality of the University College's student experience is evident from our overall satisfaction scores in the NSS, as shown in *figure 2* below.** We believe that overall satisfaction in the NSS, alongside the scale factors used in the TEF dashboard, is a strong demonstration of the excellence of the WUC student experience during this TEF period.

Figure 2: WUC overall satisfaction in the NSS 2016-2022<sup>11</sup>



**3.3 The University College has worked hard to embed a partnership approach with students.** Alongside high-quality support for academic achievement and personal development, we have encouraged and supported all students to speak up about what they want to achieve during their time at university and what they need to succeed. Our success in creating an engaged and

<sup>11</sup> NSS provider data accessed at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/nss-data-provider-level/>

confident learning community is evidenced by our NSS results, with our average score for 'Student Voice' 5.6pp ahead of our TEF benchmark and ranked 5th amongst English university providers<sup>12</sup>.

#### 4.0 Strategic approach to excellence in learning and teaching

**4.1 Our strategic approach to learning and teaching is entirely driven by the industries we serve and the students we enrol.** It is underpinned by the three principles shown in *figure 3* below, which provide the framework for course design, delivery and quality enhancement throughout WUC.

*Figure 3: WUC Learning & Teaching strategic pillars*

##### APPLIED PRACTICE

Every WUC course is designed around professional practice, using on-site specialist facilities to provide hands-on experience from day one. Teaching is practitioner-led and students develop a real-world understanding of the industries they will be entering.

##### RESPONSIVE LEARNING

Courses are highly responsive to the needs of employers and the needs of students. Flexible teaching, assessment and practice frameworks enable WUC staff to tailor delivery to support the professional interests of individual students.

##### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The University College commits to developing the whole person and to fostering personal skills, confidence and self-awareness. This extends beyond typical approaches to graduate attributes and ensures that WUC students will be able to operate as self-directed experts in their fields. Students are supported to identify, articulate and plan for their development needs and interests throughout their time at the University College. This commitment to wide-ranging personal development is the foundation for the two strategic 'pillars' of applied practice and responsive learning. It drives WUC's approach to educational gain.

**4.2 WUC's approach to teaching focusses on students as individuals.** All WUC undergraduate courses enable students to tailor assessment at every level of study. We do not offer the 'one size fits all' approach of many large universities and instead offer a personalised learning approach that supports students to achieve their best, inside the classroom and beyond it. Often described as 'student-centred learning', this approach uses differentiated learning and instruction to tailor the curriculum according to need. Learners within the same classroom, or on the same course, work together with shared purpose but each have their own personalised journey through the curriculum.

**4.3 All WUC courses have a strong applied dimension.** Over half of our staff retain professional practice in an industry role related to their teaching, supporting the currency of our programmes. In our applied research, knowledge exchange and innovation work, we partner with organisations to support innovation and next generation solutions. All students have work experience opportunities built into their programmes of study; in many cases these opportunities can be realised using our own industry-standard facilities, including the chance to run elements of on-site businesses.

**4.4 Wherever possible, the University College uses data-driven approaches to assess the quality and effectiveness of its learning, teaching and student outcomes.** We have a small but highly capable Management Information & Systems (MIS) team able to produce useable comprehensive analysis of student outcomes data. Module leaders and Course Scheme Managers (CSMs) fully engage with detailed student experience and outcomes datasets as part of the

<sup>12</sup> 'Analysis of OfS NSS provider data, December 2022'. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

structured Annual Review of Courses (ARC) process, along with other sources of information such as minutes of Course Scheme Review Committees, external examiner reports and module feedback. However, due to our small scale, some external datasets do not fairly represent our student outcomes. WUC's annual denominator value for all but one data point in its TEF outcomes is less than 300; in most cases it is less than 200. When split by student characteristics and subjects, the datasets quickly become statistically problematic. To obtain useful performance data at a subject or departmental level, datasets often have to be aggregated across years, which undermines longitudinal tracking. Where annual splits are used, the statistical uncertainty remains high and reported performance often shows significant variances. In this submission we present internal datasets which we consider to be a more reliable basis on which to judge performance.

**4.6 We place great emphasis on the value of the student voice and partnership working with students.** We have worked hard to broker trust with students and listen to the individual and collective student voice. Consequently, most students feel highly invested in the WUC community and are very willing to engage in quality review and assurance activity. As an example, for many years we have found ourselves oversubscribed with academic student representatives and, despite our very small cohorts, are easily able to assign active representatives to every combination of year group and degree course across the institution<sup>13</sup>.

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE

### 5.0 Teaching, feedback and assessment (SE1)

**5.1 Based on the most recent three years of TEF metrics, WUC's undergraduate teaching is typically outstanding.** It is only the effect of a slightly lower indicator value in 2018-19, at 85.7%, that prevents WUC from being materially above benchmark overall in this metric. Satisfaction with teaching was +3.6pp, +1.7pp and +2.9pp above benchmark in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively. Overall satisfaction in veterinary sciences, representing ~20% of students, is over 97% (response rate of 93%), with our Integrated Masters in Veterinary Physiotherapy scoring 100% satisfaction in 2020. Satisfaction amongst mature students is over 5pp above benchmark. There is only one split metric where there is a least probable statistical evidence that performance is materially below benchmark, which is in sports and exercise science and which relates to our small (~20 students) franchise arrangement with a local FE college. As shown in *figure 4* below, our NSS data for the last three years demonstrates the typically outstanding quality of our teaching.

*Figure 4: WUC scores vs benchmark in NSS questions 1-4, 2019-2022<sup>14</sup>*

WUC NSS feedback scores 2019-2022, all respondents		2019 Taught			2020 Taught			2021 Taught			2022 Taught		
		Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-
1	Staff are good at explaining things	91.56	92.02	-0.46	95.57	90.91	4.66	94.69	87.08	7.61	89.51	87.77	1.74
2	Staff have made the subject interesting	85.62	86.08	-0.46	94.30	86.46	7.84	87.61	81.89	5.72	91.61	83.54	8.07
3	The course is intellectually stimulating	83.12	84.21	-1.09	91.14	85.16	5.98	84.96	83.00	1.96	85.31	82.77	2.54
4	My course has challenged me to achieve my best work	83.12	82.76	0.36	91.77	81.24	10.53	76.99	76.62	0.37	86.01	76.95	9.06

<sup>13</sup> 'Student CSRC representatives 2018-2022', June 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Quality Office.

<sup>14</sup> 'Analysis of OfS NSS provider data, December 2022'. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

**5.2 The design of learning and teaching activities that are academically challenging and which meet the expectations of employers and industry bodies, is built into the University College’s validation, review and quality enhancement processes<sup>15</sup>.** Courses are designed with the direct input of students, often involving a student ‘consultation group’ as part of the development process. We also operate a ‘pre-validation panel’ stage of course validation which allows academic and quality staff to provide check-and-challenge of the validation material, providing an opportunity to reflect on and further improve the course proposal before it is reviewed by the formal panel. Developers and reviewers are required to demonstrate how the curriculum reflects awareness of the diversity of learners and their learning needs and experiences, and to show how this is incorporated into curriculum design through course content, modes of interaction and assessment. Students and external industry experts are mandatory members of all validation and re-validation panels.

**5.3 Teaching for all undergraduate courses regularly takes place outside the classroom or lecture theatre.** Delivery of scientific principles and practical approaches, whether they relate to animal health, conservation, sustainable food production, amenity horticulture, landscape architecture or sports coaching, can be readily contextualised using WUC’s extensive on-site facilities. This is combined with extensive use of external teaching locations and field trips including dozens of farms and nurseries, gardens, zoo collections, nature reserves, safari trips, equestrian businesses, galleries, sports clubs and academies. Our Agriculture and Horticulture students can take part in a novel European rotation programme with HEIs in Finland and the Netherlands used to deliver and assess a level 5 module in International Value Chains.

**5.4 Our TEF metrics indicate that our assessment and feedback practices are typically outstanding.** The timeliness and quality of feedback is consistently praised by our students. Feedback and feed forward are provided within a strict 28-day timeframe and include thorough guidance and target-setting responsive to the needs of the individual learner. Formative assessment is embedded in all WUC modules<sup>16</sup>, the details and timing of which are always provided in advance to students via module specifications. The University College consistently scores well above its benchmark in NSS questions 10 and 11, as evidenced in *figure 5* below.

