Name of Provider: University of Salford
UKPRN: 10007156

TEF Year 3 Provider Submission

1. Executive Summary

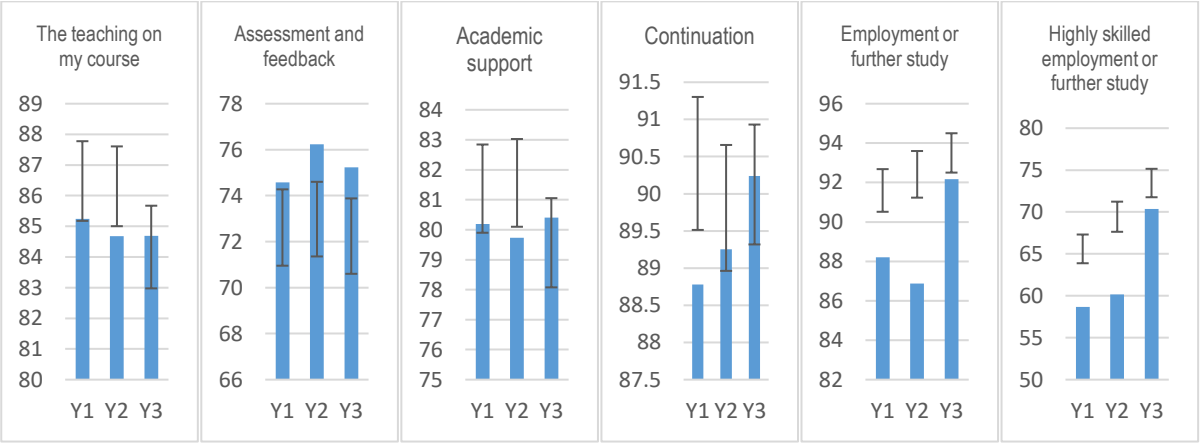
1.1 The University of Salford provides a distinctive, industry-focused education for our students in order that they thrive as learners and succeed as professionals. Our innovative and coherent strategy for education and the student experience, Salford Curriculum+, links policy to practice, and has delivered clear performance improvements:

- 5% rise in graduate employment and 10% increase in highly skilled employment since 2015/16.
- NSS second quartile for assessment and feedback.
- Good continuation in the context of our students' socio-economic background.
- Excellent part-time provision, demonstrated by double positive flags for continuation and highly-skilled employment.
- Top quartile placing in the 2017 Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey for 'industry engagement', rising 19 places in comparison to 2016.

We belive that the institution-wide implementation of our strategy, combined with our performance improvements, place our University in a strong position for a silver rating.

1.2 The student experience is set in a challenging context, with over half of our students being first-generation HE participants. Two thirds of Salford students come from areas with low-medium participation in Higher Education, falling within POLAR3 quintiles 1-3. The percentage of students who identify as BAME is 27.5%, which is 13.6% above the sector median. 16.6% of our students declare a disability, again higher than the sector median. Our students' social capital is relatively low on entry to the University. It is therefore our role to understand the challenges they face, and to support and enable them to succeed.

Salford compared with benchmark



1.3 The graphs above show our performance in each of the TEF metrics, for each of the three years, compared to the benchmark +/- 2 standard errors. In all metrics we have either maintained our above benchmark performance (as with assessment and feedback) or have made considerable improvements. In particular, we have made significant gains in Teaching, Academic Support and Continuation where we are firmly in, or beyond, the benchmark range. In each of these areas, we have a higher degree of control over our students' actual experiences. We have used our deep and developing understanding of our students' specific needs to tailor the experience for the different types of students we recruit. In designing and implementing these improvements we have come to appreciate that our students' attitudes and successes are materially affected by factors that we have adapted to in our provision, but are not included within the benchmark model. These factors include: the time and cost of commuting, personal resilience

(for example, physical and mental health), additional commitments on their time (for example caring responsibilities, work) and ready access to a supportive (familial) network.

1.4 We are extremely proud of the changes we have made to the experience of our students, and how this places them at the start of their career ladder. Many of these changes have been driven by a focus on industry collaboration in the design and delivery of our teaching and assessment. However, despite the significant gains we have made in employability, our latest performance in employment and highly-skilled employment appears to fall slightly short of the benchmark range. In addition to this being affected by factors outside our control (for example, the regional economy, desire of graduates to remain local), we believe that the additional factors noted above also influence their employment outcomes. Whilst there are good, technical reasons for not including these factors within the method, in practice, if they were included, we believe the benchmark range would increase, placing us in year 3 firmly within that range and underlining the successful outcomes that we enable our students to achieve.

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2. University of Salford Students' Union (USSU) response

At USSU we are proud to represent such a wide and diverse student body. When making any assessment of our institution it is very important to acknowledge the diversity of our student body.

With students from over 130 countries, over 5,500 BME students and a student population which is 47% mature we believe the TEF metrics do not adequately capture the life experiences of our students.

The majority of students recruited at the University of Salford are from communities that commonly face barriers to their education, particularly Higher Education. Our base in the North West of England, and more importantly Greater Manchester, means that we are surrounded by areas which have some of the UK's highest deprivation levels. Our 2016/2017 Access Agreement shows that 98.5% of our young full time undergraduates attended a state school/college with 19.4% of young full time undergraduates coming to us from a home area which falls within low participation in POLAR3.

To allow us to work towards a campus where all our students feel fully supported the Students' Union has, this year, introduced a new representation structure which now sees the election of four liberation officers dedicated to supporting students from the following student communities; BME Students, LGBT+ Students, Students with Disabilities and Women Students. In addition to this we also have elected officers dedicated to supporting International Students. This complements the work already being done by the University who, as a result of our commitment to Widening Participation, offer a large amount of support to all our students as well as targeted support

towards our most 'at risk' groups such as care leavers and looked after children, students with disabilities, students who are carers, and refugees and asylum seekers.

