Name of Provider: [Kaplan Open Learning (Essex) Limited]
UKPRN: [10021682]

TEF Year Three Provider Submission

1. Additional context further to the standard contextual data

1.1. Kaplan Open Learning (KOL) is a provider of online degree programmes and has been working in partnership with the University of Essex since 2007. In 2017 we renewed our collaboration agreement with the University for a further 10 years.

1.2. KOL delivers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in a number of subject areas including: Business, Criminology, Health, Law and Psychology. Our courses can be studied online from anywhere in the world, at a time to suit our students.

1.3. KOL is part of Kaplan International Pathways, part of Kaplan Inc, one of the world's largest and most diverse education providers.

Our mission and vision

1.4. The KOL mission is: 'To continue to transform students' lives and careers by delivering and expanding our suite of innovative, industry-led and career-enhancing higher education programmes.'

1.5. Our vision is: 'To become a world leader in online learning, making higher education accessible to anyone with the potential and drive to succeed.'

1.6. Our core values define our company culture and provide the framework for what we deliver to our customers and employees each day:

- **Integrity** - We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards in everything we do.
- **Knowledge** - We offer expert resources to help students achieve their academic and career best.
- **Support** - We give students the tools they need to succeed.
- **Opportunity** - We open doors and broaden access to education.
- **Results** - We're dedicated to helping students achieve their goals – we succeed when they succeed.

1.7. KOL is a reflective and learning organisation which, coupled with our core values, has guided our approach to higher education design, delivery and assessment. This value-led, reflective approach is evident in the innovative, student-centred features of our delivery, which allow us to better recognise and meet the needs of our target student group.

1.8. We believe that the traditional academic calendar and course start dates act as a barrier to access for our target student group who comprise mature adults, balancing work and domestic commitments. This has led us to develop a 'carousel' model of multiple admission points and course start dates, underpinned by an in-house designed Student Management System which can accommodate the complex timetabling and student tracking this entails.

1.9. Recent developments in learning and communications technology have created opportunities to widen students' access to educational materials to students. The application of 'learning science' has led us to develop content delivery tools such as integrated lecturecasts which incorporate learning materials, formative assessment activities and link to electronic resources such as eBooks and asynchronous and synchronous communication activities.

1.10. By analysing the online behaviour and performance of students we have been able to develop a comprehensive, multi-faceted 'Student Support' function, supported by the application of a learner analytic-driven automated monitoring and response system and student dashboard. Recognition that online tuition and academic support requires additional skills from the Academic staff has led us to develop:

- A tutor training module
- A process for new tutor mentoring
- Rapid tutor feedback and response
- Online second marking and tutor review processes to ensure consistency of academic practice
- Mechanisms for disseminating best practice amongst tutors who themselves operate at distance

Full-time / part-time mode

1.11. Our strategic focus is on widening participation and, as a result, the nature of our student demographic is mature, employed and seeking a flexible, vocational course to develop and enhance their careers. Therefore, our majority mode in the metrics is part-time.

1.12. KOL has never had a full-time student population in relation to the online provision. The full-time student metrics are historic and relate to the Edge Hotel School which offers degrees related to the hospitality industry. Since 2014, the Edge Hotel School courses have been delivered by EHS Ltd under a franchise arrangement with the University of Essex and is no longer part of KOL.

2. Contextualising performance against the metrics

2.1. Our TEF metrics demonstrate the high quality of our provision in the areas of teaching, assessment, support and retention. We have two positive flags (Teaching on my course and Continuation) and two double positive flags where we have also scored in the top 10% of absolute performance (Assessment and feedback and Academic support).

The teaching on my course

2.2. All KOL courses are vocationally focussed. As such, many of our tutors are industry experts as well as highly skilled academics. This has ensured that we have consistently outperformed the benchmark across all years and splits for 'the teaching on my course'. This is recognised as a positive flag in our core metrics.

Assessment and feedback

2.3. KOL's commitment to a high-quality student experience is underpinned by tutors operating to clearly articulated service levels which include a seven- day maximum turnaround for feedback across all assessments. As a result, our core metrics for 'assessment and feedback' show a double positive flag and indicate that we are in the top 10% of absolute performance.