*Figure 5: WUC scores vs benchmark in NSS questions 10 and 11, 2019-2022<sup>17</sup>*

WUC NSS feedback scores 2019-2022, all respondents		2019 Taught			2020 Taught			2021 Taught			2022 Taught		
		Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-
10	Feedback on my work has been timely	76	70.6	5.34	83.54	72.35	11.2	79.65	64.21	15.4	77.6	64.1	13.5
11	I have received helpful comments on my work	77.9	75.3	2.6	82.28	75.73	6.55	72.32	69.89	2.43	77.6	72.1	5.56

**5.5 WUC’s innovative range of assessment methods, and their relevance to employment, is frequently commended in validation and review events and praised by external examiners.** Great care is taken to ensure that individual assessment instruments effectively enable students to demonstrate they have achieved module learning outcomes, but staff are otherwise provided with considerable freedom to innovate in the design and delivery of assessment. In particular, staff are encouraged to develop assessment practices that are tailored to the needs of both their students and the specialist industries they work with. The quotes below provide examples of feedback from

<sup>15</sup> ‘Code of Practice on the development, approval and modification of taught provision’, last updated September 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Quality Office.

<sup>16</sup> ‘WUC module specification template’, last updated July 2021. Unpublished. Held by the Quality Office.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Analysis of OfS NSS provider data, December 2022’. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary’s Office.

course scheme external examiners from almost all subject areas and are reflective of the feedback received in each of the last four years<sup>18</sup>:

*“As I have said often during my time as EE, I was impressed by the topicality of assessment subjects. Debates on the effect of the Agriculture Act, GMOs, climate change and farm size, supervision of recruiting a new farm manager and an interesting and challenging case study for Farm Enterprises and Diversification (amongst others) all go to make the course vibrant and relevant”.*

*“This variety of assessment methods provides opportunity for all to succeed through differentiation, irrespective of preferred learning styles and does not favour one assessment style over another... the team is very committed to ensuring a positive learning experience for all students, irrespective of their learning support needs”.*

(External examiners for Agriculture and Horticulture (11% of UG population), 2021-22)

*A good range of innovative assessment types which can be developed on in the students’ future careers are included. Instructions within the assignment briefs and within the module guides clearly support students. Feed forward guidance provided was very helpful to the students plus extensive”.*

(External examiner for Veterinary Physiotherapy (26% of UG population), 2020-21)

*“All module strategies were highly student-centred, and many demonstrated learning as a continual process, with the assessment as a key component of the learning rather than a memory test. A range of learning and teaching approaches were used, with great emphasis on applying learnings in practice and applicability to the industry. This meant that the relevance of both course content and assessment format was made clear to the students. The variety of assessment approaches was impressive”.*

(External examiner for Equine (18% of UG population), 2019-20)

*“The modules I have reviewed show a diverse range of learning, teaching and assessment strategies covering everything from formal exams through to business plans. Many of the modules have nice real-world scenarios to support students in applying their knowledge”.*

*I am impressed with the integration of applicable and industry appropriate practical sessions where relevant to enhance student learning..... There are a wide range of assessment strategies used that allow the students to show their abilities and meet learning outcomes. Each module has a mix of appropriate assessment strategies and showed innovative practice. Examples of this are the use of practical results in exams to allow full amalgamation of teaching and assessment and debates for communication skills.*

(External examiners for Animal (28% of UG population), 2021-22)

**5.6 Assessment is tailored to students’ own learning needs and students co-create assessment criteria in partnership with academic staff.** For example, students in our Animal Science department (28% of all undergraduates), are able to choose between different species or animal groups (e.g. livestock, zoo or companion animal) when compiling reports on, say, nutritional disorders, animal training or the ethics of animal management. Equine students (20% of all undergraduates), are able to personally tailor assessment according to their interests in e.g. a sporting discipline, sports therapy, rehabilitation or behavioural science.

**5.7 All undergraduate courses involve industry experts and practitioners in formative and summative assessment.** For example, Animal Science students undertake an exercise in nutrition evaluated by an animal feed business. External practising occupational therapists assess relevant modules for our Sports & Exercise students. Equine and Veterinary Physiotherapy students work with clients’ horses for their case study work, with the latter group working at local livery yards for

<sup>18</sup> External Examiner reports (various), 2018-19 to 2021-22. Unpublished. Held by the Quality Office.

their clinical rotations. Agriculture students undertake a consultancy project for a farm-based client, whilst Landscape and Garden Design students produce design-led solutions for external business challenges. We also make use of our active alumni network in formative assessment, which allows current students to see the connection between assessment and future employment. Our extensive and creative use of real-life client assessment briefs is commended by external examiners<sup>19</sup>.

### **5.8 Our final-year capstone project provides students with the autonomy to direct their learning and assessment according to their own academic and professional interests.**

Students are presented with a wide range of options, ranging from traditional dissertations through to consultancy projects, community-based projects, entrepreneurial projects and research papers, providing a great deal of flexibility to differentiate their honours-level assessment according to their own interests and career pathway. For many the capstone project will also feed into the development of a portfolio used to obtain professional recognition. For example, our Equine Behavioural Science students can use it to contribute to registration with the International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants (IAABC). All students, regardless of the academic and professional focus, receive a rigorous grounding in research skills and data handling.

### **5.9 Our 'near-peer led teaching' scheme has increased students' confidence approaching assessment and improved student attainment in examinations<sup>20</sup>.**

Our Integrated Masters in Veterinary Physiotherapy course, which accounts for 26% of all undergraduate enrolments, has pioneered a 'near-peer led teaching' (NPLT) initiative designed to support students in the fourth (clinical) year of the course. Drawing upon comparable approaches in human medicine, whereby junior doctors teach first-year medical students, our NPLT scheme asks final-year students to co-teach first-year anatomy modules, leading small-group anatomical dissections and practical palpation sessions on the live animal. The pass rate for final-year students participating in NPLT is 20 percentage points higher than those that did not participate<sup>21</sup>. All students involved, across both cohorts, reported benefits to their learning and to their sense of belonging in the WUC community.

## **6.0 Course content and delivery (SE2)**

**6.1 Applied practice is explicitly designed into all WUC courses at all levels of study.** For example, our Pet Behaviour Academy allows students to experience actual professional pet behaviour consultations in simulated home environments and inside/outside training areas, which are all covered by high-quality 24/7 video and audio capture. Students take responsibility for managing the Pet Behaviour Clinic, including bookings, liaison with clients, management of the clinic space, advertising and social media content. Our canine, equine and veterinary physiotherapy students work with customers' dogs and horses on a weekly basis, taking responsibility for liaising with clients, completing relevant yard and kennel duties and delivering training and treatment plans.

**6.2 Our response to the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the responsiveness and agility of WUC's approach to learning and teaching.** As with many other specialist and applied HE providers, we faced particular challenges caused by the pandemic and had to rapidly re-design our undergraduate delivery. A clear focus on assessment for learning (rather than *of* learning) strategies helped with these fast and effective adaptations. Our embedded approach to student partnership working meant that we could readily and authentically involve all students in the planning and

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> Jade Terry, 'Does a near-peer led teaching program improve student's anatomy knowledge and practical skills? A study looking at the effectiveness of a near-peer led teaching program in developing students' understanding of anatomy on a MSc Veterinary Physiotherapy course', 2019. Unpublished. Held by the WUC Veterinary Physiotherapy department.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*



confirmation of Covid-related changes. Our NSS score for Student Voice in 2020-21 was 9.1pp above benchmark and all cohorts were able to complete their degree courses 'on time'.

**6.3 We embed academic and scientific (with respect to non-design courses) rigour into all undergraduate provision.** All modules are considered contributors to graduate-level outcomes, with a systematic approach to level 4 modules playing their part in developing the academic, practical, intellectual and transferable skills students require. Programme-level assessment is considered such that students develop and are assessed on skills from level 4 that they will meet again later in their award, giving them an opportunity to build on their skills development as the award progresses. An example is the rigour and detail of the delivery and (oral) assessment of anatomy and physiology knowledge at level 4 for veterinary physiotherapy students, who need to demonstrate exceptionally detailed anatomical knowledge, and the application of such in their clinical (oral) examinations at level 7.

**6.4 External speakers are a feature of all courses.** Drawn from industry, other HEIs and sector organisations, external speakers contribute to the currency and breadth of the University College's learning experience and provide students with invaluable access to networks, contemporary industry concerns, professional models and vocabularies. By networking with sector specialists, students gain an authentic and authoritative sense of the expectations of their future employees and clients.

**6.5 Students are actively encouraged to attend conferences and industry-led meetings to further their knowledge and forge new connections in their chosen industry.** For example, Animal Science students engage with and present at conferences such as the BSAS Student Conference and the BIAZA Conference. Agriculture and Horticulture students are invited to the annual City Food Lectures. Over the last four years, a consistent 7-8% of our equine cohort have been invited to present research papers at national and international conferences<sup>22</sup>. WUC students also present to the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW), an organisation that we helped to found over 17 years ago which holds an annual conference in animal welfare science.