The Students' Union has a close working relationship with the University's Student Services team which allows us to ensure that students who require support during their time here can access this easily. Where required our Advice Centre will work alongside the Student Services team to deliver a cohesive and seamless approach to student support, often making the difference between a student's decision to leave the university or continue on their course.

In addition to this we also work alongside the Quality and Enhancement Office. Our school representatives attend and are involved in school level teaching quality committees and through them and other student representatives we have contributed to discussions around improvements in university regulations and policies, ensuring that student input is taken into account at all stages. In recent years this close working relationship has allowed us to have a significant impact on students' mental health and wellbeing by reducing their stress and anxiety whilst also supporting students to make decisions on their own.

As well as working closely with the University to support students on their course we also firmly believe in and support the University's wider commitment to providing industry-ready graduates. A large percentage of our students are likely to stay in the area once graduated and while this has clear economic benefits for the region it does mean that our students are not able to enjoy the same employment opportunities as those who graduate from institutions based in other regions.

The Students' Union plays a big part in the graduate internship scheme and offers a number of opportunities to recent graduates designed at increasing their career-readiness, in areas such as finance, events planning, commercial and social opportunities.

<u>What our students say</u>
Over the past six years USSU has coordinated our Student Led Teaching Awards. These awards celebrate excellent teaching across the University, and highlight to academics and professional staff the activity that our students value as examples of things they feel make for an excellent student experience. Each nomination allows the student to provide a reason for their nomination and we feel these really showcase the ways in which staff at the University of Salford work hard to create a community of support for their students. The open text nominations capture far more qualitative information about the quality of teaching provision here at Salford than is captured by the simplistic data driven metrics of the TEF. It is clear from the nominations we receive that students feel confident that staff will help and support them and they feel comfortable seeking this help when required:

"His teaching and coaching methodology places him at the top of many students go to support list. [He] has an arsenal of knowledge and experience in the industry, and often brings his vast network of contacts into the learning environment for students to take advantage of. When spending time with [him] you are made to feel like you are in continued collaboration with the learning process and he effortlessly gives you a sense of ownership towards your degree pathway." – 3rd Year BA Television and Radio

"He has been a huge support thanks to his ever-welcoming personality and the determination to help students achieve success regardless of how small or large the task may be." – 3rd Year Business & Management

"Her lectures are always entertaining. She uses a variety of different methods of teaching, so lectures are interactive and whenever we give feedback she listens to it and acts on it. She is always imaginative in the way she teaches, she doesn't teach by reading her lecture notes but she teaches from her heart. What makes her lectures interesting and unique is that she enjoys her subject, so the students develop the love of the subject." – 1st Year Biomedical Science

3. Salford Curriculum+

Course design and assessment practices provide scope for high levels of stretch that ensures all students are significantly challenged and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that are highly valued by employers (TQ1, TQ3)
Students are engaged with developments from the forefront of research, scholarship or practice, and are sometimes involved in these activities (LE2)

3.1 Salford Curriculum+ (SC+), our strategy for education and the student experience, aims to prepare students for life by linking their academic studies to real-world experiences. It provides an approach that enables staff, students and partners to learn and practise in environments that replicate industry standards. SC+ ensures academic programmes align with ten design principles[1]:

ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING Learning experiences are grounded in **applied pedagogic theory and practice**, preparing students for the real world. Learning places **both success and failure** as developmentally positive.	**CO-CREATED CURRICULA AND DELIVERY** Programmes produced by **academic experts**, **industry partners and students**. Educational experiences are **relevant to the world of work** and respected and valued by employers.	**INCLUSIVITY** **Educational experiences which allow all to achieve to the best of their ability**, regardless of background or prior attainment. Students can **personalise** what and how they learn.	**REAL-WORLD AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING** Learners engage with their discipline through **explicit links between learning and real-world scenarios** in **authentic environments**.	**DIGITAL FLUENCY** **Innovative technologies facilitate formal and informal learning,** helping students to build **digital, networked identities**.
LEARNER AUTONOMY Sound pedagogic practice moves learners from a **novice to an expert in their discipline** and forward as **lifelong learners.**	**AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT** Students tackle **real-world problems** that they will face in their careers, **emphasising critical application** over the ability to memorise information.	**EDUCATION FOR ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR** A commitment to producing **ethically aware and socially responsible graduates**.	**RESEARCH-INFORMED CURRICULUM** Informed by **cutting-edge research** and **professional practice**, actively involving students in **the creation of knowledge**.	**PATH TO PROFESSIONAL** Explicitly embedding **self-awareness, critical thinking and communication skills** and developing **professional behaviours**.

3.2 Over the last two years, we have undertaken a systematic process of curriculum design and staff development that has translated SC+ into academic practice, ensuring that students are motivated and stretched to achieve to the best of their potential. This has been delivered through team-based development with the student experience and employability as its spine. When designing or reviewing a programme academic teams, supported by expert educational developers, map the student journey through the course, identifying good practice to be shared and, in particular, gaps in provision where the curriculum design principles need to be boosted. Teams then set SMART actions to address issues, that are captured in Programme Action Logs. Monitoring reports are regularly reviewed by the University Student Experience, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee.