Academic support

2.4. Our sustained investment in our student support services has resulted in our core metrics showing a double positive flag for 'academic support' and we are in the top 10% of absolute performance. Without exception, we have scored above benchmark and across all splits for this measure.

Continuation

2.5. Overall, 'Continuation' is recognised as a positive flag in our core metrics. Our year one data is not reportable because there were fewer than ten students in the population. Most of our students were ineligible for inclusion in this metric as our provision comprised primarily of level 5 foundation degrees up until 2012/13.

2.6. We introduced Bachelors degrees in 2012/13 and as a result, we have a reportable metric for continuation in years two and three. In both of these years, we outperformed the benchmark showing a significant improvement from year two to three.

Employment or further study

2.7. Our core metrics show that we are broadly in line with the benchmark for 'employment or further study'. We have introduced a number of initiatives that we expect will improve future performance in this area including embedding vocationally related activities in all KOL taught modules whenever appropriate (as detailed in paragraph 5.3) and the introduction of a Core Skills and Employability module into all undergraduate business programmes (as detailed in paragraph 5.4).

Highly skilled employment or further study

2.8. Our core metrics show that we are broadly in line with the benchmark for 'highly skilled employment or further study'. We have a negative flag against Other UG in the Level of Study split. These metrics represent students enrolled on level 4 certificate of continuing education and level 5 foundation degree courses. Students completing these lower level courses would not be expected to progress to highly skilled employment at the same rate as students who have completed a full Bachelors degree.

3. Teaching Quality (TQ)

Student Engagement (TQ1)

3.1. The majority of our students are mature adults, balancing work and domestic responsibilities. As a result, we have developed our academic delivery to be flexible and reflect the additional demands of employment, domestic and family commitments.

- *"I am the first person in my family to hold a degree! The course has also inspired me to become an entrepreneur and I have started developing my own products."*
  (Student testimonial, BA (Hons) Business and Management)

3.2. Students on KOL programmes are taught entirely online from our customised virtual learning environment, with a mix of activities including directed reading, multimedia 'lecturecasts' and synchronous and asynchronous tutor-led activities.

3.3. All KOL modules include opportunities to interact both in real time and asynchronously with their tutor and fellow students. KOL modules are limited to groups of 20 students to ensure a good balance between access to individual tutor support whilst participating in a diverse and cohesive learning community.

3.4. Students explore topics related to their studies and participate in a tutor-led asynchronous discussion activity typically every two weeks. This is supplemented by tutor feedback to each student on their discussion performance.

3.5. Every taught module also includes scheduled bi-weekly, tutor-led synchronous seminar or 'Question and Answer' sessions. These 'real-time' sessions provide an opportunity for students and tutors to discuss course related topics in a more immediate setting, supported by audio and web-cam access.

3.6. Individual student-tutor support is available to all students via the 'tutor office' hours which are listed in each module on the virtual learning environment and which is facilitated using Skype or the telephone.

3.7. The effectiveness of the tutor support provided to students on our programmes is evidenced by the External Examiner report from September 2017:

- *"I enjoyed exploring these three modules, and one main comment I have is that I was particularly impressed with the level of support the students are provided with, especially in the form of the Q & A sessions which were arranged through the modules".*
  (External Examiner, September 2017)

3.8. Innovations in aspects of our learning delivery, such as the annotation of eBooks and the development of our interactive lecturecasts, have been informed by feedback from our students and tutors. Our Learner Analytics System has been able to demonstrate that this has had a beneficial impact on student behaviour and outcomes and has provided powerful insights into the effectiveness of tutor and institutional interventions which will benchmark future innovations.

Valuing Teaching (TQ2)

3.9. KOL recognise the vital role of tutors in delivering a consistently outstanding student experience. Since our inception in 2007, KOL have made it a strategic objective for students to be taught by well prepared and motivated tutors who are experts in their academic or professional/vocational field. Our tutors are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, but all possess a unique mix of academic expertise blended with practical industrial or professional experience. As a result, KOL tutors are able to provide students with concrete, practical applications and examples to contextualise and illuminate their teaching.