## **7.0 Professional practice, employer engagement, research, innovation, scholarship (SE3)**

**7.1 53% of teaching staff are qualified practitioners in their specialist fields and 57% of staff are members of professional bodies/societies<sup>23</sup>.** Our small teaching staff body includes practising veterinarians, human and animal physiotherapists, clinical animal behaviourists, animal trainers, landscape architects, agricultural consultants, occupational therapists, registered human and equine nutritionists, equestrian coaches, human psychologists, elite strength and conditioning coaches, human physiologists and sports performance coaches.

**7.2 Nearly half of our undergraduates are enrolled on courses accredited by professional bodies.** Our Integrated Masters in Veterinary Physiotherapy, which represents 26% of WUC's total undergraduates, is the only veterinary physiotherapy course that enables direct entry to both the Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners (RAMP) and the Animal Health Professions' Register (AHPR) at the point of graduation, with graduates applying to be fully registered veterinary physiotherapists. Students on our Canine Therapy, Equine Sports Therapy and Animal Therapy courses also benefit from AHPR accreditation. Our smaller undergraduate courses in Landscape Architecture and Landscape and Garden Design were accredited by the Landscape Institute and recognised by the International Federation of Landscape Architects and the Society of Garden

<sup>22</sup> 'Equine student conference papers 2018-2022', collated January 2023. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

<sup>23</sup> HE academic staff qualifications, prof practice register and prof body memberships', last updated January 2023. Unpublished. Held by Registrar & Secretary's Office.

Designers. Most other undergraduate courses are formally recognised by PSRBs, including the IAABC for Equine Behaviour and the ABTC for Animal Science.

**7.3 Visits to research and industry organisations and events are an integral part of all courses, providing students with visible practical applications and showing how their own knowledge can be applied in their future careers.** For example, students attend biannual Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) events alongside farmers, vets, nutritionists and other animal health specialists. Students present their research proposals at a November meeting, receiving industry feedback and guidance, and then present their findings at a subsequent meeting in May. Students on our Sports & Exercise Science course have accompanied and worked under practising sports coaches/consultants at Olympic and Commonwealth Games training camps.

**7.4 Academic research, knowledge exchange and consultancy activity consistently contribute to an outstanding learning experience for students.** Course content is shaped by current issues in the industry; for example, our research and knowledge exchange in precision livestock management over the last ten years, including several RCUK-funded programmes, drove the development of the Livestock Technology pathway for undergraduate Animal Science students. Our Innovation Centres in Pig Behaviour & Welfare and Precision Sheep Management allow undergraduate students to capture their own data for coursework and research projects, with CCTV video systems allowing students to watch breeding sows or growing pigs live through a web browser. Research and consultancy activity in regenerative agriculture, including our involvement in a landmark project to transform the teaching of agriculture in Ukraine, Armenia and Uzbekistan<sup>24</sup>, has directly shaped our pioneering undergraduate courses in regenerative agriculture and sustainable food production. Our partnership with the charity Reach Every Generation involves Sports & Exercise Science students in investigating how physical literacy and exercise can help in the re-education of 'at risk' youths.

**7.5 Students are directly involved in enterprise activity and are encouraged to develop collaborative projects.** Examples include student-led planning and design of WUC's regenerative agriculture project, transitioning from conventional commercial farming to regenerative practice, which was successfully pitched to the NFU by students; the sale of marketable student-grown plants to the public (including the breeding, propagation and marketing of new plant *Osteospermum* ('Little Writtle')) and the organisation of the national open garden scheme for the public.

## 8.0 Staff professional development and academic practice (SE4)

**8.1 Maintenance of academic standards and delivery of a consistently outstanding student experience are underpinned by the recruitment, retention and development of academic staff.** Evidence of industry-relevant professional practice, research and/or knowledge exchange are standard requirements for the recruitment of lecturers, along with teaching demonstrations and the involvement of students on selection panels. Academic staff benefit from extensive team-teaching approaches, staff 'buddying' and structured peer observation of teaching. Staff are supported to gain both teaching qualifications and AdvanceHE fellowship and are actively encouraged to act as external examiners, to sit on internal and external validation panels and to contribute to reviews for Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence and QAA subject benchmarking statements<sup>25</sup>. Currently 47% of teaching staff hold a teaching qualification

. When looking at staff with at least two years of teaching experience, 67% have a

<sup>24</sup> See <https://writtle.ac.uk/TOPAS>

<sup>25</sup> 'Staff involved in QAA subject benchmark statement reviews', last updated December 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

teaching qualification<sup>26</sup>. We have 31 AdvanceHE Fellows and two National Teaching Fellows<sup>27</sup>.

**8.2 The University College values, retains and promotes staff committed to excellence in learning and teaching.** The pivotal role of Course Scheme Manager, responsible for quality enhancement and innovation across a subject area, has a high profile within the institution and serves as a promotion track for teaching-led staff.

All are current or recent practising professionals in their fields and thus have a real understanding of what it takes to succeed in their industries.

**8.3 Library staff are professionally engaged and well-qualified to provide expert advice and support to students.** All library staff take part in monthly CPD to enhance their understanding of key resources and services, and to develop their knowledge of WUC curricula.

**8.4 The University College runs an annual 'Get Ahead' week of events designed to support academic practice and professional development for teaching and academic support staff.** Get Ahead first ran in 2019 and has evolved from our annual one-day learning and teaching conference. Content is now spread across a week, immediately prior to the start of semester, and allows staff to share good practice, to disseminate findings from pedagogical projects and to learn about changes and enhancements to learning and teaching. The Get Ahead week involves external input, allowing staff to engage with peers from other HEIs, along with professionally developed sessions to support staff wellbeing. The week also provides an opportunity for staff to remind one another of key events or changes for the semester or year ahead, along with 'refresher' training on practical aspects of teaching delivery and academic support. The Get Ahead initiative has been welcomed by staff and has recently been extended to run three times, rather than once, per year.

**8.5 Staff are supported to engage with professional 'internships' to expand their professional knowledge and experience.** As another example of how we are able to leverage our extensive industry contacts, staff in each of our subject areas - plus our laboratory technicians and equine yard staff - have had the opportunity to complete internships with relevant business and other organisations to support their professional development. This has included equine staff spending time on a sector-leading thoroughbred stud in Newmarket to ensure currency of knowledge of breeding practices, and sports staff working alongside coaches for national sports teams to witness modern coaching and strength and conditioning practices at the highest level.

**8.6 Academic staff success is regularly recognised and celebrated.** Prior to the pandemic, we co-ran student-led teaching awards with the Students' Union to recognise academic staff across eight distinct areas. This has now been incorporated in our annual staff excellence awards and annual staff celebration event. Winners serve as role models for colleagues seeking to improve their own practice, with experiences showcased via our 'Get Ahead' learning and teaching events.

## 9.0 Academic and learning support (SE5)

**9.1 Based on the most recent three years of TEF metrics, academic support is typically outstanding.** It is only the effect of a lower indicator value in 2018-19, at 79.8%, that prevents WUC

<sup>26</sup> HE academic staff qualifications, prof practice register and prof body memberships', last updated January 2023. Unpublished. Held by Registrar & Secretary's Office.

<sup>27</sup> 'WUC Fellows as of 30.06.22', November 2022. Unpublished. Held by HR Office.

from being materially above benchmark overall in this metric. Satisfaction with academic support was +4.1pp, +4.5pp and +2.2pp above benchmark in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively. Almost all of our split metrics in this area are above benchmark and we have no split metrics that are materially below benchmark. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we supported each individual student through the academic, professional and personal challenges generated by the situation. This is reflected in our NSS metrics for academic support, with WUC achieving its highest performance relative to benchmark in 2021.

**9.2 We operate a multi-layer tutorial process which tracks academic, professional and personal development goals throughout a student's course of study.** Our framework for on-going guidance and support is set out in our Tutorial Policy<sup>28</sup> which encompasses personal tutorials for individuals and course cohorts, subject (module) tutorials and opportunities for informal academic advice and guidance. In practice, students also meet module tutors regularly and informally for advice and guidance between tutorial sessions. Student Progress Meetings are held at the beginning of the second semester to identify where there is a need for further one-to-one meetings and to make cross-team referrals to support students with poor early outcomes. Our responsive and personalised approach to academic support is reflected in our high scores for NSS question 14, "good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course", where WUC has placed in the top 8 of all university providers in England in each of the last three years<sup>29</sup>.

**9.3 The University Colleges takes an integrated approach to academic, professional and personal support.** As explained in sections 12-16 below, our strategic approach to supporting students to succeed, including academic attainment, is delivered through a programme of interconnected academic and co-curricular activity. Core (timetabled) academic support is combined with 1-1 bookable appointments, group workshops and a wide range of schemes and activities that help students to address identified academic, professional and personal skills gaps and to refine existing skillsets. This includes volunteering, paid work opportunities and our WUC Ambassador Intern programme. Students are also encouraged to book individual sessions with our specialist support services, which includes digital IT skills, academic writing, statistics support, careers, employability and enterprise advice and a wide-range of other academic and study skills.

