Statement from Sean Turner, President, Liverpool Guild of Students: I am proud to be an active member of this world-leading institution, having grown up locally and witnessed the impact it has on the community. Liverpool offers many aspirational opportunities and does not fail to deliver; whether it be experiencing new cultures via studying internationally or working with distinguished academics.

As a student, additional opportunities have enabled me to contextualise and enhance my learning. My curiosity has been fuelled through peer learning and open-ended debate. Discussions are enriched by perspectives of students from diverse backgrounds; ideas and understanding buzz amongst friends from different disciplines and continue outside of the classroom. All this and more is exploited to make learning fun, with small-group teaching, flipped classrooms, hands-on practical sessions and creative projects being developed by committed staff.

My course mates and I have been well supported by student support services, halls teams, and the Guild. Furthermore, the University is constantly striving to improve its support of students and has been sector-leading in its response to *UUK*'s 'Taskforce on sexism, harassment and hate crime' report, working closely with the Guild to develop and implement the current action plan.

The University has a positive, respectful and collaborative relationship with the Guild that is open to challenge and debate. We work in partnership to develop and implement University policy and strategy. Most recently, the Guild Officers lobbied to improve the Academic Advisor system and the University has audited the current processes and policies and is committed to implementing an enhanced, and student-focused approach, with the support of the Guild.

During my time at Liverpool I have been impressed by the extent to which the student voice is valued. Students are contributing members on numerous University committees from departmental curriculum panels to University Council. Students are supported by the Guild through the Course Representative system to voice considered opinions at all levels. The Guild work collaboratively with the University to ensure that the Code of Practice on Student Representation is engaged with by all departments to ensure students are at the heart of all decisions.

This submission demonstrates teaching excellence and showcases the wonders of study at Liverpool.

Statement from Professor Dame Janet Beer, Vice Chancellor: The University of Liverpool has, since 1881, worked for the "*advancement of learning and ennoblement of life*". This founding mission continues to guide us today and lies at the heart of our *Strategy 2026*. As a connected, global University with multiple physical and virtual campuses – Liverpool, London, Suzhou, Singapore and online – our worldwide influence and impact is unrivalled in higher education.

We are working hard to offer a consistently high-quality academic environment in which we educate well-rounded, enquiring global citizens who connect and engage – through their learning, research, civic engagement and inter-cultural understanding – with the world's most pressing problems. All our curricula integrate teaching and research to ensure that our students derive the maximum benefit from a dynamic environment of intellectual enquiry and challenge. We value diversity and we are a proudly inclusive institution, committed to the provision of opportunity for those with the capacity to benefit. We have an embedded culture of collaborative working that ensures staff and students work in partnership in a culture of continuous improvement.
This submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework demonstrates our commitment to exceptional teaching and student success. We support all our students to engage with a stimulating university experience, to achieve their best and become highly employable and well-connected global citizens who are sought after by the best employers worldwide.

This submission has been jointly authored by the University and the Guild of Students.

Our Context

1. The University of Liverpool was founded in 1881. We are the original 'red-brick university' and a member of the Russell Group of 24 research-intensive UK universities committed to an outstanding teaching and learning experience and offering unrivalled links with business and the public sector. We are committed to a research-connected education for all our students with a focus on enquiry-based learning. Our impactful research is "*life changing, world shaping*", in particular in three areas – advanced materials, infectious diseases, personalised health – where

we are established leaders. In REF2014 81% of our research was rated internationally excellent or world-leading. We have (to date) been closely associated with nine Nobel Laureates in science, medicine and peace.

2. We value the opportunity to engage with TEF as a national initiative to recognise institutional excellence in teaching and student outcomes. Obtaining a Gold TEF rating by 2021 is a goal of our Strategy and our present trajectory makes us confident that it can be achieved. Recent league table performance has underlined our progress. In the 2018 *Guardian* University League Table we are 16th for NSS Overall satisfaction (89.5%), up 35 places; for Teaching on my course we have risen 28 places to 28th; for Assessment & feedback we have risen 23 places to 49th. While we recognise that the starting point for the initial hypothesis in TEF Year 3 is high Bronze, we demonstrate here that a holistic assessment of our provision corresponds to Silver. First, **the starting point for the initial hypothesis is borderline**: our indicators for Academic support and Highly skilled employment or further study are just 2.0% below benchmark. Our metric for Academic support is heavily impacted by our poor 2017 NSS result for Medicine of 44%, which reduces our institutional indicator by 0.5% and without which we would not have a negative flag. We discuss the unique, non-academic background to this in **LE3**, and our recent actions taken in Medicine have resulted in 73.3% of Medicine students now indicating satisfaction with Academic support. Second, **both negatively flagged core metrics show significant improvement from TEF Year 2**. In Highly skilled employment and further study the gap to benchmark has reduced from 3.4% to 2.0%; in Academic support, from 3.0% to 2.0%. This is all the more impressive given that the TEF Year 2 and TEF Year 3 metrics share two of their three years of data. These improvements show that our strategies are having a sizeable impact, as does the fact that, for each negatively flagged metric, the number of negatively flagged years has reduced to one (the oldest). Third, with an indicator of 96.2% **our metric for Continuation is starred**, therefore sits within the top 10% of providers and has no negative flags in any of its splits. This student outcome is outstanding, especially given our proportion of WP students (22% of full-time UG in POLAR Q1/2 and 27% in IMD Q1/2) and the star is effectively a positive flag. Further, we have a positive flag (indicator 98.5%) among students on programmes on the PG/UG boundary (22% of our cohort), and a double positive flag among students on Other UG programmes (indicator 97.4%). Among those traditionally vulnerable student groups from disadvantaged backgrounds, we also have a double positive flag (indicator 93.8%) for Continuation among Mature students (14% of our cohort) **(LE3)**. Fourth and finally, **the splits in our NSS-derived metrics reflect our successful WP strategies**. We have a double positive flag for Assessment & feedback among BME students (indicator 74.5%), and a stronger pattern of flags for the NSS metrics overall among POLAR Q1/2 than POLAR Q3/4/5 students. Across all three NSS metrics our students from under-represented groups are more satisfied, compared with benchmark, and there are no negative flags in any of the split metrics for Mature, BME or Disabled students **(TQ)**. In summary, the borderline nature of our negative flags, a very high absolute score for Continuation, and our core and split metrics, all point to Silver.

3. The case for Silver is reinforced by our **supplementary metrics**. With respect to the two full-time LEO metrics, we outperform our benchmark for both Sustained employment or further study (indicator 83.6%, benchmark 83.0%) and Above-median earnings or further study (indicator 73.4%, benchmark 72.7%); we have (double) positive flags for Sustained employment or further study among PG/UG boundary students and for Above-median earnings among Mature students; and we have no negative flags in the split metrics. With respect to Grade inflation, while the proportion of good degrees awarded has increased, this can be accounted for by changes in the makeup of our student body and subject mix (see **TQ3**).