3.10. Online teaching can differ significantly from traditional face-to-face delivery and it presents a particular challenge for tutors which requires highly developed communication skills underpinned by technical expertise in the various synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for tutor-student engagement. To ensure our online students receive the best possible experience, KOL pays great attention to tutor selection, preparation and development:

Tutor onboarding / mentoring

3.11. All new tutors are required to meet strict academic standards laid down by the University of Essex. In preparation to undertake teaching duties, all tutors must complete a rigorous online training programme which introduces them to the learning platform and provides them with necessary practical and technical skills required to teach effectively online. Once a tutor has successfully completed the online training, they are closely mentored by an experienced KOL tutor through their first taught module.

3.12. Only once a tutor has successfully completed their mentored teaching experience are they allowed to undertake unsupervised teaching. We believe that this rigorous approach to new tutor preparation and the subsequent support to develop their practical skills has been a key factor in the excellent feedback from students, External Examiners and our University partner.

Tutor development

3.13. All tutors are encouraged and supported to develop their pedagogical as well as academic expertise both internally through their membership of the KOL academic community but also externally through membership or organisation such as the Higher Education Academy. All full-time members of the Academic Team are supported to achieve a recognised HE teaching qualification and we have an arrangement with the University of Essex to allow KOL staff to complete their Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PGCHEP) an HEA recognised qualification.

3.14. Working closely with our Associate tutors KOL has actively engaged in research into a wide range of aspects of online teaching and learning. This research has resulted in the development, testing and introduction of a number of ground breaking pedagogical and student support innovations such as our Learner Analytics System. This tracks student activity on our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and automates student support interventions which has improved progression and retention rates and further underpins the excellent work of our tutors.

KOL Virtual staffroom

3.15. The majority of KOL academic staff operate remotely, and as a result KOL has developed a virtual staffroom on our learning platform. The staffroom provides a forum for discussion for best practice in online pedagogy, the exploration and dissemination of new ideas in teaching, learning and assessment as well as the support of online learners.

External Engagement

3.16. KOL encourage and provide practical support for tutors to participate in external activities such as external examiner appointments, programme reviews and validation events at other HEI's. In doing so, we believe that this will assist tutors to develop their wider academic skills through the engagement with a broader community of practice.

Rigour and Stretch (TQ3)

3.17. All KOL programmes are designed to challenge and stretch our students. KOL has a robust system of programme validation and review overseen by the University of Essex which ensures that they stretch students and utilise relevant external reference points including QAA subject benchmarks, PSRB and industry competency indicators as well as input from our own academic and subject matter experts to ensure students develop the skills and knowledge required for success in their chosen field.

3.18. All KOL programmes are structured in such a way as to progressively develop the skills that students need in their field of study with structured opportunities for open ended independent learning provided throughout their course.

3.19. KOL have developed an integrated approach to content delivery and assessment which ensures that:

- Subject matter is available to students correctly sequenced and appropriate to the students' developing level of expertise.
- Students are able to test their understanding of the subject at regular intervals and are able to receive immediate formative feedback on their progress.
- Students are able to undertake innovative, practical and vocationally relevant summative assessment activities such as professional reports, essays, individual and group asynchronous and synchronous activities such as online moots and group presentations.

3.20. These touch points provide indicators of student engagement and understanding which are used to trigger proactive student support interventions.

3.21. As part of our strategy to provide rigour and challenge we ensure students engage with tutors who are professionally active in addition to academically qualified. As an online provider with global reach, our students are geographically, ethnically and culturally diverse and a fundamental element of our pedagogic model requires students to regularly engage in discussion and debate with each other and their academic tutors. We believe this practice challenges students to further explore their subject, be aware of and consider alternative perspectives in a rigorous and scholarly way.

3.22. Student assessment activities require them to apply their subject knowledge to contemporary examples and practice and to critically reflect on their learning and identify areas for further self-development.