3.3 Our programmes are co-produced by academic experts in their field, industry partners, other key stakeholders and students themselves to ensure that their educational experiences and qualifications are contemporary, relevant to the world of work, and are respected and valued by employers. In this we are supported by our long-standing and extensive links with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies: a total of 265 academic programmes are accredited by 57 PSRBs. We also work with industry specialists: for instance, the Film Studies programme was designed with input from HOME, the major Manchester arts centre, and Watershed, a centre for culture, cinema and digital creativity in Bristol. The Occupational Health programme was co-

[1] University of Salford Curriculum Design Guide available at http://www.salford.ac.uk/qeo/iczready

designed with service users, thus ensuring that students are exposed to professional contexts throughout their studies.

3.4 We recognise that “one size doesn’t fit all” when the curriculum principles are put into practice and so disciplinary contexts influence how students experience active and collaborative learning. For example, at level 5, Civil Engineering students engage in a week-long Constructionarium field trip that requires them to design and build a structure in teams. It is often cited by students as significant in their journey to professional status. Architectural Design and Technology students work on group projects at level 5 to design and present workable refurbishment solutions for existing university buildings. Our undergraduate programme in Journalism, based at MediaCityUK, replicates industry practice by undertaking 15 newsdays to produce live TV/radio output or live published web/print content. These modules are facilitated by academic staff who are also practitioners. They mentor students to enable them to work as a team as well as build a portfolio of work and reflect on the development of their practice.

3.5 Teaching is research-informed and engages students as researchers. An excellent example is in Radiography, which includes our world leading Diagnostic Imaging research group. All first-year students take part in a week-long research project in which groups are given a practical problem to investigate. They produce a literature review and devise a research methodology. Having gathered data, groups present their findings to tutors and peers, reflecting on and proposing improvements to their practice. This research-led approach continues in year two culminating in the final-year individual research project undertaken by all students. It links academic and clinical learning, and helps students develop research skills that will be valuable in their professional lives. Expanding research-informed teaching is a key component of our new Research and Knowledge Exchange strategy. We will enhance our pedagogic research and implement a series of research opportunities for our students to enhance their experience and improve employability.

3.6 In keeping with our industry focus and our aim to prepare students for life, the University is almost at the NSS top quartile for application of learning. Engagement in professional practice plays a key role in supporting applied learning across our disciplines. For example, our podiatry clinic has been designed to give students hands-on experience as part of their degree programme. Working under the supervision of fully trained academic staff, students use state-of-the-art equipment and techniques to diagnose a wide range of ailments and provide treatment.

3.7 We have an established inclusive teaching framework that supports student achievement, regardless of their prior educational attainment or background – something that is particularly important given that two thirds of our students come from less advantaged backgrounds. Staff have been trained in the production of inclusive learning materials, which is complemented by enhanced study skills provision for all students. Academic programmes incorporate a flexible approach to curriculum delivery that minimises the need for special adjustments. Students can personalise their learning experience to suit their preferred learning style by, for example, offering negotiated assessment tasks.

3.8 As part of SC+ performance monitoring, we use TEF metric categories to identify programmes of study where performance requires improvement. The PRISM programme offers tailored, timely support, including staff development, for these Programmes Requiring Institutional Support and Monitoring. Each of the programmes identified as needing targeted support in 2015/16 saw NSS overall student satisfaction increase by 5% in 2017.

4. Authentic Assessment

Course design and assessment practices provide scope for high levels of stretch that ensures all students are significantly challenged and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that are highly valued by employers (TQ4)

4.1 Student satisfaction with assessment and feedback is consistently high, as demonstrated by the positive flag against the core metric benchmark. Salford is in the NSS second quartile

nationally for assessment and feedback. Student satisfaction is supported by a key facet of SC+: authentic assessment. Our curriculum design process includes a focus on tasks that are meaningful and applicable outside of abstracted academic environments.

4.2 Making a successful transition to level 4 study can be challenging for any student, and in particular for those who enter university with vocational qualifications. That is why we invest significantly in supporting our students, almost half of whom enter with BTEC qualifications, to develop their assessment literacy. This includes using a standard institutional assessment brief which clearly sets out the intended learning outcomes and marking criteria for the task. In making our expectations of our students transparent and accessible we have learned from the HEA-led "What Works?" initiative to 'demystify' the assessment process. To further build our learners' confidence, staff 'unpack' the assignment with students to check their understanding of the task. In Graphic Design, for example, students work with the programme team to review grade descriptors, establishing a shared language that is reflected in co-created descriptors that complement the individualised feedback students receive. Students also take on the role of tutor in order to mark and moderate a mock assessment.

4.3 Analysis of institutional data indicated that there may be barriers preventing students who have failed one or more pieces of summative assessment from participating in the main reassessment period in the latter part of the summer vacation. Our research suggested that a primary barrier, particularly for level 4 students, was the length of time that lapsed between the original assessment, which may have been before Christmas, and the reassessment opportunity. We also studied the innovative model of year-round reassessment windows developed by our School of the Built Environment as part of its move to offering two-year accelerated undergraduate degrees. Based on the success of this approach we now offer in-year assessment retrieval at level 4, supporting students who are failing modules by allowing them to resit in-year rather than having to wait until late summer. This initiative is relatively recent and initial data is promising.

4.4 As our students progress through their studies, they engage with simulations of the real-world problems that they will face in their careers, moving to increasingly "live" scenarios. At level 5, Human Resource Management students work on live briefs provided by Salford City Council. In Health Sciences, students take on live scenarios in the specialist "daily living" suite. This allows them to practise clinical skills in a controlled environment prior to engaging with external placements.

4.5 In engineering, modules across a level are linked by an innovative integrated design project which brings together students in multidisciplinary teams. The project simulates the working environment students will enter on graduation. Each group receives a client brief to produce a design for a piece of engineering infrastructure. Over the course of the academic year, groups develop their design, supported by tutors in weekly sessions in a flipped and problem-based learning approach. These examples from across the University evidence our scaffolded engagement with industry at all levels of study, incorporating extensive use of simulated and real-world environments to equip students not just with disciplinary knowledge but also with skills that are highly valued by employers.