4. Beyond teaching excellence, the delivery of our founding mission, "*the advancement of learning and ennoblement of life*", is characterised by three overarching themes: student engagement; internationalisation; and widening participation. Our values-driven commitment to **student engagement** is articulated in our Student Engagement Framework and our Code of Practice on Student Representation. These recognise and articulate students' central role in the development and delivery of our Education Strategy for excellent teaching and student outcomes across the University. One major channel for engagement with our students is the Liverpool Guild

of Students, which offers student representation and social, cultural and volunteering opportunities which complement University provision. Together we work to ensure our students form a relationship with the University that they will maintain throughout their lives. Our Student Representation and Engagement Sub-Committee, jointly chaired by the PVC (Education) and the Guild President, is an important means by which the student voice feeds into our enhancement activity, and the Guild's annual Student Voice Report shapes our Education Strategy Action Plan for the coming year. Student representatives contribute to all our education-related governance bodies at Department, School, Faculty and University level, from staff-student liaison committees to Council. All our subjects have staff-student liaison committees and all student representatives receive compulsory training for their role through the Guild. This embedded approach to student engagement has shaped many policy initiatives described below, including electronic management of assessment **(TQ4)** and lecture capture **(LE1)**. We are particularly proud of our Enhancement Projects: defined and led by students, and delivered in partnership with the Guild, academics and professional services staff, they have had a huge impact on the student experience, addressing topics such as independent learning **(TQ3)**, embedding a research and learning culture **(LE2)**, internationalisation **(TQ1)** and employability **(SO2)**. Our students clearly welcome our approach to engagement: the Guild won the prize for the best students' union in HE at the NUS awards in 2016, and our indicator for the Student voice group of optional NSS questions has risen year on year since 2014, now standing three percentage points above the sector average (72% vs 69%).

5. **Internationalisation.** All our students become global citizens and we empower them to address global challenges by providing an international curriculum and experience via our global network of campuses and international study and work-placement opportunities, including at our partner institution in China. 2014/15 HESA data show that we were 5th in the sector for students undertaking qualifying mobility, including studying abroad, working abroad, volunteering and ERASMUS; we do not yet have comparator data for subsequent years but mobility has increased from 1128 placements in 2014/15 to 1507 in 2016/17. In 2006 we were the first UK provider to open an independent university in China – Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) – and over 3000 students from XJTLU are currently studying in Liverpool. In 2016/17 we launched a Year in China scheme to allow UG students to study Chinese language and culture at XJTLU. Nearly seventy students participated in the first two years and currently demand doubles annually. This is part of a wider expansion of Study Abroad: we have over 100 partners worldwide and over 1000 students attended a Study Abroad fair in November 2017. The value of the scheme is summed up by this student: '*Year in China was an opportunity to submerge myself in a totally new language and culture while also gaining valuable university credits. I would urge anybody on the fence about taking the Year in China to just do it, it's honestly the best thing you can do at university and truly makes you stand out from the rest of your graduation cohort*'.

6. **Widening participation.** We are recognised as a sector leader in WP where we exceed our benchmarks and have the highest proportion of students from state schools and LPNs in the English Russell Group. We are committed to a diverse student body across all disciplines and to **fair access** for anyone who can benefit. Our *Liverpool Scholars* scheme supports WP sixth formers as they research and apply for HE. It has supported over 1200 scholars since its 2007 launch, and in 2017 we recruited our largest ever cohort of 78 former scholars into year 1. Our current Guild President was himself a scholar. We have supported a further 250 students through the national *Realising Opportunities* scheme, and in 1999 we launched *Go Higher* as a foundation programme for local WP students aged 21+ who are interested in UG study but lack traditional entry qualifications. Students attend one day a week on campus and undertake guided home study. Guest lectures widen students' horizons and guide them in their future study options. Since 2012/13 455 students have registered on *Go Higher* and most students who complete progress to year 1 with us (average 62%), or at other universities (average 12%); since 2016 21 have gone on to PG study at Liverpool alone. As already noted, the splits in our NSS-derived metrics reflect our successful WP strategies, and our standing as a UK leader in social mobility was noted in our last QAA HER report: "*The University has a strong track record in widening participation. The Liverpool Scholars programme offers prospective students a range of activities and a dedicated tutor to support them. The commitment to widening participation has a strong emphasis on its long-standing relationship with the local area, and extends to various underrepresented groups,*

including mature and part-time students. A focus on improving retention of mature students is being facilitated through the Go Higher programme".

Case study: Improving access through foundation programmes
We have a long history of delivering foundation programmes in partnership with local colleges. In September 2017 we recruited 326 students via our partner of over twenty years, Carmel College. We prioritise applications from mature and WP students, with up to 31% mature students in these cohorts (cf. 4% among 2017 direct entrants to the same subject areas), and up to 23% LPN1 students (cf. 10%). We work closely with the partner colleges to align curricula and ensure that, on completion, foundation students are well prepared for level 4. Success is reflected in continuation: up to 91% among the Carmel foundation students; and up to 91% among the ex-Carmel level-4 students, only slightly below the 93% continuation rate of the cohort as a whole.

7. Our WP strategy addresses not only fair access, but also **student success**. Our research-connected curricula and co-/extra-curricular opportunities ensure that all our students, whatever their background, benefit from a rich environment of intellectual enquiry and become highly employable. Using effective cohort tracking we have identified local barriers to success and initiated timely interventions. For example, a review in 2015 showed that in some subjects our students with BTEC qualifications (the majority of whom are from WP backgrounds) were 78% less likely to attain 50% or more in their first year when compared with their A level counterparts. Consequently, a University Transition, Success and Progression Group was created to develop the support required for entrants with BTECs and Non-Traditional Qualifications (NTQs). This Group works with Departments to develop local programmes of support and evaluate their impact.

Case study: Targeting student support
As a pilot project in 2015, cohort tracking in Life Sciences showed that students with BTECs were obtaining marks significantly lower than students with A levels (48% vs 66%) and that 50% of the BTEC cohort came from WP backgrounds. A specialist transition programme of support was put in place for the BTEC students in year 1, covering additional study skills, exam preparation and workshops on underpinning subject theory. This has almost closed the first-year attainment gap compared to A level students to 5%. The pilot has now been rolled out to other subjects with students with BTECs and NTQs and an attainment gap. Additionally, we are running a project with a local partner FE college to help prepare their BTEC and Access students for seamless transition into HE. The project comprises complementary curriculum development in both the college and the University.