- *"One of the highs in this module was the clarity with which concepts were explained and then applied to practical examples of real companies and/or organizations… the Lecturecast tutor was absolutely fantastic at that. He was very insightful and practical."*
  (End of Module Student Survey Feedback, August 2017)
- *"Having tutors know their subject matter so well really helped me to grasp it. PM is an expert in marketing and explained the course really well - the lecturecasts were engaging and easy to understand. I am very grateful for everything I have learnt. PM's communication was regular and his feedback really useful."*
  (End of Module Student Survey Feedback, September 2017)

3.23. On completion of their studies, KOL students can be confident they are equipped with the subject knowledge and understanding and the academic and practical skills necessary to succeed in the graduate employment market.

Feedback (TQ4)

3.24. Our degree programmes use a variety of summative assessment including coursework, group and individual project, assessed tutorial material, dissertations and essays. All our taught modules involve regular formative assessment activities which are integrated into lecturecasts and allow students to test their knowledge and receive instant feedback throughout their studies.

3.25. To ensure a robust and consistent student assessment and feedback experience we have developed a central service level agreement and monitoring system for all tutors. The system ensures:

- Feedback and grades are returned to students within seven days.
- Sample second marking takes place contemporaneously on the VLE and is clearly evidenced for External Examiner scrutiny.
- Grading disputes are escalated automatically for resolution in a timely and auditable manner.
- Examples of good practice in feedback and grading and captured and disseminated to the wider tutor body.

3.26. Additional evidence for the effectiveness of assessment feedback is available from the results of internal 'end of module' surveys which in 2016-17 indicated that 95.2% of student respondents felt that 'feedback was provided promptly' and 93.5% of students felt that the 'feedback they received helped them clarify things they did not understand':

- *"I was very happy with the guidance I received and as I was able to act on the feedback provided to improve my grades to a level I have never achieved before."*
  (End of Module Student Survey Feedback, May 2017)

- *"The course was challenging, it pushed me out of my comfort zone and taught me new skills. Getting continual positive feedback and encouragement kept me on track, even when I doubted myself."*
  (Student testimonial: CertCE Business Studies)

3.27. In addition to student feedback from our internal end of module surveys and the NSS, comments in our External Examiner reports also demonstrate the effectiveness of assessment and feedback on KOL programmes:

- Assessments have been described as: *"clear and comprehensive and reflect the module content well."*
  (External Examiner Feedback, December 2017)

- Tutor feedback was complimented*: "Good detailed feedback provided to students."*
  (*External Examiner Feedback, September 2017*)

3.28. The above evidence explains why we have consistently and significantly outperformed the benchmark across all years and splits for the 'assessment and feedback' metric and that we are in the top 10% of absolute performance.

4. Learning Environment

Resources (LE1)

4.1. An intuitive, easy to use Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) hosted and supported by KOL provides a user experience which makes it easy for students and academic staff to access course materials anywhere, anytime on a wide range of devices. The platform is tailored to each student profile allowing for the application of adaptive learning strategies and a personalised student experience.

4.2. The platform hosts all the resources students need to complete their programme of study including interactive lecturecasts, self-test activities and online assessments. The platform also supports live synchronous sessions. These sessions allow students to collaborate with their peers in a live environment and also provide them with the opportunity to ask their tutor questions about course content. Asynchronous discussion forums.

4.3. In addition, all KOL students are provided with access to the University of Essex Library and its excellent range of electronic resources – we have created support materials for students to ensure they can navigate the library catalogue and make best use of the materials available.

4.4. The VLE also provides the ability to integrate eBooks. All KOL modules are supported by a comprehensive series of readings, with core materials provided in the form of an eBook. The eBook platform provides students the flexibility to access their textbooks on a variety of devices both online and offline. Students can study at home on their laptop, write notes on their smartphone, then see the same notes and highlights on their PC at work. Students can also search across all their textbooks from one central place. The eBook platform also supports assistive technologies for users with visual, hearing or mobility disabilities. These features include text-to-speech software and screen reader technology.