## 10.0 Learning resources (SE6)

**10.1 The University College offers all students professionally focussed, industry-standard learning and practice facilities and student satisfaction with learning resources is high.**

Students are particularly satisfied with course-specific resources, where we consistently score beyond our NSS benchmark. *Figure 6*, below, shows that across the last three years, our students have scored us highly in all three 'learning resources' questions in the NSS. These scores reflect our efforts to respond to student feedback from 2018-19 and earlier years, which has included upgraded library and IT facilities and the development of a new HE Study Hub. Aside from this weaker performance in year 1, there is only one other split metric with below-benchmark performance in respect of learning resources. This relates to sports and exercise science, which includes a small franchise arrangement with a local FE college. We know that satisfaction with learning resources amongst this group has typically been lower than that for sports science students taught directly by WUC and this has been addressed with the provider.

<sup>28</sup> 'QA079 Tutorial Policy', 2019. Unpublished. Held by the Quality Office.

<sup>29</sup> 'Analysis of OfS NSS provider data, December 2022'. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

**10.2 Specialist technology and equipment is used to engage industry partners, which in turn allows students to understand how these tools are used in real-world applications.** For example, our equine water treadmill and extensive gait analysis software have attracted elite-level riders and their mounts for performance analysis, with the resultant training plans enabling students to understand the requirements of elite equine athletes. Our specialist physiological testing equipment is used by professional football, cricket and rugby clubs, along with schools, academies and physiotherapy businesses, with WUC undergraduates directly involved in the testing of players and athletes and the development of rehabilitation programmes. Such equipment is also an integral part of dissertations, with students taking this equipment out into the field for their own independent studies.

Figure 6: WUC scores vs benchmark in NSS questions 18, 19 and 20, 2020-2022<sup>30</sup>

WUC NSS learning resources scores 2020-2022, all respondents		2020 Taught			2021 Taught			2022 Taught		
		Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-
18	The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well	83.44	80.71	2.73	75.00	69.13	5.87	74.47	74.14	0.33
19	The library resources have supported my learning well	86.08	86.22	-0.14	81.08	71.82	9.26	82.14	81.96	0.18
20	I have been able to access course-specific resources when I needed to	87.97	85.84	2.13	76.58	71.25	5.33	88.03	81.62	6.41

**10.3 WUC's library provides a wide range of physical and electronic resources that are regularly reviewed in conjunction with students.** SCONUL data shows that library resources and usage are excellent for an institution of WUC's size<sup>31</sup>. All degree courses are well-supported with relevant books, sector magazines, e-books, e-journal and database subscriptions. Students are positively encouraged to have their say in library resources, for example through making print book suggestions and ordering inter-library loans for more specific research needs. Feedback relevant to each academic area is systematically gathered through Course Scheme Review Committees, whilst the SU is able to feedback on general facilities and services through regular liaison meetings.

**10.4 The WUC Library is offered to students as an active support service, not simply a bank of resources.** Recognising that the very best library resources can only be utilised effectively if students are equipped with the necessary academic and study skills, WUC Library staff deliver general and targeted information training, digital literacy and research skills to all undergraduates as part of the Empowering Success programme. These take the form of bookable 1-1 appointments, cross-team referrals and embedded tutorial sessions. Library staff proactively engage with academic teams to ensure that the sessions are tailored to students' needs, and are contributing to specific learning outcomes. These sessions are logged and monitored to ensure parity of delivery across subject areas. Feedback gathered on sessions delivered by library staff shows that attendance has increased students' confidence and the efficiency with which they access research literature<sup>32</sup>. The Library team also has regular dialogue with the HE disability team to ensure that library resources meet the needs of students with additional needs and that resources are accessible and inclusive.

<sup>30</sup> ibid

<sup>31</sup> 'SCONUL benchmark data', January 2023. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

<sup>32</sup> 'Library user training manuals\_Student feedback semester A', November 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Library team.

**10.5 The University College's HE Hub offers a comfortable, modern facility for individual and group study.** The Hub, opened in 2017-18 in response to student feedback, is designed for the exclusive use of HE students from 6am-11pm every day. It has a mix of quiet study areas and social learning spaces equipped with a range of modern equipment and resources, self-sufficient kitchen and lockers. Co-located are the Student Success study skills team during the day, and from 6pm the Residential Student Support Officer team.

## 11.0 Student engagement (SE7)

**11.1 Positive student engagement and a strong student voice are a defining feature of the WUC student experience.** Our NSS Student Voice indicator has been materially above benchmark in every year of the TEF and the overall indicator is 5.6pp above benchmark based on very strong statistical evidence. In absolute terms, this places WUC 5th amongst English university providers for this student experience measure<sup>33</sup>. This performance reflects the strong sense of community developed and maintained at WUC over many years, and of the genuine approach to partnership working between students and staff. We also view it as a successful outcome of our commitment to personal development for each student, which places emphasis on students having the confidence to advocate for themselves and their peers.

"I feel part of a community of staff and students", has been above benchmark in every year during the TEF period, and above benchmark by between 5 and 10 percentage points in the latest three years<sup>34</sup>.

**11.2 We take deliberate steps to involve students in the assurance and enhancement of their learning experience and students consistently tell us that it is clear how their feedback has been acted upon.** Each year-group of each course scheme nominates a student representative to attend Course Scheme Review Committee (CSRC) meetings and provide feedback on behalf of the group. CSRC meetings take place twice a year, with agendas covering a range of topics designed to feed directly into annual course monitoring reports<sup>35</sup>. The CSRC process has benefitted from a separate forum to resolve non-academic matters (our HE Student Council, established in 2018-19). Engagement is strong<sup>36</sup> and students have the confidence to propose and debate course changes with staff. Having taken deliberate steps to build a more inclusive, cohesive and engaged student community who feel they have a voice, we are particularly proud that in every year of the TEF WUC has placed in the top 5 of all university providers in England in NSS question 25: "it is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted upon"<sup>37</sup>. Our commitment to authentic student input into course design and enhancement is evidenced by the data in *figure 7*, below.

**11.3 Student success is celebrated internally and externally through a range of competitions and recognition schemes.** For example, academic prize winners in Horticulture attend the Worshipful Company of Gardeners event and we run the Young Horticulturist of the Year competition in partnership with the Chartered institute for Horticulture. In three of the last four years, WUC equine students have been shortlisted for the British Equine Trade Association (BETA) Equine Thesis of the Year competition, In addition to academic prizes, student success is celebrated through our annual Student Spotlight awards. Launched in 2019-20, the Spotlight awards recognise student achievement in three areas that reflect WUC's mission and ethos: community excellence, extracurricular excellence and enterprise excellence. We make an average of 32 Spotlight awards each year, in addition to which we have a Student of the

<sup>33</sup> 'Analysis of OfS NSS provider data, Dec 2022'. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*

<sup>35</sup> 'CSRC ToR 22-23 onward', last updated November 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Quality Office.

<sup>36</sup> 'Student CSRC representatives 2018-2022', June 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Quality Office.

<sup>37</sup> 'Analysis of OfS NSS provider data, December 2022'. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

Year award drawn from the pool of winners. All winners are recognised at our annual graduation ceremony, receive a LinkedIn endorsement and feature on WUC's website and social media.

Figure 7: WUC scores vs benchmark in NSS questions 23, 24 and 25, 2019-2022<sup>38</sup>