5. Teaching at Salford

An institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching has been implemented at the provider (TQ2, LE2)

5.1 Our institutional focus on excellent teaching is driven by academic leaders and supported by the Quality and Enhancement Office (QEO). Through the QEO we provide initial and continuing professional development for academic and academic-related staff. The staff development programme centres on developing both individual practice in learning, teaching and assessment, and ways for programme teams to work together in delivering an excellent academic experience.

5.2 Academic job descriptions emphasise teaching expertise alongside academic qualifications and/or industry experience. The UK Professional Standards Framework informs our reward and recognition procedures, which include a teaching and learning route. The academic promotions procedure is underpinned by devolved accountability at school level. This affords schools greater autonomy and agility in recognising and rewarding, and retaining, outstanding talent and performance. Our established performance and development process supports professional and personal growth, and teaching excellence is an intrinsic part of annual performance and development review.

5.3 All new members of academic staff are assigned a mentor for the duration of their probationary period. If they do not hold a teaching qualification, new staff complete our PG Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) as a condition of their probation. The programme is run by the QEO, has been in place since 2001 and is accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) at the level of Fellow. At its most recent HEA re-accreditation in 2016, the PGCAP received thirteen commendations, including for the programme design that brings together teaching staff and learning support staff. The panel concluded that the "University of Salford demonstrate a clear institutional commitment to supporting staff to engage with professional development, the narrative clearly demonstrates that engagement with the UKPSF is both encouraged and expected by the institution across all relevant staff who teach and/or support learning".[2]

5.4 The QEO coordinates the HEA Fellowship Support Scheme which enables staff to achieve external recognition for teaching excellence. The scheme offers group workshops and personalised support for applications at the level of Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow. This approach has been instrumental in the significant rise in the percentage of academic staff holding teaching qualifications. In 2014/15, 46% of academic staff held a teaching qualification compared to 69% in 2017. A further 10% of staff are currently undertaking the PGCAP.[3]

Teaching Recognition	%
Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow, Principal Fellow	48
Other HE teaching qualification	21
PGCAP (new staff)	10
Not currently recognised	21

5.5 We also provide a Leadership Development Programme. It includes sessions that bring together over one hundred senior academic and professional services staff every three months to consider one priority theme for the University. Recommendations arising from these sessions are considered by the Vice-Chancellor's team for implementation. More informally, the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience regularly host 'café conversations' offering colleagues the opportunity to meet and discuss University themes and issues.

5.6 The University celebrates excellent teaching in a number of ways. Our Teaching and Learning Showcases provide the opportunity to share best practice across disciplines. Showcase themes have included work-based learning and acting as our own 'industry partner' by providing internships within the University.

5.7 The annual Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Awards for individuals and teams reward outstanding contributions in teaching, professional development and curriculum innovation. The awards also aim to raise the ambition of winners to springboard to national recognition of teaching excellence. For example, a recent winner of a Vice-Chancellor's teaching award went on to become a National Teaching Fellow in 2017. This member of staff is now contributing to the ongoing professional development of colleagues across the institution. Our University-sponsored

[2] HEA Accreditation Panel outcome and feedback, July 2016
[3] University of Salford HR staffing records, 2017

awards are complemented by the University of Salford Students' Union Annual Teaching Awards which include best teacher and best personal tutor.

5.8 Our institutional culture encourages curriculum innovation. We offer specific support through the Student Experience Enhancement Projects scheme. This is one of our newer initiatives. Funding is awarded to innovative projects that directly benefit students and improve their experience at Salford. In 2016/17, for example, 29 applications were received and 13 projects received funding. Evidence of impact is in the process of being gathered.

5.9 We were delighted to have been shortlisted in the HEA Global Teaching Excellence Awards 2017. The awards are open to all providers of higher education and entries were received from all around the world. An international panel of judges shortlisted just 27 institutions, in recognition of their institution-wide approaches to developing innovation in teaching excellence. Salford was also shortlisted for two Times Higher Awards in 2017, for Outstanding University Entrepreneurship and International Collaboration of the Year.

5.10 We actively engage with our peer group of Alliance Universities in developing teaching excellence. We are a founder member of the Teaching Excellence Alliance (TEA) programme. The TEA develops, defines and champions our universities' distinctive teaching excellence, as well as supporting a culture of continuous improvement and professional development for teaching staff. Since its inception in 2016, the TEA has been working on a 'toolkit' that will best serve the collective development of teaching practice. An initial two-day staff development event, the 'TEA Sandpit', was attended by 60 staff from across Alliance universities, with six colleagues from Salford. Outputs from the event directly shaped two proposals to the Alliance vice-chancellors' group: a CPD programme for Alliance staff and a Peer Review College. Both proposals have received funding for the coming two years. Although a relatively new venture, Salford's leading involvement in the TEA exemplifies our commitment to pedagogic distinctiveness.

5.11 Whilst many of our academics hold doctorates in their discipline, we equally value the industry experience colleagues bring into the University. Students also benefit from industry practitioners who teach on programmes of study as visiting lecturers and specialist tutors. Examples of industry involvement can be found across the institution, from programmes in health where students work with qualified nurse mentors, to TV, radio and journalism where BBC and ITV professionals deliver sessions on industry skills. Students of criminology are taught by industry partners in order to develop critical knowledge in an applied context. Prior to undertaking an industry work placement, these students work with a group of criminal justice partners, including a criminal defence barrister, a senior police officer, a magistrate and those who support victims and at-risk children. In arts and media courses, our "January extra" programme offers students at all levels the opportunity to participate in interdisciplinary projects with industry partners such as Salford City Council and the Peel Group, a major Greater Manchester property, media, transport and infrastructure company.