8. We are, under ***Strategy 2026***, delivering our distinctive vision '*to be a connected, global university at the forefront of knowledge leadership*', further developing our high-quality environment for the education of well-rounded, enquiring global citizens who – through their learning, research, civic engagement and inter-cultural understanding – connect and engage with the world's most pressing problems. We take a values-driven approach to our partnership with students and collaborators and our commitment to a diverse student and staff body. We joined the Athena SWAN Charter in 2009 and have been recognised for our commitment to gender equality with Silver University award status as well as four Bronze, five Silver and one Gold School-Level Awards. We are also a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, a Disability Confident Employer, and a member of Time to Change, a commitment to addressing mental health in the workplace (**SO3**).

9. Our **Education vision** is to '*integrate teaching and research to ensure that we derive the maximum benefit from our rich environment of intellectual enquiry and challenge'* in order to '*support students to become creative and culturally rich graduates, with the capacity to find employment that will enable them to be agents for change in a connected world*'. Our Strategy aligns with our ambition for TEF Gold and aims to provide a consistently outstanding intellectual, social and physical environment for research, teaching and learning, at the cutting edge of disciplines **(TQ3)**, with award-winning, world-class facilities **(LE1)**, and a stimulating and challenging curriculum.

10. **Three distinctive pedagogical hallmarks** are embedded within all our curricula – active learning **(TQ1)**, research-connected teaching **(LE2)** and authentic assessment **(TQ4)** – complemented by common elements of programme content delivering global perspectives **(TQ3)**, digital skills **(SO2)**, values-driven citizenship **(SO3)**, and employer engagement **(SO1)**. In support of outstanding teaching and enhancing employability our specific targets include: increasing the proportion of students undertaking a work placement, internship or study abroad as part of their programme **(SO1)**; increasing the proportion of students engaging in HEAR-recordable, extra-curricular activity, such as volunteering **(SO2)**; and increasing the proportion of teaching staff with teaching qualifications (including senior managers) **(TQ2)**.

11. **Responsibility for delivering our Education Strategy** lies with our PVC (Education). He is supported by the Education Advisory Group which comprises key academic and professional service leads, as well as the Guild President, and meets monthly to monitor implementation of the Education Strategy Action Plan. Governance is provided by the Education Committee and its standing sub-committees, reporting to Senate and, ultimately, Council. In the following sections we link the pattern of our metrics across Teaching Quality, Learning Environment and Student Outcomes and learning gain to our strategic policy and practice. We show that we know our student body and understand the detail of our performance in teaching and student outcomes; we recognise our areas of weakness and strength, and have taken appropriate action to address them and build on them, with a clear understanding of the trigger, nature and impact of initiatives. Our approach to enhancement has three key dimensions: to deliver institution-wide improvements, to facilitate actions within Schools and Departments based on local best practice, and to pilot new initiatives that can be assessed for impact and, if effective, implemented across the University.

Teaching Quality

12. **TQ1.** Students are engaged in all aspects of curriculum change as a cornerstone of our policy on Engaging Students in Curriculum Development and Approval. Feedback from students on our provision down to module level is collected annually for all modules and is a key part of the evidence base for the annual Professional Development Review (PDR) of academic staff (**TQ2**). In this way, teaching performance is monitored and areas in need of attention identified. We were early adopters of the **Evasys module evaluation tool**, and have worked in close partnership with Electric Paper (now Achievability) to enhance the tool for the benefit of the sector. In the 2017 NSS student voice question about student feedback being acted upon, our top-quartile result was 69% compared to the sector average of 60%. Feedback on teaching is also sought via our policy which ensures **peer observation of teaching** at least every two years, and more frequently for staff on probation or where Evasys feedback identifies specific issues. Staff discuss peer observation in their PDR meetings and reflect on their role as peer observer or observee. Staff underperformance is monitored by the relevant Head of Department/School, the Faculty Associate PVC (Education) and the PVC (Education).

Case study: Improving student satisfaction
In response to disappointing NSS results in Academic support, Law introduced TeachSmart, a student-staff innovation that has introduced post-lecture summaries, post-seminar reflective podcasts, key-concept presentations, the use of a textwall for student participation in large classes, online MCQs, and unseen topics for seminar discussion. Academics responsible for the English Legal System & Skills and Equity & Trust modules converted the curriculum from a traditional didactic lecture/seminar-based delivery model to one with directed reading, skills-oriented tasks, and AV material accessed independently, and valuable class time given over to ‘sense making’ in small groups, thereby creating a more engaging learning journey and increasing opportunities for diagnostic and formative feedback **(LE3)**. Resources were developed including videos, ‘equity shorts’, covering key legal principles and case law. After a transition year, student satisfaction and engagement were transformed: Law’s NSS result for Academic support rose from 67% in 2012 to 75% in 2017 and students now praise academics for articulating expectations clearly and taking the time to provide extra feedback sessions.

13. While our core metrics in Teaching quality are neutral, levels of student satisfaction are

disappointing in some of the splits. For PG/UG Boundary students the dissatisfaction primarily relates to students in Medicine (see **LE3**). In our part-time metrics we have an exclamation mark for Teaching on my course. This is a very small group (92 students in total) comprised of mainly level-5 students resitting failed modules on a part-time basis, so their low satisfaction is understandable. However, to address the underlying issue, we now target their support via signposting to KnowHow (see **LE3**).

14. **TQ2.** We are committed to facilitating, recognising and rewarding excellent teaching and our Education Strategy identifies effective recruitment, peer observation, supportive PDR and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as the means to improve the performance of teaching staff. Our recognition of the importance of teaching is reflected in the level of resource we dedicate to it: we have the fifth best staff:student ratio (11.7) in the Russell Group and across our programmes 26% of student learning time is spent in scheduled learning and teaching sessions (cf. 22% across the rest of the Russell Group and 24% outside the Russell Group; source: *Unistats*). All core funded academic staff are involved in teaching, and 90% of our teaching and research staff hold a PhD. This ensures that students in all disciplines are exposed to our best research and researchers.

15. We have set a specific target for all academic staff to hold an HEA fellowship or equivalent by 2021. The proportion stood at 34% in 2014/15 and now exceeds 60%. We attribute part of our improvement in NSS and league table metrics (see paragraph 2) for Teaching on my course and Assessment and feedback to this policy. **HEA-accredited programmes for staff new to HE**, including those at XJTLU, are delivered by our Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL), and successful completion of one of these programmes is a probation condition for all new academics. Since 2009/10 over 1400 staff have secured HEA fellowships by this route. Reflecting their regard for our programmes, the HEA are currently working with us and our online partner Laureate to develop an accredited PGCert programme in HE teaching & learning for the international market.