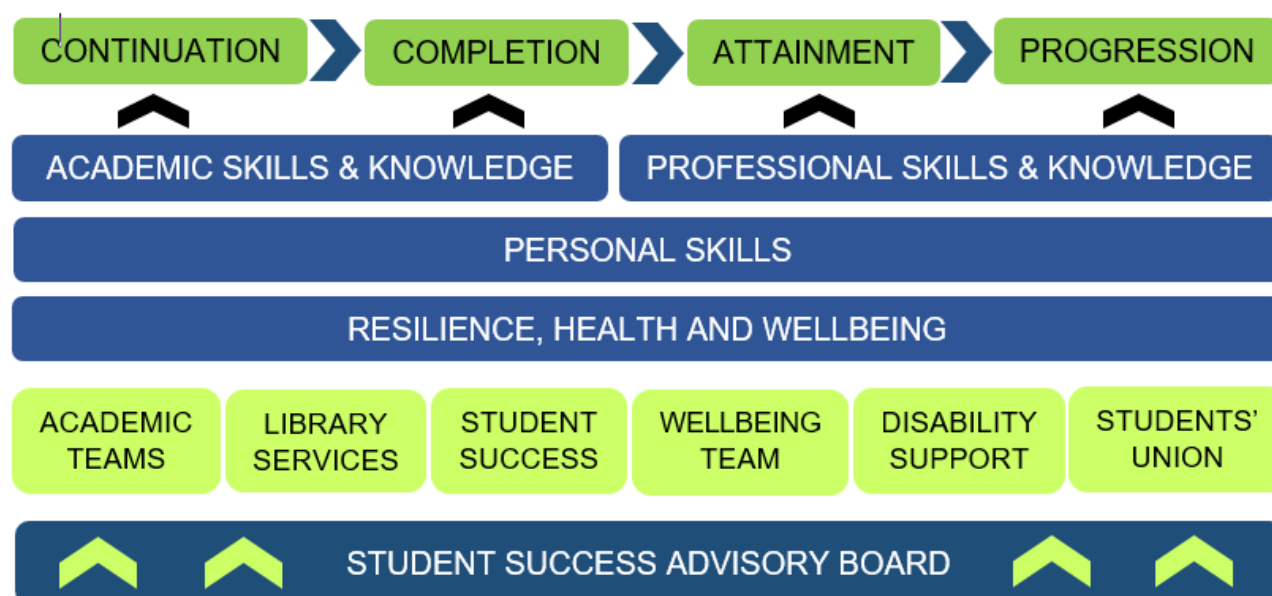
WUC NSS student voice scores 2019-2022, all respondents	2019 Taught			2020 Taught			2021 Taught			2022 Taught		
	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-	Agree (%)	BM (%)	+/-
23 I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course	85.71	85.9	-0.19	89.24	85.41	3.83	88.50	81.40	7.1	82.27	81.31	0.96
24 Staff value students' views and opinions about the course	79.22	77.9	1.32	84.81	78.18	6.63	78.57	70.32	8.25	76.06	70.77	5.29
25 It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on	77.12	64.04	13.08	77.85	64.26	13.59	72.32	55.23	17.09	69.5	54.55	14.95

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

### 12.0 Strategic approach to supporting positive outcomes (SO1)

**12.1 The University College takes an integrated approach to supporting successful student outcomes.** In our experience, the support needed by our students to continue, complete and attain in HE, and to progress to further study or employment, relies upon interconnected delivery of academic, professional and personal skills. Often this must be underpinned by support for individual resilience, mental health and wellbeing. For a significant minority of our students, it will also involve specialist disability support services. We take an anticipatory student-centred approach in which this 'eco-system' of support is delivered by highly connected academic and professional service teams. This is represented by *figure 8*, below. Access to any form of support is normalised. A student can self-refer to a service or be referred to a service by any team to another via a simple online link.

Figure 8: Overview of WUC support for student success



<sup>38</sup> ibid

**12.2 Our ‘Empowering Success’ tutorial programme provides a menu of academic, professional and personal skills sessions mapped across each level of study**<sup>39</sup>. Despite active promotion of student success support for everyone at the University College, we know that relying upon students to self-select this activity will not be sufficient. For this reason, academic teams work closely with our student success and library staff to embed ‘empowering success’ sessions into scheduled group tutorials. Academic year supervisors book these sessions into relevant group tutorial slots and the activity is included in core student timetables. This approach allows for a level of consistency, whilst the academic course teams are able to tailor the tutorials to the needs of small groups. Around 96 of these group tutorials are delivered over the course of a 13-week semester, comprising over 2,900 student interactions<sup>40</sup>. This is in addition to group and individual tutorials provided by academic teams and an ‘open-door’ policy on help and advice, whereby academic staff provide a limitless amount of additional ad-hoc support sessions for students.

**12.3 Support for successful student outcomes is designed, delivered and evaluated in partnership with students.** Our Student Success Advisory Board (SSAB) was established in 2020 and meets every other month to reflect on and agree changes to improvements in student success support services. This includes collection of high-quality feedback from minority groups to better understand their requirements, and identification of emerging student needs arising from changing circumstances, such as the cost-of-living crisis. The SSAB addresses areas of importance for the student body and provides feedback to help shape service delivery for the current and next semester. An example is the introduction of our ‘small steps to success’ initiative designed to build confidence for disabled students with progression into the workplace. The Student Success team then works in partnership with the SU on a regular basis to create, promote and evaluate services for students, for example the 2020-21 ‘You Are a Limited Edition’ guest speaker event which shared real-life student and alumni examples of overcoming barriers to success.

**12.4 Our approach to supporting student outcomes is agile and responsive and aligned to our theory of change**<sup>41</sup>. Support teams work collaboratively to help students address specific issues that may be barriers to success, such as financial challenges, isolation, family or health concerns, along with less tangible ‘barriers’ that are likely to be a complex output of their personal background, socio-economic circumstances and educational history. We have developed a large library of support material and content for semi-structured 1-1 and group sessions aligned to these ‘barriers to success’ which we are able to deploy very quickly, with skilled learning mentors able to combine tried-and-tested general content with specific material tailored to the needs of individuals. For example, degree and cohort-specific ‘study booster’ workshops are provided in the lead-up to assessments driven entirely by the requests and availability of the students in the class.

**12.5 We find that effective support for personal resilience, health and wellbeing is an essential element of supporting successful outcomes.** Despite our small size, we have invested in a Wellbeing team that includes qualified counsellors, a chaplain, specialist disability support services, and a residential team who operate a 24-hour service for students living on campus. These services are complemented by a strong network of external partnerships including regional NHS support services, charities, information and therapy services<sup>42</sup>. We have also invested in a Student Assistance Programme, similar to the employee assistance programmes operated by many employers, which provides students with free, confidential, independent advice around the clock.

<sup>39</sup> See [https://www.library.writtle.ac.uk/files/ugd/bb5d1a\\_360dc46553d3406187dc5189b4e72672.pdf](https://www.library.writtle.ac.uk/files/ugd/bb5d1a_360dc46553d3406187dc5189b4e72672.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> ‘Empowering Success evaluation’, December 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Student Success team.

<sup>41</sup> See [https://writtle.ac.uk/pdfs/Access-and-Participation-Plan-2020-21\\_2024-2025.pdf](https://writtle.ac.uk/pdfs/Access-and-Participation-Plan-2020-21_2024-2025.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Overview provided at <https://writtle.ac.uk/Links-to-External-Agencies>; more info via WUC Moodle site



### 13.0 WUC continuation and completion outcomes (SO2)

**13.1 The University College consistently has very good first-year retention rates.** Our overall TEF continuation metric is 'broadly in line with benchmark' for the TEF period and the indicator values are fairly consistent over the period, ranging from 85.7% to 87.6%. We have three split metrics where there is at least probable statistical evidence that they are materially below benchmark. In all cases, numbers are very small and make it difficult to draw any conclusions or provide commentary on these statistics. For example, the relatively low retention rate in our art & design course is driven by outcomes for one particular cohort, 2017-18 entrants, where there was a starting population of just 14 students. There are 13 other split continuation metrics where there is a minimum of 80% statistical confidence in the available data, all of which are in line with benchmark.

**13.2 Our TEF overall completion metric is not a fair reflection of our completion outcomes; the overall metric is affected by an outlier value in year 2, which tips WUC 0.1pp beyond the 'below benchmark' materiality threshold.** As is visible in the OfS TEF dashboard, our degree completion rate in year 2 is significantly lower than the other three years, at 77.2%. Our completion rate for this cohort was affected by an unusually low rate of continuation for the 2014-15 entry cohort on our Animal Science courses. This was unfortunately due to the simultaneous departure of two key staff members whose expertise could not be replaced for several months, with resulting high workloads and reduced morale for remaining colleagues. It was not - and is not - typical of degree completion rates for either this subject area or any other, as shown in *figure 9*, below<sup>43</sup>. The large size of this cohort, at over a third of the total denominator for the year, has a significant impact on the completion metric for that year and in turn for our overall TEF completion metric. This is an example of where an isolated issue in one department can have major consequences for a very small institution such as WUC, but would be 'absorbed' within the data of a large provider.

*Figure 9: Breakdown of full-time cohort completion rates by WUC subject area and TEF time series (indicators with a denominator <20 are excluded)<sup>44</sup>*

WUC subject area	Yr 1 (13/14 cohort)		Yr 2 (14/15 cohort)		Yr 3 (15/16 cohort)		Yr 4 (16/17 cohort)	
	Denom-inator	Indicator	Denom-inator	Indicator	Denom-inator	Indicator	Denom-inator	Indicator
Agriculture	48	75.0%	60	76.7%	32	84.4%	27	92.6%
Animal Science	114	85.1%	138	72.5%	130	80.0%	117	86.3%
Landscape Design			33	87.9%	22	81.8%		
Others in Vet Sciences			33	84.8%	39	92.3%	55	80.0%
Design Studies	22	77.3%						
Sport & Exercise Science					20	65.0%	31	87.1%

**13.3 Updated completion (cohort tracking) metrics for the last two years show an overall full-time completion indicator of 84.4%, demonstrating very high completion rates for our students.** Using internal enrolment and progression data for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 academic years, our completion indicator is calculated as 82.0% for full-time starters in 2017-18 and 87.7% for full-time starters in 2018-19<sup>45</sup>. These updated values are in line with the year 3 and 4 TEF data and so further demonstrate that the year 2 benchmark value is anomalous. On this basis, our overall performance demonstrates that completion outcomes for our students are typically very good. Our split metrics for completion over the TEF period indicate below benchmark outcomes in four areas, but in all cases the small numbers involved do not provide very strong statistical confidence. We are

<sup>43</sup> 'TEF completion cohort tracking analysis and update', December 2022. Unpublished. Held by MIS team.