6. Wrap-around Student Support

Appropriate levels of contact time, including personalised provision, secures high levels of engagement and commitment to learning and study from students (LE1, SO3)

6.1 We work concertedly to understand our students and their needs. Making extensive use of student data reporting helps us "wrap" our processes and practices around the student journey. Our guiding principle is: "What I need to know now is…". Informed by our internal participation data, our strategy is to flex physical and digital resources to effectively address students' issues as they arise. As the external landscape and our student demographic evolves, we will continue to work on maximising student engagement and belonging. Part of this involves deploying extra support for areas of student wellbeing in times of peak demand.

6.2 Support starts before students have joined us, in order to aid their transition into HE. Applicants receive a set of 'Conversion Communications' to help them prepare for life as a Salford student.

This is complemented by dedicated ‘Applicant Days’ for those holding offers from the University. Typically taking place in December, February and April, these events offer applicants the opportunity to visit the University in a relaxed environment and find out more about life at Salford and in Manchester. Applicants can explore the campus and facilities, tour university accommodation, and gain a more detailed insight into their academic programme. In 2016, 1,642 applicants attended these days; this rose to 1,845 in 2017.

6.3 At the start of the academic year, we send new students a comprehensive pack of ‘Life at Salford’ material, providing them with details about studying on campus and the surrounding area, with the aim of enabling them to feel at home as quickly as possible. A key part of fostering a sense of belonging is Welcome Week, which we have reviewed and considerably improved since 2015. We consulted students on what they wanted from the week and their feedback clearly demonstrated a desire for them to feel a sense of belonging at the University, and more widely in Salford. As a result we developed ‘Welcome Home’, a communications campaign and supporting project that draws on Salford’s rich heritage and provides an immediate sense of place and belonging. Welcome Home gives students all the information they need about registration, finding accommodation, getting to know Salford and travel. At the last Welcome Week, over 120 events were scheduled, including introductory lectures and seminars that engaged students with their programme and cohort. A Welcome Hub in each school saw staff, more experienced students and the University’s wellbeing team deliver soup, tea and support to 700 students who were feeling a little overwhelmed starting at university. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with 97% saying they felt welcome or very welcome during their first week. The excellent work of Welcome Home has been nationally recognised, reaching the final shortlist of four projects in the ‘Best Creative Comms’ category at the national Comms2Point0 Awards.

6.4 We have a working model for pastoral intervention that draws together personal advising, academic tutoring, peer mentoring and stretch and challenge, into a cohesive support package. This concept reconfigures personal tutoring, steering it away from perceptions of a ‘remedial’ service and into a framework focused upon self-improvement and personal ‘fitness’. It allows flexibility and scope for the system to identify and tailor support for struggling students, whilst pushing those who are already working well, offering value-added provision, and helping students aim higher. We are in the process of training academic staff in coaching skills to support the roll out of the working model.

6.5 Alongside support from academic staff, our Library provides Skills for Learning, a programme of workshops, drop-ins, individual and online learning. Pre-arrival students access an online package that helps them understand what it means to study at university. Most academic programmes offer Skills for Learning as an embedded part of the curriculum, particularly at level 4. Training includes academic writing, critical analysis, research and information literacy, referencing and digital skills. In addition to these sessions, the Library offers a range of online learning opportunities. In 2016/17, there were 10,795 unique page views of the Skills for Learning website.

6.6 We make extensive use of learning analytics in understanding student needs. For example, all staff have access to an online dashboard that analyses performance at module and programme level. The dashboard uses risk ratings that include institutional and national subject-specific targets, taking appropriate account of comparative sector data as well as absolute values. The data include admissions statistics, module evaluations and feedback from staff/student committees, NSS results, continuation, student achievement, external examiner reports and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body reports, where applicable. Programme teams maintain an action log – a rolling, dynamic document that sets out plans for improvement and identifies good practice for dissemination. Action logs are monitored by School executive teams and are available online to all staff and students as part of our ongoing dialogue for enhancement.

6.7 As a key part of our commitment to supporting students so that they can access the right support at the right time, in 2015, we drew together all student-facing services under a single umbrella called askUS. It was co-created with students and named by them. AskUs offers support

on a wide range of issues, including money matters, accommodation, visas, careers and employability, IT, wellbeing and disability. Instead of being directed through several service points, our students access a “one-stop shop”. As well as its online presence, askUS is physically located in the same building as the Students’ Union, a tangible sign of our close working with the SU.

6.8 We have embedded a comprehensive suite of mental health services through askUS in response to the fact that, like many other providers, we have seen an increase in the number of students presenting with mental health conditions which, in the absence of the right kind of support, can jeopardise successful engagement with studies. Our services include specialist support via the disability service, one-to-one sessions with a wellbeing advisor, and information and events on topics including self-confidence, stress and anxiety. We provide proactive training for staff in how to spot potential mental health issues in students and to ensure they feel confident in providing appropriate guidance and signposting to specialist services. This training is delivered in ‘Psychological First Aid’ workshops. To date, half of our academic staff with substantive teaching duties have taken part, with coverage extending across all academic schools. Building on sector research which shows that a wide range of staff in student-facing roles may be the first to spot signs of potential mental distress, staff from all professional services and the Students’ Union have participated in this rolling programme of Psychological First Aid workshops.

6.9 We recognise that some students face specific challenges. For example, we provide specialised advice and wellbeing services for care leavers. This starts during the application process when prospective students are invited to meet with the dedicated askUS team and other care leavers who are students at the University. We encourage our care leavers to volunteer to mentor other care-experienced young people at local schools. Our work in supporting care leavers extends beyond the University through our involvement in developing the National Network for the Education of Care-Leavers (NNECL) since its beginnings in 2011.