16. The **University of Liverpool Teaching Recognition and Accreditation** scheme (ULTRA) is HEA-accredited up to the level of Principal Fellow. ULTRA is supported by web resources and workshops, while each candidate is assigned a mentor and writing workshops provide peer support. School- and Department-level 'ULTRA champions' raise the profile of the scheme and also provide mentoring support. During 2016/17 Heads of School and Department were targeted to apply for HEA fellowship via ULTRA. Since 2009/10 over 150 (senior/principal) fellowships have been awarded under the scheme.

17. We have several **schemes to recognise, value and reward staff for effective and transferable creativity and/or innovation in teaching and learner support**. A teaching & scholarship career pathway is available for academic staff alongside the traditional teaching & research pathway, and 17 professors have been promoted or appointed on this route. We annually celebrate outstanding contributions to pedagogy and the enhancement of the student experience at our awards gala, which recognises individual and team excellence among academic and professional service staff. The 'Lecturer of the year' award celebrates an outstanding contribution to research-connected learning and teaching **(LE2)**, while the 'Outstanding contribution to public engagement' award includes outreach **(SO3)**. We annually award *ca*. 10 Learning & Teaching Fellowships to academic and professional services staff who can evidence creativity and innovation in teaching and learner support, in line with our three curriculum hallmarks, and a commitment to internal and external dissemination. We support the HEA's National Teaching Fellowship scheme and have 11 Fellows, most now in influential educational leadership roles. Our most recent NTF was the lead academic behind a novel two-stage online test design described in **TQ4**. The HEA noted that this work had led to a transformation of the assessment culture in Life Sciences, benefitting 1200 students per year; it has since been adopted by other departments. Externally her work has been adopted by the University of Hull in a complete overhaul of their first-year teaching in science & engineering.

18. We have a systematic approach to sharing and disseminating good practice. CLL organise annual **Learning & Teaching and Pedagogical Research Conferences** to share our latest

innovations in teaching and learning, provide support and fellowship for colleagues and cement the community of practice around pedagogy. The L&T Conference regularly leads to good practice being adopted elsewhere, e.g. the peer-assisted learning scheme described in paragraph 36 (**LE3**). The CLL also offers a year-round workshop and seminar programme involving internal and external speakers, with 333 events in 2016/17 attended a total of 3779 times by 1746 staff. We have a sophisticated community of practice in technology-enhanced learning where, in addition to a seminar programme and experts network, we organise two-week winter and summer schools. We were commended in our 2015 QAA HER for "*the strategic and effective role played by the Centre for Lifelong Learning in training and supporting staff in pedagogic practices and developments and disseminating good practice*".

Case study: Impact of a Learning & Teaching Fellow
The module leader for Contemporary Voting Behaviour won a Learning & Teaching Fellowship in 2016 and used the award to develop AV learning materials to teach quantitative methods using a flipped-classroom and 'active learning by doing' approach in line with our distinctive curriculum hallmarks. The module includes interactive supported PC sessions based on problem-based learning tasks where students analyse survey data and present their findings to their peers. It uses voting behaviour to teach key employability skills in numeracy and quantitative data analysis, as well as presentation and public-speaking skills **(SO2)**. In 2016/17 student attainment was high, and the module achieved 100% student satisfaction and 100% endorsement of the high quality of the teaching, the learning support provided, and the intellectual stimulation.

19. **TQ3.** We provide an excellent intellectual environment for teaching and learning at the cutting edge of our disciplines. The rigour with which we apply academic and professional standards is confirmed annually by our **external examiners** in respect of: the quality of our teaching: '*The teaching within History is demonstrably excellent*' **(TQ1)**; how our assessments appropriately challenge students: '*I saw some extremely well-crafted exam papers, module convenors taking real time over the selection of accompanying title quotations and all were appropriately challenging in their rubric requirements*' (English literature) **(TQ3)**; our approaches to assessment and feedback: '*Overall, Liverpool Geography provides an excellent and very coherent set of assessments that are used to determine degree classifications*' **(TQ4)**; our research-enriched curricula: '*Research-led teaching is obviously at the heart of the curriculum, with students given a strong background in research and study skills at level one and encouraged to follow the example of staff in placing new knowledge and ideas at the forefront of their own work*' (Music) **(LE2)**; our personalised support for student learning: '*Liverpool is an exemplary institution in the care it shows for [students'] academic and professional development*' (French) **(LE3)**; our commitment to students' professional goals: '*Bench inspection involving industrial advisors is excellent and this bridges the gap between industry and academic world*' (Electronic & electrical engineering) **(SO1)**; and our employability agenda: '*Field work teaching starts on the first weekend in year 1 and students are exposed to real-life scenarios of marine fieldwork on shores and on board vessels with a wide range of follow-up report writing*' (Ocean sciences) **(SO2)**.

20. Our **grade-inflation** data shows a 12% increase in the proportion of good degrees (first and upper second) awarded between 2007/08 and 2016/17. One significant factor underlies this increase, namely, the growth in the number of XJTLU students from zero in 2007/8 to over 3000 today. These are academically the most able students from the Chinese secondary education system with attainment that places them in the top 1.5% of the Gaokao, and one-third of them graduate with a first-class degree. Over 80% of them proceed to further study (but are not included in our TEF Highly skilled employment or further study indicator), many in top-100 universities across the world. XJTLU students now account for one-quarter of our graduating cohort, and have driven the growth in our overall figures. The increase is not due to inappropriate grade inflation; those subjects where the rate has increased appreciably are those where most of our XJTLU students are based. Further, over and above endorsement of our academic and professional quality and standards by external examiners and PSRBs (see next paragraph), unlike several providers we have not changed our classification algorithm over the period and have maintained class thresholds at 40%/50%/60%/70%.

21. We encourage **stretch** in various ways. For example, we design our curricula to ensure all programmes and modules are based on our world-leading research, we use a rigorous marking rubric, every student has the opportunity to undertake a research project, 22% of our students are on PG/UG Boundary programmes, 10% are taking combined honours and 7% have an international study experience. We offer considerable module choice and a range of final-year specialisms taught using various methods to encourage **active learning** including: flipped classrooms, online workspaces, interactive lectures and seminars, simulations and group projects; these ensure students are **challenged** throughout. Our programmes involve experts from a wide range of employers who work alongside academics to place students' learning in the context of future employment and global challenges. Recognising the relevance of our curricula to professional practice, our provision is accredited by over 130 **Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies** (PSRBs) and 59% of our students are on PSRB-accredited programmes. This collaboration between researchers, professional bodies and employers fuels the design and delivery of stretching programmes leading to excellent outcomes.