<sup>44</sup> 'TEF data dashboard – WUC outcome metrics', October 2022. Unpublished. Held by the MIS team.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

unable to disaggregate performance over time, nor to understand the overlapping impact of any particular issue or time period upon these multiple split indicators.

## 14.0 Supporting continuation and completion (SO1)

**14.1 We know that helping students to quickly settle in to university life and fostering a sense of belonging is critical for continuation.** Of all undergraduates who choose to withdraw from the University College, 54% will do so in the first 12 weeks, of which 19% will withdraw in the first 6 weeks<sup>46</sup>. Over the last four years we have significantly enhanced the quality and breadth of our induction and early enrolment activities. All students are provided with a course-specific induction schedule that details the mandatory and optional sessions delivered during HE Welcome Week, as well as access to a comprehensive online 'Welcome Hub'. Students are encouraged to engage with a series of 'pick and mix' sessions that focus on study skills, life skills and 'give it a go' sessions for clubs, sports or wellbeing activities. This programme of induction support has been developed, delivered and evaluated in partnership with students.

**14.2 We work with students to foster a strong sense of community and take extra steps to engage students who are living off campus.** We facilitate students from diverse backgrounds to come together on our green campus, supporting a sense of belonging underpinned by a common commitment to the natural environment. As one example, our Student Success Advisory Board has driven WUC's efforts to be recognised as a Hedgehog Friendly Campus. Over the last 18 months this cross-disciplinary community initiative has involved around 50 students and staff working together to raise awareness of hedgehog endangerment and habitat preservation<sup>47</sup>.

**14.3 Early student engagement is closely monitored and wrap-around individual support is provided where needed.** Prior to arriving at the University College, all students are asked to respond to three questions via our online enrolment task, covering whether they *feel they made the right decision to study at WUC*, whether they *feel optimistic about the year ahead*, and whether they *feel confident that they can cope with their studies*. Efficient use of this data allows academic and support teams to quickly follow-up with any student who signals that they may need extra support. As previously noted, our small scale and cross-team referral process means that the right support can quickly be identified and booked with the relevant team(s). In week 1 all students receive a 1-1 induction tutorial with their allocated tutor which asks them to reflect on their aims and aspirations for their course and provides a further opportunity to check that all practical issues have been dealt with, including access to systems, campus facilities, any issues regarding accommodation or caring responsibilities, and whether or not disabled students have all necessary support in place. All students are subsequently provided with a 'check-in' from our Learning Mentors during weeks 3-5.

**14.4 New students tell us that they feel welcomed, well prepared and confident about their studies at WUC and that they are aware of the support available to them.** We conduct a post-induction survey during week 6 of the first semester which evaluates the effectiveness of our pre-enrolment and induction activities in supporting students to make the best possible start in their studies. Data from the last two post-induction surveys has shown a decrease in the proportion of students expressing worries, discontent or other causes for concern during the early weeks of their course<sup>48</sup>. In conjunction with the qualitative information captured through feedback to course tutors and direct to the SU, this provides us with evidence that our support for continuation is having a positive impact and contributing to improved outcomes.

<sup>46</sup> 'UG withdrawal data 2018-22', December 2022. Unpublished. Held by Registrar & Secretary's Office.

<sup>47</sup> See <https://www.hedgehogfriendlycampus.co.uk/>

<sup>48</sup> 'Analysis of post-induction surveys', January 2023. Unpublished. Held by Registrar & Secretary's Office.

**14.5 We supplement whole-institution support activities with tailored initiatives to support students who face additional barriers to success.** We know that our mature students are more likely to withdraw compared to their young counterparts; historically, students with disabilities are less likely to achieve a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 degree outcome than their non-disabled peers, and students from the most under-represented and most deprived backgrounds are both less likely to continue and complete their degree *and* to achieve a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1. These gaps in student outcomes are the focus of current and previous access and participation plans and are to some extent borne out in our TEF indicators, though in many cases small cohorts prevent meaningful longitudinal analysis. We have put in place four key schemes targeted at students across different levels of study whom we know to be at higher risk of not achieving their potential, but open to any student who feels they may benefit:

- Flying Start: pre-sessional study skills support targeted at mature learners and those with non-traditional entry qualifications to develop confidence and competency levels
- Supported Induction Programme: supported start-of-year process for students with disabilities, including a (slightly early) supported campus move-in experience
- Small Steps to Success: tailored support workshops for students with low-confidence/anxiety around e.g. completing presentations or approaching an employer
- Final Steps to Success: supports transition out of WUC and away from the internal support services such as the Wellbeing team and counselling services.

Though our small scale means that robust quantitative evaluation of these activities is extremely difficult, qualitative feedback from the students involved has been overwhelmingly positive<sup>49</sup>. We are pleased to see that the attainment gap between disabled and non-disabled students has narrowed in each of the last two years, though there is a large confidence interval in respect of this data<sup>50</sup>.

## 15.0 WUC progression outcomes (SO3)

**15.1 We have concerns with the singular approach of using GOS data to evaluate progression outcomes.** Our combined indicator for the three years of data, based on only 388 respondents, shows that we are materially below benchmark in this area. However, we have concerns regarding the approach to SOC coding as applied to our course portfolio and graduate profile. As recently articulated by GuildHE<sup>51</sup>, the agricultural and broader land-based industries have well-developed qualification routes from both FE and HE but the different skill levels for different jobs are often less well reflected in job titles. Hence graduates in ‘agriculture, food and related studies’ (CAH06), which represents over 85% of WUC’s provision, are disproportionately impacted by mis-coding in GOS returns. Whilst we appreciate that benchmarking attempts to take this into account by including subject of study, SOC mis-coding becomes materially significant for WUC given the combined impact of small datasets and the high proportion of provision in CAH06. A line-by-line internal analysis of the 299 respondents in paid/unpaid work across our three surveys identified 30 instances of possible SOC mis-coding, of which we consider 13 to be *positive* instances of professional/managerial roles incorrectly coded as SOC groups 4-9<sup>52</sup>. Based on these 13 cases alone, our overall indicator value would shift from 56.0% to 59.5%, taking us from ‘materially below benchmark’ to ‘broadly in line with benchmark’.

**15.2 Many students progress to roles with SMEs and 20% of our graduates choose to run their own business<sup>53</sup>.** In these organisations, and in particular in very small businesses, job roles

<sup>49</sup> ‘Flying Start and APP evaluation’, December 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Student Success team.

<sup>50</sup> See analysis provided in [https://writtle.ac.uk/pdfs/Access-and-Participation-Plan-2022-23\\_2026-2027.pdf](https://writtle.ac.uk/pdfs/Access-and-Participation-Plan-2022-23_2026-2027.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> See <https://guildhe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OfS-B3-Phase-3-Consultation-final-GuildHE-response-pdf.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> ‘Analysis of all GOS data’, December 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary’s Office.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*

tend to be broad and varied and job titles are less likely to convey a SOC-based definition of 'managerial' or 'professional'. This is not a failure in our students' outcomes, but an intrinsic feature of the industries we serve and the regional dimension of our graduates' destinations. For example, over 95% of employers in the landscape industry are micro or small businesses<sup>54</sup>, in the equine industry this is estimated to be 99%<sup>55</sup>, and in agriculture 97%<sup>56</sup>. Our applied, practice-led courses provide students with the skills and experience needed to enter self-employment by allowing them to work with sector-standard equipment throughout their studies, and to work directly with plants, crops, dogs, horses, livestock and other animals from day one. This hands-on approach is entirely dependent on practice-led teaching and a wide range of high-cost, specialist equipment. With a wide range of commercial practice happening on site, students are able to apply their academic learning to commercial practice, developing the practical skills to run a small business.

**15.3 We judge successful progression outcomes to be those in which the graduate is able to move into their chosen field and to directly use the knowledge and skills they have developed during their time at WUC.** Of note is the proportion of our graduates who progress to working in their chosen field. Internal analysis of GOS data shows that, across the three years, 63% of those in paid or voluntary unpaid work were in a role *directly* aligned to their degree course<sup>57</sup> – for example, those who graduated with equine degrees working with horses, or those with agriculture degrees working in the farming industry.