4.5. A key challenge of online learning is keeping students engaged and motivated, and reacting quickly if a student is 'at-risk' of not completing their qualification or falling behind. KOL has developed a state-of-the-art Learning Analytics System to identify at-risk students. The Learning Analytics System utilises live data from our VLE, identifies at-risk students and automatically sends out customised interventions to students to help them before it's too late.

4.6. The Learning Analytics System also provides our Student Support team with a dashboard view of each student's engagement with the VLE allowing them to easily identify at-risk students and tailor their level of support and communication. This has enabled the Student Advisers to spend time focusing on at-risk students who require additional, individual support.

4.7. This innovative use of learning analytics demonstrates how technology can be used to enhance the student experience and engagement, streamline administrative processes and improve student retention. It also provides an analytical insight into online learning behaviour and demonstrates how support can be tailored to individual needs at scale. We believe that this has contributed to our high NSS overall student satisfaction rating, averaging 93% over the last three years.

Directed reading

4.8. Directed reading is undertaken using eBooks, which are accessible via our virtual learning environment, rather than the traditional printed texts of earlier distance learning models. All course eBooks are provided as part of the student fee to ensure timely and comprehensive access to the correct content.

4.9. The use of eBooks had enabled us to track the usage of these resources and identify patterns of student behaviour. We have used these insights to assess the impact of a number of content innovations that we have piloted; including the use of direct tutor annotation within the texts to highlight significant passages and provide context and supplementary information. The results of these pilots have been very encouraging and we are extending the practice to all of our taught programmes.

Lecturecasts

4.10. Lecturecasts are pre-prepared online learning tools which incorporate teaching materials usually included in a traditional lecture but supplemented with interactive multi-media materials and formative assessment activities. Constructed in the light of our research into students' use of instructional materials, these teaching materials are segmented into manageable units interspersed with opportunities for formative assessment and feedback. The lecturecasts are available for students 24/7 and can be downloaded to view offline and at the student's convenience.

4.11. Lecturecasts are a key ingredient of the pedagogical mix developed at KOL. Since their introduction, as a replacement for recorded lectures and stand-alone formative activities, we have observed a significant increase in the extent and thoroughness of student engagement with the learning materials provided.

Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice (LE2)

4.12. Since our inception in 2007, one of the strategic goals of KOL has been to focus on the development of vocationally related programmes that embed academic and professional scholarship.

4.13. One advantage of the virtual nature of KOL delivery is that KOL tutors are drawn from across the UK and the rest of the world and are able to contribute to the development and delivery of vocationally relevant academic programmes whilst continuing their professional practice.

4.14. All KOL taught modules represent a partnership between KOL academic staff, KOL learning technologists and external subject matter experts. This partnership ensures that the student learning experience in every taught module is informed by and embeds the latest academic scholarship, professional practice and employs cutting edge ideas in instructional design and learning technology.

4.15. Students are engaged with research informed materials at all stages of their studies. This process reaches its conclusion with the final level dissertation or project which all KOL undergraduate programmes require students to complete. The 'capstone' project requires students to undertake an independent piece of research into a topic of their choice, engage with the scholarly debates in the discipline, and with the guidance of a KOL tutor/mentor - produce a substantial piece of work.

4.16. In addition to engaging students with research informed materials, KOL has made a considerable research investment into our instructional design and learning technology to better understand the links between learning materials, student behaviour and student learning outcomes.

4.17. As a result of our research we have developed a learner analytic led student support system and have been able to develop and assess the effectiveness of a number of teaching innovations such as:

- Revised module sequencing to explore the impact of alternative subject sequencing on student satisfaction and assessment outcomes.
- Narrative based modules where learning materials and student activities and tutor interactions are structured around a developing case study.
- Lecturecasts, interactive multimedia teaching materials which incorporate opportunities for formative assessment and feedback.
- Enhancements to guided reading materials using annotated eBooks.

4.18. In all our research activities, we have worked closely with students, sharing our plans and engaging with them as partners.