Case study: Mission to Mars
Mission to Mars is a week-long project developed in 2010 that takes the entire UG physics intake and challenges them during week 1 of semester 1 (every day, all day) to produce a detailed plan for a mission to Mars. Students work in teams on competing missions under the guidance of a member of staff acting as 'flight director'. They cover all aspects of such a trip, including scope and scientific purpose, life support, trajectory, mass management, radiation shielding, and communication. They hold a press conference midweek and present their missions to staff who choose the winning mission. This project has been hailed by students as a great way to transition into university while getting to know their peers and establishing a rapport with their lecturers. This unique example of stretch has since been adopted by Gothenburg and Chalmers Universities where a Mission to Mars has been offered as a popular option following a visit by them to Liverpool in 2014.

22. Our commitment to rigour and academic and professional standards is reflected in our **involvement in sector-wide initiatives**. For example, our PVC (Education) is a member of a UUK TEF working group and the Russell Group's TEF Advisory Group, convened at the request of Government to provide input to the DfE on the design of the TEF. Our academics contributed to the development of many QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and one of our Psychology academics is heavily involved in HEFCE's National Mixed Methodology Learning Gain Project (NMMLGP), piloting a combination of methodological approaches to measuring learning gain. We are also participating in the HEFCE-funded, HEA-facilitated, sector-led Degree Standards: External Examining project to develop and pilot professional development resources for external examiners, where our PVC (Education) chairs the steering committee. Geoff Stokes, Head of Special Projects at the HEA, said: "*The University of Liverpool is taking a leading role in the Degree Standards: External Examining project. The chair of the steering committee for the project is from the University; external examiners from the University have piloted the professional development course; and its professional development staff are now involved in the roll-out of the course. The HEA is delighted that the University of Liverpool has chosen to invest in its own staff's development as external examiners and is, thereby, providing an example to other HEIs and contributing to trying to ensure that degree standards are more comparable across the sector*".

23. **TQ4.** In response to some historically disappointing levels of satisfaction with assessment and feedback from internal surveys and the NSS, all subjects are required to comply with institutional policy ensuring marking criteria for all assessments are explicit and available and that feedback is provided within 15 working days. To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment and feedback we have implemented **electronic management of assessment** (EMA) across all courses (**LE1**). This policy was shaped by the Guild's 'The pound in your pocket' campaign, which highlighted the cost of printing and submitting hard-copy assignments. Between 2010 and 2016 (the 2017 NSS was boycotted) NSS results for Assessment and Feedback increased by 13% to 72%, with 17% gains for *Feedback on my work has been timely* and *The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance*, and a 14% gain for *I have received helpful comments on my work*.

24. **Many subject-level initiatives have been taken to enhance assessment and feedback** in line with our authentic assessment curriculum hallmark and in response to cohort feedback and focus groups. For example, **Life Sciences** has addressed problems associated with automatically marked online tests: where tests are summative, immediate feedback encourages collusion; where tests are formative, participation rates can be low. In response, a two-stage testing model was developed, with a formative part A providing focused feedback for incorrect answers which can be completed multiple times **(LE3)**, and a summative part B which can only be accessed once a threshold standard has been achieved in part A and can only be completed once, and feedback is only provided after the completion deadline **(TQ3)**. The new model has led to increased attainment at all ability levels, with the mean exam mark up from 58% to 65% **(TQ1)**. Students in **Earth, Ocean & Ecological Sciences** who undertake an independent overseas study visit also gain work experience, learn about the culture and biodiversity of another country and produce a briefing note for a Government minister. Students benefit from overseas travel and independent skills development, as well as better degree and employment outcomes. **Dentistry** has developed an award-winning initiative called LIFTUPP, a competence-based learning-tracking/management system used by academic and clinical staff to provide individualised and timely feedback to students and report on their learning. As a result of the introduction of LIFTUPP there was a demonstrable increase in student satisfaction with assessment and feedback from 50% to 89% between 2009 and 2016. LIFTUPP is now commercially available and is being used at other universities across the UK.

Learning Environment

25. **LE1.** We provide not only the best intellectual but also physical environment for research, teaching, learning and assessment with **award-winning, world-class facilities** in support of our strategies for active learning and effective teaching practice. Student input is shaping the delivery of our £800m estate plan: we are now providing a greater sense of place, belonging and home, with the creation of zones highlighting distinct academic areas. The Guild has seen a £14m investment to create state-of-the-art facilities, and these were key to the Guild's prestigious NUS Best Students' Union award in 2016. Over this TEF period there has been a £13m enhancement to learning and teaching spaces, shaped by our students and academics in line with pedagogical needs to include innovative teaching spaces to facilitate collaborative and active learning **(TQ1)**. A new £10m learning and teaching hub is under construction and is due for completion in September 2018 with three lecture theatres and several collaborative learning spaces, PC suites and social space for students.

26. A £7m **investment in specialist teaching space** has created new music practice rooms, architecture studios, language laboratories and specialist PC hubs. All these improvements were triggered by student feedback on their learning spaces. As an example of impact, Architecture's result in the NSS question on access to specialist equipment, facilities or rooms has improved from 64% in 2014 to 82% in 2017. A significant level of estate planning and capital investment has been made in recent years in our veterinary science facility in Leahurst, Wirral. A new lecture theatre and student common spaces were completed in 2016, and their significance was recognised by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' accreditation panel: '*At Leahurst the expansion of the lecture theatre has provided a greatly improved learning experience for the students and the Henry Edwards Learning Centre has enhanced farm animal tuition.*' Our Management School recently opened a new extension which has created additional flexible learning space and improved teaching facilities, including a Bloomberg suite comprising 40 Bloomberg terminals with access to financial data and economics and business news.

Case study: Our award-winning Central Teaching Laboratory (CTL)
Our CTL, established in 2012, was the UK's first shared teaching laboratory for physical, environmental and archaeological sciences, designed to enhance student experience through high-quality, contemporary learning facilities and promote inter-disciplinary learning. It has been internationally acclaimed for its innovation in UG science education. A CTL-based team of academics won the HEA's Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence in 2016, recognising their

role in promoting student success. Our CTL was judged to have had an impact on departments across the University, supporting new pedagogies **(TQ1)**, improving employability skills, and introducing cross-disciplinary modules and multi-disciplinary dissertation projects **(LE2)**. Within the CTL students have the opportunity to work with peers from other disciplines **(TQ3)**, and develop the necessary skills for meaningful employment in the modern STEM world **(SO2)**.