6.10 We also provide specialist support for transgender students. The Higher Education Funding Council for England has recognised our work towards being a Trans friendly university as sector-leading and innovative.[4] Over a two-year period we have seen a seven-fold increase in the number of students seeking support in relation to gender transition or gender questioning. Taking a collaborative, student-led approach, the University undertook an exploration of the support available. This led to employing a Trans student to develop an action plan and dedicated webpages. Links with local organisations and charities were also strengthened, and all frontline askUS staff have undertaken Trans awareness training.

6.11 Student feedback on the service provided by askUS is consistently excellent. When asked “how knowledgeable was the person helping you today?”, 94% of students rated askUS staff highly. The approval rating for friendly and helpful staff was even higher, at 97%. The service resolves 93% of enquiries immediately or through same-day appointment. The askUS service is continuing to hone its offer to meet the needs of students. We have reconfigured the front-facing service desk to enable a more flexible approach to providing support, including using mobile technology to allow help to go to the student rather than the other way around. Extended hours and Saturday opening is in response to flexible modes of study, and we have introduced live chat and a responsive twitter feed for a quick resolution of queries. Students are therefore able to dip in and out of channels, for instance moving from online into a phone consultation or a face-to-face meeting.

6.12 We continue to innovate our student support and are addressing future challenges through partnership working with the Students’ Union and through our askUS strategic delivery plans. Whilst evolving and enhancing student support will continue to present challenges, as a University we are confident that we are equipped with the right knowledge, expertise and processes to support students to succeed.

[4] Equality Challenge Unit, *Sector-leading and innovative practice in advancing equality and diversity*, available at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2017/edpractice/

7. Engaging Our Students

Excellent outcomes for students in particular with regard to retention and progression into highly-skilled employment and further study (LE3, SO3)

7.1 We use a range of leading indicators and influencing factors to review performance in relation to retention and to give us assurance that our activities are having a positive impact. This is brought together in our University Progression Framework which has implemented a number of initiatives and projects, some building on business as usual and others seeking to deliver new activities and processes. We are making good progress in addressing retention with the most recent internal data for continuation from 2016/17 to 2017/18 showing that performance has improved by 2% from 86.5% to 88.5%. This does not include students who leave the University but go on to study at another HE institution. Giving the lag in incorporating data into TEF, this improvement will not be seen in TEF metrics for another three years.

7.2 Since 2015, student progression administrators (SPAs) in each school use participation and engagement data to identify disengaging students. The SPAs work with academic staff to provide timely interventions, for example by linking students directly into the appropriate support services. Cross-institutional teams work with live retention data, responsively using student performance to track the effectiveness of actions. One such team developed the 'Thinking of Leaving?' workshops. Students who may be considering leaving the University are encouraged by staff to attend weekly support workshops run by the wellbeing team. Last year, 76% of students attending these workshops remained with the University. These instances are the beginning of far reaching enhancements in our use of intelligent analytics to develop practices which systematically foster student success.

7.3 Another use of analytics is our piloting of a new system, StREAM. It offers an opportunity to make positive interventions for those students at risk of early withdrawal, using algorithms from centralised data points such as library book loans, online assessment submissions and tutorial attendance. Automated alerts flag students with below average engagement and allow personal tutors, programme leaders and SPAs to foster positive conversations and deliver targeted personal, relevant and timely support. Importantly, students can access their own data by logging into their personal profile to check how they are performing.

7.4 Our investment in new student residences on campus has been a key commitment to improving the sense of community amongst our students. As well as bringing more students into high-quality accommodation on campus, the new residences provide a wellbeing network through the 'Denizen' initiative. Launched in 2015, Denizen is run by the Students' Union with support from the University. It offers peer support from student reps who receive general training about the role and its responsibilities from the Students' Union and specific wellbeing training from the University.

7.5 In addition to institution-wide initiatives, as part of our Progression Framework each school has local interventions that are informed by detailed cohort analysis, including the percentage of students entering through clearing and reasons for interruption/withdrawal. Schools then identify priority programmes for intervention. Actions and outputs are monitored by the Deans and the Vice-Chancellor's team on a quarterly basis.

8. Cutting-edge Learning Resources

High-quality physical and digital resources are used by students to enhance learning (LE1)

8.1 Our industry-standard infrastructure provides high-quality physical and digital resources that enhance our students' learning experience. All students have the University's Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) embedded in their modules. We were one of the first universities to introduce minimum standards for online provision, in 2011, and many of our modules exceed these standards. Requirements include staff contact details, assessment information and learning resources provided in advance and in an accessible format.

8.2 Our campus at MediaCityUK (MCUK), opened in 2011, positions our students at the heart of one of the most exciting regeneration projects in the UK and in close proximity to a locus of creative and media industries. In September 2015, we launched the Studio for International Media and Technology at MCUK as an interdisciplinary collaboration between the School of Arts and Media and the School of Computing, Science and Engineering. This move has hugely accelerated cross-disciplinary collaborations between students working on industry briefs and enabled them to achieve higher standards of work which is regularly judged and showcased at professional level.

8.3 Since 2015 there has been particularly significant investment in our physical estate on our Peel Park (main) campus. New £81M student residences on campus are helping to consolidate a sense of community. We have opened the £55M arts centre, incorporating cutting-edge technology and facilities including theatre and performance space and design ateliers. Our state-of-the-art Megalab for students of environment and life sciences provides world-class teaching facilities equipped with the latest technologies.