Personalised Learning (LE3)

4.19. Research by the National Audit Office into the factors affecting student retention and success in Higher Education has identified a number of risk factors including:

- **Age -** Non-continuation rates of full-time first degree students under the age of 21 was 7.8 per cent, with that for full-time first degree students aged over 21 being almost twice that figure, at 15.2 per cent.

- **Entry qualifications -** For full-time students, pre-entry qualifications were stated to be "the biggest influence on likelihood of continuation".
- **Mode of study -** The factor most affecting a student's chance of continuing is whether they are studying full-time or part-time, with full-time students being much more likely to continue if other factors are held constant.

4.20. KOL recognises that its student body includes a higher than average number of "at risk" students according to the above criteria. For example, the average age of KOL undergraduate students is 32, they are typically 'return to learn' students who have not taken part in formal study for many years and they are studying part-time.

4.21. We have highly developed support systems for students to enable them to overcome these challenges and succeed. We believe that building one-to-one relationships with students in order to gain a good understanding of their individual challenges and study patterns is essential for retention and student success. This enables us to initiate early interventions should grades or attendance decline.

4.22. Personalised support for student learning is provided by our tutors and our dedicated team of Student Support Advisers:

Module tutors

4.23. Module tutors regularly interact with students in threaded discussion activities and provide feedback as part of their regular assessment activities. Tutors also interact with students in bi-weekly synchronous seminar sessions. Tutors provide one-to-one support in their 'tutor office' hours and are available on Skype/telephone.

Student Support Advisers

4.24. Student Support Advisers provide proactive support for students from the commencement of their studies through to graduation. Advisers carry a caseload of 150 students and act as the first point of contact for students, providing a range of support services including:

- Module planning and progression:
    - Delivering online welcome sessions for new students
    - Advising students on progression including dual module management
    - Determining module and class requirements and allocating students to classes
    - Monitoring absences and encouraging students to remain active on the programme
- Pastoral support:
    - Acting as the first point of contact for any non-academic questions, problems or issues
    - Monitoring discussion boards and assignment submissions
    - Liaising with academic staff on academic issues, student engagement and extenuating circumstances

4.25. Using our Learner Analytics System, Student Advisers are able to monitor students' engagement levels through the VLE. We have designed an activity tracker which provides our student support team with a range of data ranging from student login times, number of posts submitted to an online discussion and date and time of assignment submissions. This enables the Student Support Advisers to proactively contact students to offer support and motivation and point them to additional resources, if required. This personal support works in conjunction with an automated email system which sends reminders at pre-defined touchpoints such as upcoming deadlines and lack of engagement.

4.26. Our students are able to request an authorised leave of absence from their studies for up to six months at a time – allowing for such events as holidays, moving house or temporary increased responsibilities at work. This in turn ensures that the students can progress through the course at a pace that suits their commitments outside their studies. Should a student experience extenuating circumstances which require longer than a six-month break, they can apply for 'Intermission' for up to 12 months – allowing time to resolve such issues and return to their studies positively at a later date, without the stigma of being withdrawn from their course. This constant dialogue with the student, and sympathetic management of their leave requirements, helps their retention on the course in the long run.

4.27. All students are provided with a customised study plan when they join the programme, which ensures they complete their studies within the agreed timeline. The plan requires students to study modules in sequence, although students can adjust their study plan in consultation with their dedicated Student Adviser to speed up or slow-down their studies by 'doubling-up' on modules or taking short study breaks.

4.28. Our understanding of the requirements of our target audience for flexibility to schedule their studies around complex employment and domestic commitments has led KOL to develop the necessary administrative and IT systems to facilitate this service. These systems include:

Module scheduling

4.29. We have developed an in-house designed Course Planner tool which supports the student and tutor timetabling of our module carousel with regular module starts throughout the year. The system is integrated with our Student Management System and our VLE and has a 100% success rate in scheduling correctly staffed and resourced modules on to which students can progress at any of the ten module start points in a year.