27. Our NSS results for **library provision** show consistently high student satisfaction, achieving 87-89% over the last nine years. We continue to invest with £4m spent in 2017 to create new study spaces, social spaces, and flexible technology-rich individual and collaborative learning zones, as well as the KnowHow Centre (see **LE3**). In 2016/17 £1.5m was spent on books and £4.5m on subscriptions, with our two Libraries being accessed over 2.17 million times. Another spending priority has been items included on module reading lists, compulsory for all modules as part of the VITAL Baseline Policy (see paragraph 30), while the Library's 'Pass the Book' scheme was introduced in response to the Guild's 'Pound in your pocket' campaign and allows students to sell or donate their used textbooks to other students via a simple web interface. Engagement with our students has played a key role in the external recognition of the Library service. We first achieved the Customer Service Excellence award in 2014, and in our 2017 revalidation we achieved 'Compliance Plus' in seven areas, recognising that we: use customer insight and service-usage patterns to inform strategy, policy and practice; provide our customers with clear and relevant information about our services in line with their needs and preferences; and consult and involve customers when setting, reviewing and raising standards.

28. Our curricula and educational approaches are shaped by our **Learning, Information and Digital Skills Strategy** so that all students develop digital literacies and appropriate technical skills that equip them for lifelong learning, graduate employment and professional practice. The seven JISC digital literacy skills form a core part of module approval and specifications, and staff expertise is developed via core modules within our HEA-accredited CPD programmes (see paragraph 15). To complement campus-based training resources and programmes we subscribe to the lynda.com training platform of over 10,000 online courses and produce discipline-specific 'playlists' of relevant training.

29. Investment in digital technologies to support students and enhance their learning and teaching environment is informed by active engagement through regular focus groups at different cohort levels, detailed analysis of the NSS results annually and an annual IT satisfaction survey for all students. The analysis of these surveys and feedback from group meetings, both institution-wide and at departmental level, is used to identify areas for improvement and to prioritise investment in the technology systems and services that enhance the student experience as learners. This approach has been in place for more than 5 years and has helped to maintain a high level of student satisfaction in our digital technology and services provision. Focused investment in core infrastructure and applications has created a resilient and effective learning environment to support our students. Ongoing investment in our wired and wireless network, a rolling upgrade programme of computers in libraries and teaching centres, the provision of a laptop loan scheme in our main libraries, the continual enhancement of learning technologies within all learning and teaching spaces and the provision and development of core business applications and mobile applications to allow students to access learning-related resources anywhere and at any time, are just a few examples of how we ensure the provision of a current and relevant high-quality experience for all students aligned with institutional strategy.

30. Following feedback from students, in particular the Guild's 'Making the most of IT' report, in 2014/15 we introduced a number of related policy enhancements. The **VITAL Baseline** defines the core module-level academic support provided to every student within our VLE (branded internally as VITAL - Virtual Interactive Teaching at Liverpool); namely key learning resources, exam resources, a link to ReadingLists@Liverpool, as well as coursework and exam feedback. Many academics and Departments go further with integrated eBook provision, online testing for formative and summative assessment, simulations, discussion spaces, digital resources, etc. VITAL is used by all students to support their learning and is commented on positively in the NSS; in October 2017, a total of 54,043 visits were made to ReadingLists@Liverpool. Our policy for

mandatory **lecture capture** is designed to support revision, aid retention and attainment, and provide flexible study opportunities for students with part-time jobs, caring commitments and those whose first language is not English. Data shows that many students view the recording of the previous lecture in preparation for the next one, and in preparing for exams **(TQ1)**. Our approach to the **electronic management of assessment** was described in **TQ4**.

31. The success of our digital skills strategy is evidenced by results in the NSS, internal student surveys and in particular **the 2017 JISC digital tracker**, which point to high levels of student engagement and satisfaction. Our students have good access to digital services and systems, and are positive when technologies are used in their courses. The results are materially better than the sector average for: use of e-books and e-journals; mobile access to university systems and file storage/backup; positive feelings toward the use of digital technology; levels of connection with teaching staff when using digital technology; and the delivery and management of online assessments; ease of digitally accessing University information or course content; and student isolation, which we know is linked to poor student mental health (see **SO3**). Our result in the 2016 NSS question *I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to* is well above the sector average at 89% and has averaged 87% over the past 8 years.

32. **LE2. Research-connected teaching** is one of our three curriculum hallmarks and all programmes are required to link strongly to our research activity within a framework of enquiry-based learning. Programmes take an integrated approach to research skills development, and students develop a progressively deep insight into the research process, critical thinking skills, and scientific writing. Exposure to **professional practice** is also integral to our curricula and is recognised by the extent of our PSRB accreditations (**TQ3**). UG students are expected to engage with departmental research culture, for example through research seminars, and in level-6 option and dissertation modules they directly engage with academics' specialist research interests. Further research opportunities are provided through vacation studentships (**SO1**), employer-based projects and intercalated Masters (see **TQ3**). We partner with the Undergraduate Awards (UA) who recognise top UG research, share this work with a global audience, and connect students across cultures and disciplines. 78 of our students made submissions in 2017 and seven were highly commended, across arts, sciences and social sciences; two dissertation students in Environmental Sciences were shortlisted for national Royal Geographical Society research group prizes; one year-2 student in Physics and prominent member of the Physics Outreach Group won the first Institute of Physics' Ann Marks Memorial Award for her communication of physics through outreach activities.

Case study: Research-led teaching from the Materials Innovation Factory (MIF)
For many years we have had a productive relationship with Unilever that has facilitated graduate recruitment, internships, joint projects and apprenticeships. Now, the MIF, a £65m cross-disciplinary joint venture between the University, Unilever and HEFCE, uses research strengths as a catalyst for collaboration in education across Science & Engineering. Driven by a cross-faculty group, new and revised modules based on MIF research build pathways through existing integrated Masters programmes allowing students to connect disciplines and to come together in final year for collaborative research projects. MIF exposes students to state-of-the-art industrial research and development, the importance of working in multi-disciplinary teams and the scientific challenges faced by industry today.

Case study: Research-based experiential learning
Interchange is our registered charity that acts as a broker between Voluntary Community Organisations who have research and/or work project needs, and our students, who wish to conduct applied social research as part of their degrees. It is a well-established science shop, which has been running since 1993. Students work on a wide range of topics, including domestic violence, homelessness, mental health and dementia. All projects contain examples of authentic assessment (**TQ4**), such as evaluation reports and studies, documentaries and oral histories, feasibility studies, case studies and other community activities. During the past 4 years Interchange has supported 90 students and 60 community organisations. In 2015 a Social Return

on Investment report found that 70% of Interchange students went on to further study with the remainder more likely to secure highly skilled employment in comparison to their peers.