8.4 In nursing and midwifery, we have opened a £1.1M simulation suite which allows students to practise skills in a safe environment under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. The facility includes an adult and a children's ward, treatment room, nurse's station, a midwifery home area and labour room. Our newest venture is the construction of a "maker space" that brings together academics, students and industry in an informal environment where innovators can gain assistance with product development and prototyping, and students can engage in live industry briefs.

8.5 We have also developed new social (learning) spaces. The most recent is the B'Hive suite for students in health, society and health sciences. The B'Hive features bookable rooms, informal spaces and a breakout space for active and collaborative learning. As part of our internship scheme, an intern was part of the project team from planning to opening. Her work involved gathering student views on the existing learning spaces, acting as a point of contact with various managers involved in the project, and auditing usage of the completed space.

8.6 The £6M redevelopment of the Library provides flexible learning spaces and facilities that meet our students' needs in our 24-hour campus. Students have been central to steering the direction of the Library redevelopment. They shaped the design and layout, better zoning to allow for quiet study as well as group work, and a more natural flow through the building. One of our key objectives was to minimise disruption to students throughout this major work. To that end, we engaged with our established student Library Champions as well as with the wider community of student reps. As a result, a student-generated, comprehensive list of workarounds was put in place, such as setting up pop-up libraries, ensuring that no work took place during exam time and prioritising work overnight. The University paid a premium for the cost of the project to enable these workarounds, recognising the essential role the Library plays in our students' experience.

8.7 Student involvement in the Library redevelopment did not stop there: we also commissioned students to supply artwork for walls and a piece of sculpture for the courtyard. This was done in the form of a competition with the successful candidates being given a sum of money to cover production costs. At various points in the project, broadcast journalism students interviewed stakeholders for the University's own Shock Radio. The Library contractors gave masterclasses to students of quantity surveying and the lead designer was a guest lecturer for interior design students. Finally, one of our photography students was commissioned to create a time lapse film of the development. This project amply illustrates our commitment to act as 'our own industry partner' and provide work-based learning opportunities for our students. We continuously gather student feedback on the Library, as we do with other learning resources. Since we have redeveloped the Library, student satisfaction has risen considerably, from 81% in 2016 to 88% in 2017.

9. Path to Professional

Excellent outcomes for students in particular with regard to retention and progression into highly-skilled employment and further study (LE2, S01, SO2)

9.1 We are increasingly effective in supporting excellent student outcomes. In year 3 of the TEF metrics, we had a 5% rise in graduate employment and 10% increase in highly skilled employment, with employment or further study on benchmark. Data from the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) survey indicates positive, on-benchmark sustained employment. LEO data offers a balanced view of Salford graduate employment, showing that while some of our graduates may take longer than six months to enter employment, after three years their employment is sustained. Notably, our part-time highly skilled cohort returns a metric in the top 10% of absolute performance, in line with the vocational nature of our part-time provision. A number of regional, contextual and demographic factors explain our performance and we recognise that graduate employment is a path to improvement.

9.2 To support student outcomes, we have adopted an approach tailored to our diverse demographic. This has resulted in, for example, an improving rate of employment in our disabled students and a strong increase in highly skilled employment from 54% in 2013 to 66% in the most recent year. This is a complex population for us to support as more disabled students are from the highest two polar quintiles (c. 55%) compared to the majority of the student population, and more are mature students.

9.3 Tailored employability advice and guidance starts from the moment students decide to study at Salford, through to graduation and beyond. At registration students are asked to complete a survey on their work experience, career readiness and employability needs. On average, 97% complete the survey. Their answers enable us to offer a personalised approach to employability by providing relevant support and development opportunities.

9.4 A key thread running through employability development is enabling our students to make the critical link between their studies and their future engagement, as professionals, in the wider world. In the Business School, for example, all first-year students take the Professional Development module. The module is delivered in conjunction with the Careers Service and includes input from a wide range of external organisations. It prepares students for placement and job applications, including practice interviews, and ensures that they all develop their CV and professional online presence. The CLOCK scheme in Law provides an excellent example of linkage between academic knowledge and professional practice. Specially trained law students support clients who for various reasons cannot access legal support from private solicitors or through legal aid. Activity has focused on benefits appeals tribunals, where there is a substantial local need. Students use the skills developed within the University to provide a real service to the local community and to have a real-world impact. Students also engage in external talent development programmes, such as that run by the Edinburgh International Television Festival. The aim of the programme is to identify and nurture the next generation of talent from all backgrounds and kick-start their careers in the television industry. In 2017, Salford students were particularly successful, as noted by the programme director Campbell Glennie: “It’s fantastic to see 15 of the University’s students and alumni shortlisted for our assessment days. This is the highest number of any single institution, and a testament to their drive and industry awareness.”[5]

9.5 Many of our students will go on to develop portfolio careers, particularly those graduating from digital and creative arts programmes. With this in mind, the University supports the development of entrepreneurial skills both through the Careers Service and within modules. For example, students of Dance take a creative entrepreneur module that includes ideas generation, project management and business planning. Not all health professionals work in the NHS and so final-year students in

[5] University of Salford Staff Channel, ‘Industry links give students invaluable experience’, July 2017, available at http://staff.salford.ac.uk/newsitem/5799

Health Sciences take the Into Employment module that develops knowledge and skills relating to practice in the private sector.

9.6 In line with our industry focus, we operate as ‘our own industry partner’ by offering an internal internship scheme. For example, in 2017 67 interns completed three-month periods with the University and Students’ Union. Eight months after completing the internship, the graduates were surveyed and responses show that 95% were in work or further study. The University has also benefitted from the programme, with interns contributing to the development of new and existing learning spaces.