Student Dashboard

4.30. As part of the KOL commitment to supporting students to become strong independent learners, we have designed and built a Goal Setting Dashboard to enable students to monitor their own progress, set learning goals and compare their performance to fellow students. As students set academic goals they are presented with conditional study tips to help them achieve these goals. Students can then monitor their performance, identify areas to improve performance and adjust their goals accordingly. This was piloted in the 2016/17 academic year. The impact of the Student Dashboard is currently being analysed with a sample group of students. This research will help to identify the efficacy of the current implementation and will inform further development before the platform is released to the wider student population.

5. Student Outcomes and Learning Gain (SO)

Employment or further study (SO1)

5.1. The average age of our undergraduate student population is 32 and, as a result, the majority are already in full-time employment when they commence their studies with us.

5.2. Feedback from new applicants to KOL programmes indicates career advancement and career change as primary motivating factors for study which underpins one of KOL's core values to ‘help students achieve their academic and career best’.

5.3. This understanding of our student demographic has led us to embed vocationally related activities in KOL taught modules whenever appropriate. This practice, which allows students to construct and apply their knowledge in a meaningful context, congruent with their current or planned future employment contributes both to the pedagogical effectiveness of our provision and improves employability. Examples of such activities include:

- use of vocationally related course materials such as work based case studies, role-plays and groupwork.
- use of assessment activities which allow students to select an employment setting for their coursework.
- reflective activities which require students to review their learning and develop personal development/learning plans appropriate to their personal ambitions.

5.4. A 'Core Skills and Employability' module has been embedded into the curriculum for all undergraduate business programmes. This introduces students to the broad expectations and preferences of employers regarding the desirable skills and attitudes of employees. The module was updated and improved in the 2015/16 academic year to enable students to reflect on their learning journey and identify, develop and articulate their accumulated skills and knowledge to effectively enhance their employability prospects.

Employability and Transferable Skills (SO2)

5.5. Online education is a rapidly developing area and new technologies are presenting opportunities to innovate and improve the effectiveness of delivery. KOL has created and is constantly updating and improving a suite of interactive online study skills resources which are embedded into students learning materials. The resources are presented in a range of formats to suit students’ varying learning styles including: reading, videos, visual aids and practical self-tests to help the students check their own understanding of the information.

5.6. The resources focus on the following areas:

- Essentials – Introduction to Online Learning
- Academic Honesty and Referencing
- Reading and Research
- Writing

5.7. These sections were identified as areas where our students often struggle and require assistance from the Academic team. The resources have been designed to ensure that students can access them at their convenience, focus on specific areas they are finding difficult or work through each section comprehensively ticking it off once completed. To ensure maximum impact, tutors have been introduced to the resources and are encouraged to refer students directly to particular activities and resources in their feedback to help improve students' work going forward.

Positive Outcomes for all (S03)

5.8. We have a widening participation strategy which provides the opportunity for students who have not been able to access higher education previously to re-enter education. Many KOL students commence their studies with few or no academic qualifications and measuring outcomes for these students is different from traditional. The factors that make it difficult for these students to study such as their age, domestic responsibilities also make it difficult for them to enter into highly paid employment. We believe that a measure of distance travelled in their studies is a more appropriate measure of success rather than entry into highly skilled employment.

5.9. Our research has shown that when our students choose to study, a key factor in their choice is the availability of flexible online delivery. Online students are unlikely to consider traditional, full-time or face-to-face study as an alternative and consequently, when they complete their undergraduate studies, they will only consider postgraduate provision if it is available online. The lack of available online postgraduate provision is likely to be a significant inhibiting factor in our graduates progression on to postgraduate study. We believe that the recent expansion of KOL's postgraduate provision will result in an improvement in this metric in future years.

6. Conclusion

6.1. The demographic profile of our learners is atypical in the Higher Education sector and presents significant challenges particularly around retention and progression into highly skilled employment. Despite these challenges, KOL's commitment to provide an outstanding student experience underpinned by highly motivated subject experts and the application of cutting-edge instructional design and learning technology is evident in all the metrics. We recognise the challenges faced by our students and engage with them to customise and enhance their learning. We believe our approach to and support for teaching excellence in its widest sense enables us to provide a truly transformational learning experience for our students.