33. **LE3.** Our Education Strategy states that '*We will support all of our students to achieve their potential by providing transitional support, study skills and effective digital ways of working*'. In the last three years a strategic and sustained investment in our learning support provision, KnowHow, has been central to the success of our students. KnowHow combines face-to-face support with online self-help resources, with the **KnowHow Centre** located prominently within one of our two main-campus libraries. In collaboration with our Counselling Service, the Centre uniquely combines academic and digital skills development (research skills, academic writing, exam preparation, and critical thinking; **TQ3**) with student wellbeing (managing stress, mindfulness, positive anxiety; **SO3**) and employability (time management, organisation, communication, and digital literacy; **SO2**). In the academic area, it complements discipline-specific resources provided in Departments, as well as in-sessional academic English help provided by the English Language Centre. In Writing@Liverpool, part of our KnowHow provision, PGRs are trained to deliver workshops and one-to-one writing tutorials and produce digital resources to help UG students with study skills, especially academic writing and digital literacy. One-to-one tutorials ensure students' personal learning needs are addressed, while workshops provide support with transition into HE **(SO3)** and stretch **(TQ3)**. The number of KnowHow workshops delivered annually has doubled and they are overwhelmingly appreciated by students, with 97% indicating that they would recommend them to other students, and 100% saying that their workshop learning will help with their studies. 'Tips from our tutors' videos had over 2000 viewings in autumn 2017. The success of this institutional support system is evidenced by our outstanding Continuation metric and the proportion of good degrees awarded.

34. In the NSS-derived metric for Academic support we have a negative flag, although since TEF Year 2 the variance to benchmark has narrowed from 3.0 to 2.0 and the number of negatively flagged years has also fallen to one (the oldest). Between 2010 and 2016 (the 2017 NSS was boycotted) NSS results for Academic support increased by 6% to 81%, with a 6% gain for *I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course* and a 9% gain for *Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course*. Our strategy to deliver improvement here is therefore working. Of particular note, the result for this metric among our Medicine students for NSS 2017 is 44% and it is their dissatisfaction, on known but mainly non-academic grounds (linked to the deratification of the Liverpool Medical Students Society following inappropriate behaviour), which has depressed the indicators for all three of our NSS-derived metrics; these students make up 34% of those on the PG/UG boundary and 9% of the total cohort. The background to this unhappiness is understood and we are addressing the issues appropriately and in partnership with the Guild. This approach is proving effective: in the context of the Guild's NSS boycott we ran our own Academic Student Experience Survey among all except first-year UG students and 73.3% of final-year Medicine students are now positive about their academic support.

35. One of our approaches to supporting students to achieve their full potential is through **academic advising**. Every student is assigned a named member of academic staff in the role of Academic Advisor who provides information, advice and guidance on academic matters, and can signpost to specialist support for non-academic issues. Students meet with their academic advisor every semester and attendance is recorded to ensure engagement. Advisors also provide co-curricular advice on aspects such as employability development and study abroad. Training for academic advisors is provided centrally via an approved University framework. NSS and student feedback is monitored annually to ensure that the academic advisor system is working in all subjects and where necessary local poor performance is dealt with via a mandatory action plan.

36. We have a University-wide peer-assisted learning (PAL) scheme, originally piloted and developed in Chemistry in 2012/13. The scheme complements our peer-mentoring programme (see **SO3**) and helps year 1 and international students transition into UK HE. PAL leaders provide subject and pastoral support, and help students adapt to the new academic environment and enhanced teaching and learning activities, e.g. collaborative learning. It also develops PAL leaders' leadership and employability skills, and the activity is HEAR-recordable (**SO2**). The

evaluation of the scheme has been presented at several conferences and published by the HEA.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

37. **SO1.** To maximise highly skilled employment outcomes our Education Strategy targets an increase in the proportion of students undertaking a work placement, internship or study abroad experience within their programme. As one of the UK's top-25 universities targeted by leading global graduate recruiters (*High Fliers Research*, 2017) our **Careers & Employability Service** (CES) has developed excellent global connections and provides students with access to an extensive range of work placements, internships and employment contacts with over 5000 employers. Six months after graduation, 91.2% of our 2015/16 UK full-time graduates were working or studying, up nearly 1% on the previous year, while 80.9% were in graduate-level work or study. The employability of our graduates contributes directly to our local economy: 51.6% of our UK graduates are working or studying in the North West (54.7% of these on Merseyside). CES supplements School-based careers programmes by delivering a year-round programme of intensive employability presentations, workshops, seminars and 'meet the employer' events for all students. CES's annual final-year employability campaign, 'The Time is Now', involves industry- and sector-specific panel events, assessment-centre masterclasses and volunteering fairs, as well as seminars on self-branding, interview skills and commercial awareness. CES's 'Recruiters in Residence' event is also extremely effective in creating opportunities for students to network with local and regional employers and gain access to internships and graduate employment opportunities. We also fund an 'opportunity bursary' to support WP students with costs such as attending job interviews and travel to work placements and internship programmes. Our 'UpReach' placement scheme for WP students works to improve social mobility by delivering a personalised model of intensive support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds so that they can access top graduate jobs; 54 students participated in 2016/17, 11 of whom were subsequently awarded internships with prestigious graduate recruiters (**SO3**).

Case study: Enhancing employability through the Kickstart student intern programme
Our Kickstart intensive employability programme provides additional support for recent graduates, particularly those from under-represented groups, as they prepare to compete in the graduate job market. The programme involves one-to-one coaching, information, advice & guidance, access to free on-line PG study modules, and paid three-month internships. In the current year we funded 100 Kickstart interns, almost half of whom (43%) were from WP backgrounds (e.g. Employability Bursary eligible) and 16% were BME. As a result of our proactive approach to employability, in TEF Year 3 our indicator for Employment or further study has risen from 92.0% to 93.9% and the negative flag among BME students in TEF Year 2 has disappeared.

38. Our strategies to improve graduate employment are clearly working. While we have a negative flag for the full-time Highly skilled employment or further study metric (particularly among Young, White, and Male students), the variance to benchmark has narrowed from 3.4% in TEF Year 2 to 2.0% to TEF Year 3. At the same time, the number of negatively flagged years has reduced to one. For our part-time provision (n = 83), we have a negative flag for Employment or further study, and exclamation marks for both core DLHE-derived metrics and the supplementary Sustained employment or further study metric (especially among Young and BME students). In the part-time splits we have a negative flag for the core highly skilled employment or further study metric (White and Male students; n = 68 and 50 respectively) and the supplementary Above-median earnings or further study flag (Female students; n = 31). As mentioned in paragraph 13, these are mostly level-5 students who are resitting so may find it more difficult to secure graduate employment. They have access to the same opportunities as full-time students but are now also being actively targeted by interventions such as 'The Time is Now' and Kickstart.

39. **SO2.** Our Education Strategy prepares students for the **graduate jobs of the future** via our employer-informed curricula and opportunities for students to engage in enrichment activities. Outside the curriculum the Guild run their own volunteering projects and also host a volunteering brokerage platform, Volunteering Liverpool, which currently provides some 250 volunteering opportunities. The online MyLiverpool site also provides students with access to a wide range of

volunteering and other activities, as well as a platform to capture students' learning and achievements. Many of the activities are HEAR-recordable and can be used to support applications for employment or further study; 893 students graduated with HEAR-qualifying activity in their e-portfolios in 2016 and this increased to 1422 in 2017.