9.7 We also work closely with Santander to boost students’ employability. Since 2015/16, Santander has awarded £117,500 of funding to arrange 3 month paid internships with local SMEs. This ongoing relationship has been positively reviewed by Santander and employers:

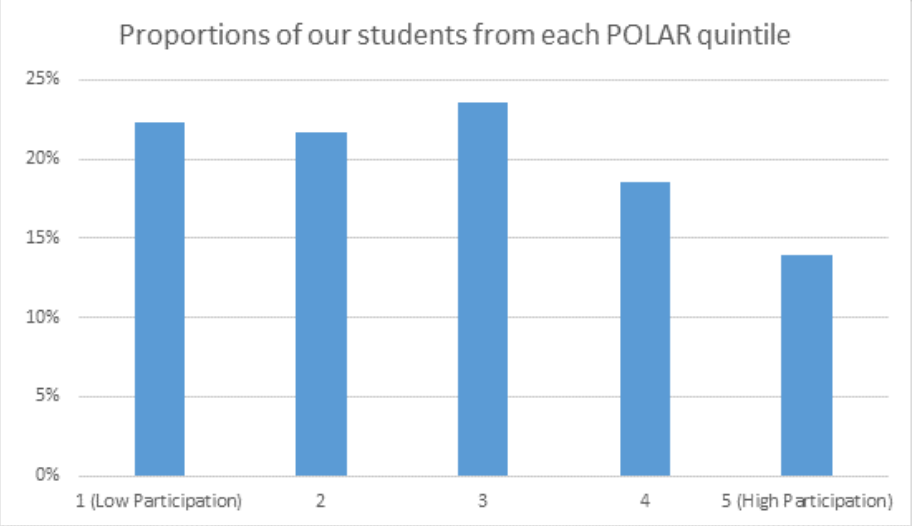
> “We have found the scheme to be a real win-win situation. The interns get a paid placement in an environment where they can learn from experienced people in their field and add to their CVs, while being remunerated for the valuable contributions they make to a company's real output.” Adam Morrell, UX & Optimisation Director, Banc search engine marketing company

> “The Santander Internship programme has been a great success for our organisation. […] The value added has been evidenced by a doubling in monthly website visitors, greater online visibility (including SEO ranking), improved customer conversions and an increase in new client enquiries. […] Consequently, we have offered [the intern] a permanent position within our team and would have no hesitation in recommending the internship programme to other organisations.” Molly Marsden, Marketing Executive, Grass Roots Recruitment

9.8 Alongside employability development sessions, students can access focused training opportunities. Our business boot camps run four times a year and are aimed at students who have a business idea but need support in formulating the next steps. They provide two days of intensive training and development. In 2015/16, for example, the Enterprise Team engaged with 946 students overall, 126 of whom attended boot camps. The team supported students who created 67 business ventures and awarded £15,000 in start-up grants.

9.9 Our most recent development has been to open a branch of Unitemps on campus. This is a strategic investment by the University to more effectively coordinate and grow student engagement with paid employment opportunities. Unitemps refers students to support from the Careers Service, helping them develop their job seeking and career planning skills. It also helps them reflect on what they want to gain or have gained from engaging in employment, and to recognise how this can enhance and provide evidence of their employability. In its first year of operation 3084 students registered with Unitemps.

9.10 Understanding the distance travelled by Salford students means understanding that our students see their career prospects constrained by their location, geographic differences in employment opportunities and average wages, and by their socio-economic background. Two thirds are from more disadvantaged areas, with a much higher proportion from the lower participation neighbourhoods than nationally, as evidenced by the POLAR3 classification:



9.11 This set of conditions is a major influence on student outcomes, in line with the findings of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) 2016 working paper on graduate earnings[6]. The challenging socio-economic background of most Salford graduates means that they are less likely to have financial support from parents, are less likely to be able to take advantage of higher education as a socially immersive experience, and are less likely to have access to social capital.

9.12 Most of our graduates choose to stay in the region rather than relocate for work. Whilst seeing our students remain in the north west is a positive outcome for the region, it is a significant factor that should be considered in the assessment of our employment metrics. This is in part due to the competitive nature of the graduate employment market in the north west and especially in Greater Manchester, which is an attractive destination for geographically mobile graduates from other areas. It is also in part due to the nature of the regional economy, which offers fewer highly-skilled posts than other parts of the country. This limiting geographic factor is not taken into account by sector benchmarking.

9.13 Where there is growth in graduate employment opportunities in the region, it is largely in non-traditional highly-skilled professions such as the creative arts, media and technology, which tend to entail portfolio careers. Such employment tends not to be well captured by the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey as it takes place just six months after graduation. As noted previously, the LEO data offer a more balanced view of graduate employment. This is supported by the Department for Education report on the graduate labour market for 2016[7]. It shows that graduates aged 21-30 had lower highly skilled employment rates than any of the other graduate age categories, which may suggest that it takes time for graduates to become established in the labour market or to reach the higher levels in organisations that are captured by the high-skilled employment rate measure.

9.14 Bearing the above in mind, Salford students bridge a very wide gap in successfully completing their studies and finding employment. We enhance their outcomes by ensuring their exposure to an active learning experience and an industry-focused, research-informed curriculum. As a University, we have adapted quickly to the changes to Higher Education and we are clearly focussed on our vision to make Salford the university of choice for students wanting a hands-on, work-based, high quality learning experience. The pace of the changes we have made, together with the additional demographic and other factors we respond to, means that an assessment of Silver would more accurately reflect the lived experience of our current students.

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[6] Britton et el., *How English domiciled graduate earnings vary with gender, institution attended, subject and socio-economic background*, Institute for Fiscal Studies, April 2016
[7] Department for Education, *Grade labour market statistics 2016*, April 2017, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610805/GLMS_2016_v2.pdf