**15.4 Our graduates have high satisfaction rates and consider their activity to be meaningful.** We believe that a successful outcome is one that meets the needs and expectations of the individual graduate, in which *they* consider their activity to be valuable. Our own survey of WUC graduates, conducted in April 2022, reached 60 former students representing all academic departments. Amongst all respondents, 82% agreed or strongly agreed that "my time at WUC prepared me for my current role/activity or my future plans" and 95% stated that "I consider what I'm currently doing to be meaningful" either all of the time or most of the time<sup>58</sup>. Responses to graduate reflection questions across the three GO surveys show that 78% of our respondents agreed that "my current activity fits with my future plans" and 85% agreed with the statement "my current activity is meaningful"<sup>59</sup>. Only 20 graduates (5.2%) of our overall GO-surveyed population were unemployed, with this proportion decreasing year on year.

## 16.0 Supporting successful progression outcomes (SO1)

**16.1 The University College prepares and supports students to be effective operators in SMEs.** Whether they are self-employed or working for others, most of our graduates will need the skills and experience to quickly take on wide areas of responsibility, to be autonomous decision makers, and to manage both specialist services and general business functions such as finance, marketing and human resources. These skills are embedded in course design, teaching delivery and assessment and feedback. Students have the opportunity to apply and hone these skills using WUC's specialist learning resources and through regular interaction with industry professionals. All courses include modules which use projects and other assessments based on client scenarios.

<sup>54</sup> 'Skills for Greener Places: A review of the UK's landscape workforce', December 2022. Available at [https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2022/12/773450-Landscape-Institute\\_INTERACTIVE.pdf](https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2022/12/773450-Landscape-Institute_INTERACTIVE.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> 'LANTRA Equine fact sheet 2010-11'. Held by the WUC Equine department.

<sup>56</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2021>

<sup>57</sup> 'Analysis of all GOS data', December 2022. Unpublished. Held by Registrar & Secretary's Office.

<sup>58</sup> 'WUC Graduate Reflections Survey', April 2022. Unpublished. Held by the Registrar & Secretary's Office.

<sup>59</sup> 'TEF data dashboard – WUC outcome metrics', October 2022. Unpublished. Held by the MIS team.

**16.2 The University College provides a range of tailored careers and employability activity which receives consistently positive feedback from students<sup>60</sup>.** In addition to general careers fairs and events, we run bespoke events including our food, farming and horticulture careers fair, 'how to get a job in agriculture and food' panel events, animal careers fair, animal careers roundtable networking sessions and Fresh Produce Consortium external careers fair. Student engagement with these events is excellent<sup>61</sup>. Over recent years our careers and employability events have evolved from general industry-specific careers fairs to more personalised industry sessions with fewer employers but a much richer, personalised experience and more time and space for group discussions, 1-1 networking and information gathering. As well as providing more tailored support, this approach is also welcomed by a significant number of WUC students who tell us that busy, loud, large-scale events can be overwhelming and intimidating for them.

**16.3 Since early 2019, all WUC students have had access to an 'Entrepreneur in Residence'.** This individual is the Federation for Small Businesses Regional Chair for the East of England and has founded and developed multiple successful businesses. He provides a combination of talks, workshops and bespoke tutorial sessions requested by students/staff alongside 1-1 business mentoring adapted to individual needs. This service adds further value to the support we provide for self-employment and SME-based progression and receives good feedback from students<sup>62</sup>.

**16.4 All students are able to complete additional practical short-course qualifications alongside, or as part of, their degree studies, improving their readiness for a range of chosen careers.** A few examples include an accredited L3 canine hydrotherapy award included within our Canine courses, the British Horse Society Silver Challenge Award incorporated in equine courses and our equine massage therapy award embedded in our veterinary physiotherapy course. All students also have the opportunity to access at a discounted rate any of the vocational, certified practical short courses delivered by our commercial short course unit. For example, students are able to complete short courses and certificates of competence in dozens of different areas covering animal care, arboriculture, landscaping and land-based machinery and mechanics.

**16.5 The University College's Careers Advice, Employability and Enterprise services meet the AGCAS quality standard<sup>63</sup>, are Matrix-accredited and positively reviewed.** WUC's Careers Coordinator has also acted as an AGCAS peer reviewer. We underwent a Matrix accreditation review in December 2022, which reported on the period since our last (positive) review in November 2019. This involves review of documentation alongside interviews with our careers 'link' governor, staff, students and employers. The 2022 report identified particular strengths of WUC's support, including that our staff and students work together and listen to each other's thoughts and findings to design and develop provision, and that the extent of our reach and the robustness of our delivery is "impressive" for such a small institution<sup>64</sup>. Other positive comments, which highlight our responsive and reflective approach to supporting student outcomes, include:

*"When supporting group tutorial sessions, the content is tailored to the need of the students and may be related to specific FE or HE topics, networking, using social media, careers events, and skills audits for employability against the Graduate Attributes framework"*

*"To monitor the effectiveness of their service and look for opportunities for development CAS, Employability and Enterprise employ feedback mechanisms to capture impact from students and*

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<sup>60</sup> Evaluation of WUC careers events, collated January 2023. Unpublished. Held by Student Success team.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*

<sup>62</sup> 'Student Success Impact polls', last updated January 2023. Unpublished. Held by Student Success team.

<sup>63</sup> See <https://www.agcas.org.uk/AGCAS-Membership-Quality-Standard>

<sup>64</sup> 'WUC Matrix accreditation review report', December 2022. Unpublished. Held by Student Success team.

*employers. There is a strong student first culture within the service, with staff demonstrating a passion to help students understand their progression opportunities and provide them with the resources to achieve their end goal. This passion was evident to students, many who commented similarly about the service”.*

*“The service being assessed specifically linked student outcomes to the overarching measurable aims and objectives of the University College, which are achievement and progression. Progression particularly being focused on, as it a primary area of focus for Careers advice, Employability linking with employers and industry, and Enterprise for students wishing to progress to developing their own business.....As an organisation, [they] evidenced a real focus on responding to feedback mechanisms to improve their service and overall delivery using a ‘plan, do, and review’ approach”<sup>65</sup>.*

**16.6 All events that the WUC Careers, Employability and Enterprise service runs are evaluated.** As noted in our most recent Matrix evaluation report, WUC supports student progression in a reflective and agile manner to continuously improve the quality and impact of the services provided. We conduct impact polls for all activities and events, with the service receiving an average of 4.76 stars out of 5 during the last academic year<sup>66</sup>.

**16.7 We regularly support graduates after they have left the University College and positively encourage students to stay in touch with us after graduation.** Our strong sense of community does not stop at the point that students complete their course. It is common for graduates to stay in touch with their course tutors and our Student Success team offers careers, employability and entrepreneurship support for up to three years post-graduation. As an example, in 2021-22 our careers and employability team made contact with 194 individuals who completed their course the previous summer – around 95% of the graduating cohort.

## EDUCATIONAL GAIN

### 17.0 WUC approach to educational gain (SO4)

**17.1 We define educational gain to be the sum of academic, professional and personal development achieved by a WUC student between enrolment and graduation.** We consider academic, personal and professional practice gains equally important if our students are to translate their subject interest into meaningful work or further study and ultimately become a knowledgeable, personally effective and well-rounded professional in their chosen field. Our graduates will have the ability to make an immediate impact to their working environment yet will remain engaged with continuing professional development as their careers progress.

**17.2 We are committed to increasing the opportunities and aspirations of individuals from non-privileged backgrounds. By the end of their course, our students will present at least as confidently and knowledgeably as their graduate peers from more advantaged backgrounds.** In contrast with the over-representation of higher socio-economic classes in many of the industries we serve, a majority of our students enter with no direct family experience of higher education<sup>67</sup>. Between 34% and 39% are from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, compared with 28% across the English sector as a whole – and compared to less than 20% in the three largest land-based universities<sup>68</sup>. Over the last three years, between 24-27% of students have been drawn from the relatively most

<sup>65</sup> ibid

<sup>66</sup> ‘Student Success Impact polls’, last updated January 2023. Unpublished. Held by Student Success team.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Analysis of HESA Student entry profile data 2018-22’, December 2022. Unpublished. Held by MIS team.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Analysis of OfS APP dashboard’, December 2022. Unpublished. Held by Registrar & Secretary’s Office. Source data accessed at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

deprived backgrounds, significantly higher than at other land-based universities<sup>69</sup>. Our students begin their courses with a deep commitment to their specialist subject, but typically do not have the existing networks, confidence or social background that can heavily influence “success” in the graduate job market as (narrowly) measured by first job title or salary.