40. Based on the success of our partnership with Unilever and other top firms, the University has developed an **Employer Engagement Strategy** to develop strategic partnerships with 100 employers. Each has been selected on the basis of their strategic alignment with the values and mission of the University, including our commitment to internationalisation and widening participation. As a result of this strategy the partnerships are providing students with access to real-world projects and initiatives. 45 partners have hosted student placements and 80 have recruited our graduates in the last three years.

Case study: Employer engagement
Since 2013 teams of level-5/6 Maths students have worked with local businesses on six-week, business-risk projects. Supervised by PGRs and academics, the teams produce software and papers for publication and deliver presentations to industry bosses. Students benefit from the work experience, develop teamwork and presentation skills and see theory applied to real-world problems. Potential talent for PG study is also identified, while businesses secure access to a recruitment pool of work-ready graduates. Stuart Millward, CEO, SatSafe Technologies said, '*Working with the students on this project was a privilege and the quality of work was testament to the extremely high standards of Liverpool University's Department of Mathematical Sciences*'.

41. **SO3.** Our determination to secure positive outcomes for all shapes our policy and **practice in support of various under-represented groups**, including Mature students, students with disabilities, and students with mental-health issues, plus those on programmes in disciplines/professions known to be associated with poor wellbeing. Following the withdrawal of DSA support we now fund assistive technologies and transcribing services for disabled students and a new role of assistive technology technician has been established to support students in this area. We run KnowHow workshops to support the use of all these technologies (see **LE3**), and all students with support plans (586 in 2015/16) are encouraged to attend a one-to-one appointment with their Liaison Librarian to support training in the effective use of our information resources. Our overall approach is clearly working: our core metric for Continuation is starred and among those traditionally vulnerable student groups from disadvantaged backgrounds we also have a double positive flag among Mature students (93.8%).

42. We take a holistic approach to student welfare, providing general, targeted and specialist support. Our **Wellbeing Framework** (2014) is aligned to the 'Healthy Universities' framework and has four priorities (healthy lifestyle, mental health, supporting key transitions, and supporting diverse cultures and communities). Our signing of the Time to Change pledge to support positive approaches to mental health and our annual Wellbeing Week are just two examples of initiatives which have been introduced to support the Framework. Wellbeing Week is designed to promote interaction between staff and students and foster a greater sense of community, and 2017 saw over 1275 recorded engagements in 86 activities.

Case study: Supporting vulnerable students
We have invested in providing additional support for all students, including those most at risk of poor mental health, hardship or low retention. As an example, our Vet Peer Support Scheme was established in 2009 in response to the nationally high levels of suicide among vets. Each year, to supplement a dedicated counsellor at our Veterinary Science campus, some 40 peer supporters undertake 30 hours of counselling skills training and attend supervision sessions with a qualified counsellor. Peer supporters are available to all Veterinary Science students. Peter Jones, British Veterinary Association Past President, who attended a 2014 conference organised by the peer supporters said: "*I found your conference amongst the most rewarding meetings I've been to since being a member of the officer team at BVA. I will certainly be following up on the commitments I made to encourage peer support at all the vet schools and to explore how we might take this forward as a scheme for young new graduates working with our vet network.*"

43. In common with all universities we have experienced a growing demand for our student welfare services. In 2017 we moved **Student Welfare, Advice & Guidance** to a new central, high-profile location next to the Guild, and the number of initial face-to-face enquiries increased by 250% in the first quarter of 2017/18 year compared to 2016/17. Offering rapid support to international students via our 'quick question desk' has been a real success with enquiries rising by 38%. We recognise that not all students wish to access support through a central specialist service. All academic departments have trained staff, in addition to academic advisors, with appropriate skills and knowledge to provide advice and guidance locally, to respond to first-line enquiries and provide follow-up support. For consistency of provision a single 'When to refer' guidance document is used by all staff with student-facing roles.

44. As the **number and complexity of mental-health issues** presented by students have grown, we have built up institution-wide capacity to provide a consistent response, e.g. via a new compulsory staff e-learning module on mental wellbeing. We run mental-health first-aid training for staff and have also been working with Mental Health First Aid England to develop a training package specifically for HE. The training helps participants understand a range of mental-health issues, appropriate initial responses, and the type of support which is available. We run reflective-practice groups for staff to help them share good practice and develop skills in a range of topics, e.g. responding to suicidal ideation. We have recognised the value of **integrating academic and non-academic support** within our KnowHow workshop programme (LE3). We traditionally delivered wellbeing workshops through our Counselling Service but take-up was low. We therefore increased their visibility and accessibility by embedding them in the KnowHow academic support programme. Semester 1 registrations and attendances consequently both rose by 33% from 2016/17 to 2017/18. The Counselling Service also offers individual counselling, as well as support via our self-help hub, including podcasts, online cognitive behavioural therapy modules, and access to the 'Big White Wall', an anonymous moderated online community which allows students to access online support 24 hours a day.

45. We proactively **use research to inform practice**, and have collaborated with academics in Psychology on a study forthcoming in the *Journal of Mental Health* which investigates the variables impacting on student mental health. Social isolation was found to be the strongest predictor of mental distress and assessment stress was the most important academic predictor, while strong identification with university friendship groups was protective against mental distress. This highlights the importance of students developing social groups, and we facilitate this in several ways: advisors in student residences organise social activities on different scales, allowing less-confident students to mix with others in a structured environment; and our varied halls activity programme, together with the Guild's 'Give it a Go' programme, encourages students to meet each other and try out a new activity before committing to joining a society.

Conclusion

46. This provider submission provides a wealth of evidence of excellence against the TEF assessment criteria. It demonstrates that we offer a high-quality educational experience to all our students that encourages enquiry-based learning linked to our research, provides opportunities for personal enrichment, and is underpinned by personalised student support. PSRBs, employers and external examiners testify to the quality, rigour and intellectual stretch of our curricula and the consequent effective preparation of our graduates for highly skilled employment and practice. We react quickly to opportunities for improvement, and our strategies are proving effective. We are ensuring ownership of strategy and policy, and are committed to developing institutional and local practice which improves the quality of teaching and student outcomes. Our metrics, not only in absolute terms and relative to benchmark, but also in terms of recent trajectories, demonstrate that our student-centred approach is effective, and that a holistic assessment of our provision corresponds to Silver. But the final word should go to a student, our Guild President, '*This submission demonstrates teaching excellence and showcases the wonders of study at Liverpool. … Liverpool offers many aspirational opportunities and does not fail to deliver* '.