**17.3 We support students with vocational qualifications to succeed in scientifically rigorous higher education study.** Of those entering with level 3 qualifications, 78% have vocational qualifications such as BTECs and only 22% have ‘academic’ awards such as A-Levels<sup>70</sup>. Through adaptive teaching approaches and targeted academic support, we enable these students to rapidly develop a grounding in relevant academic and scientific knowledge and principles which, by the end of their level 4 study, places them on a level footing. This includes, for example, timetabled supplementary tutorials that directly follow core science-based modules for those students without an academic science background, and work with students from mature and vocational backgrounds to overcome anxiety and underperformance with time-limited examinations. By the end of their course, our students will have the academic and scientific credibility to enter a graduate-level role or postgraduate programme in their chosen discipline regardless of their entry qualifications.

**17.4 We aim to design and deliver higher education that equips our graduates to adapt and succeed in an increasingly complex and uncertain labour market.** The academic, professional and personal skills developed and refined during HE study must stand our graduates in good stead for the entirety of their future career(s), not just their first job after leaving university. A WUC degree does not simply serve to demonstrate a standard of education; it supports development of the skills, qualities and attributes needed to navigate current and future changes in the industries we serve. We aim to harness the enthusiasm that our students bring to their specialist, applied subjects - and their more general commitment to good stewardship of the natural world - whilst supporting them to develop a broader understanding of the complex factors likely to shape the green economy.

## 18.0 Support to achieve educational gains (SO5)

**18.1 Students are supported to regularly audit their own academic, professional and personal skills.** From the point of enrolment, we attempt to instil a self-reflective and self-driven approach to developing knowledge and skills. All students are asked about their expectations for their course during their induction tutorial, allowing year tutors to respond to the particular aims, aspirations and learning needs of each student on the course. This is revisited during subsequent tutorials at each level of study. This is complemented by a ‘standing out from the crowd’ session delivered to all level 4 students which introduces our VLE-based skills self-audit tool designed to help them identify knowledge and skills gaps and make an action plan of how they will develop over the year ahead. Students also make extensive use of online platforms such as Mahara to document skills development within portfolio assessments.

**18.2 Students receive regular 1-1 support to reflect on their academic progress and identify the steps they need to take to reach their academic potential.** All students receive ‘feed forward’ as well as feedback on their work, with feed forward points more specific and greater in number for those entering with the lowest academic grades, or with no formal qualifications. At key times during the semester, Learning Mentors are invited to Progress Committee Meetings to discuss the progress of each student in relation to continuation, engagement and attainment, identifying any additional support needed to maximise potential. Final-year students who are on a borderline degree classification are personally invited to attend tailored ‘study booster’ session to improve attainment.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid*

<sup>70</sup> ‘Vocational academic FT UK UG entry qual analysis’, January 2023. Unpublished. Held by MIS team.

All support meetings are recorded using student engagement software and made accessible to students; this transparent approach encourages students to act on what has been agreed.

**18.3 From day one of their course, undergraduates are treated as partners in a professional practice community.** All students will undertake client-facing work at all levels of study. In the first year this will typically be focussed on campus; for example, our Canine and Veterinary Physiotherapy students work with dogs and horses in our public-facing facilities, our Animal and Agriculture students work in our commercial pig unit, and our Sports Science students practice coaching with youth athletes in our FE sports academies. As students move through levels 5 and 6, this client-facing activity expands to include regular interaction with external professional clients. Furthermore, we provide students with immediate access to qualified practitioners and specialist equipment, avoiding an approach in which the most expensive and specialist resources are reserved for finalists and postgraduates. For example, first-year Equine students gain experience of using Equinosis, a high-end diagnostic system designed for veterinarians that provides an objective test of lameness in horses. Sports students use the NordBord and ForceDecks platforms and HumanTrack system to assess asymmetry and physiological power – highly sophisticated assessment tools that are extremely difficult to find outside of Premiership football clubs. Our most senior practitioners and researchers teach at all levels, including first-year students.

**18.4 Students are supported to interact with a wide range of industry experts to build confidence and credibility in their chosen field.** Our undergraduates are exposed to an extensive external network through both core teaching and assessment and co-curricular networking and volunteering opportunities. These contacts will range from former students now operating their own businesses through to our Visiting Industry Fellows<sup>71</sup> and representatives from large corporations such as Tesco and Morrisons. At levels 5 and 6 all students are supported to co-research real-world challenges with industry partners, supporting them to understand the application of subject knowledge, advance their problem-solving skills and develop their communication with different audiences. For example, agriculture and horticulture students work on a project with ICL, a multi-national fertiliser production company, to investigate bio-stimulants and peat alternatives.

**18.5 Collaboration and cross-teaching between academic departments supports students to develop a broad understanding of their chosen subject and widen career and study horizons.** This includes, for example, collaboration between staff and students in our sports science and equine departments to support the performance of elite riders in our Equine Academy, or work between animal science and agriculture students to explore the relationship between food, farming and livestock health and wellbeing. Students also benefit from the diverse experience of staff *within* each academic department, with around 40% of undergraduate modules delivered through team teaching<sup>72</sup>. This embeds multiple perspectives and varied expertise in our teaching, supporting the flexible critical thinking required to meet current and future challenges and avoiding the siloed learning which can so often be a by-product of modularised degree programmes.

## 19.0 Evaluation of educational gain (SO6)

**19.1 The University College will implement a compound measure of educational gain which reflects our strategic approach to supporting student outcomes.** Our measurement of educational gain will place equal weight on academic, professional and personal development gains. It will combine more systemic use of existing self-audit tools to collect qualitative, reflective data on the development achieved during the course of study at WUC, along with quantitative data on 'distance travelled' between entry qualifications and degree achievement (including professional

<sup>71</sup> See for example [https://writtle.ac.uk/page\\_PressRelease.cfm?ID=21750](https://writtle.ac.uk/page_PressRelease.cfm?ID=21750)

<sup>72</sup> Analysis of undergraduate module timetable data, January 2023. Unpublished. Held by MIS team.



practice standards). We will also use graduate outcomes information – both GOS data and our own longitudinal survey data – to evaluate the professional gains that our graduates continue to make after they have left the University College. We want to use the concept of educational gain as a structured framework in which our students determine their own goals and expectations and then work with us to identify the academic, professional and personal skills and experience needed to achieve them on a semesterly and annual basis. A student’s ultimate ambition as well as the planned pace of development gains will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate.

**19.2 We are used to assessing learning gain for our FE learners and are able to use this experience to inform evaluation of (academic) educational gain amongst HE students.** A comparison of entry tariffs and exit qualifications which broadly mirrors our approach to setting ‘target grades’ amongst FE learners shows that most of our degree students will achieve or exceed the degree attainment which could have been expected based on their entry tariff<sup>73</sup>. This is despite WUC not experiencing the degree inflation witnessed across the rest of the sector<sup>74</sup>. However, we recognise that simple comparison of entry and exit grades is not sufficient to capture academic gain in HE without prior attainment being appropriately contextualised by personal circumstances. For this reason, we plan to align a whole-institution approach to HE educational gain with our new access and participation plan. We will continue developing this measure over the course of the next year such that it is ready to trial with the 2023/24 entry cohort, with full roll-out planned for 2024/25.

## 20.0 SUMMARY

**20.1 This submission documents the significant improvements to all elements of our undergraduate experience implemented since 2018 and the positive impact they have had for our students.** Our strategic approach to learning and teaching has been successful in embedding an applied, responsive and personalised learning and teaching experience attuned to the particular needs of the students we enrol and the industries we serve. Our TEF metrics and wider NSS data for the last three years demonstrate typically very good quality with respect to learning resources and typically outstanding quality with respect to teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support and student voice. The features of our student experience demonstrated in this submission, and visible through our 2019-20 to 2021-22 metrics, reflect the overall outstanding quality experience offered to current and prospective students of the University College.

**20.2 The typically outstanding quality of the current WUC learning and teaching experience leads to very good quality continuation, completion and progression outcomes for our students.** As evidenced in our TEF metrics, our students have consistently very high rates of continuation. As evidenced in our TEF metrics in combination with the specific contextual information provided in section 13 of this submission, our students have consistently very high rates of completion. We expect these rates of completion to improve further as the impact of our outstanding student experience becomes visible through the completion rates of more recent (post-2018-19) cohorts. We consider progression outcomes for our students to also be consistently very good when evaluated according to the professional relevance of graduate pathways and the self-assessed meaningfulness of graduate destinations. We will continue to develop approaches to identifying and evaluating the success of our graduates, as part of our overall approach to measuring educational gain, in order to overcome the significant limitations of GOS data in measuring the quality of our specialist provision.

<sup>73</sup> ‘L3 entry quals and degree attainment for UK-domiciled degree students entering between 2013 and 2017’, January 2023. Unpublished. Held by MIS team.

<sup>74</sup> See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/analysis-of-degree-classifications-over-time-changes-in-graduate-attainment-from-2010-11-to-2020-21/>