

## Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Year Two provider submission

### Provider Context

#### The University

1. Bishop Grosseteste University (the University; BGU) is a small Higher Education Institution (HEI) based in Lincoln, Lincolnshire. Its mission is to excel at teaching, learning and research, enabling all students to achieve the highest possible standard in their chosen field. The established portfolio of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses has expanded in recent years to include a full range of social sciences and humanities programmes, delivered through three academic Schools. To accommodate this growth and diversification, the single-site campus has benefited from a refurbished and extended library, teaching and learning spaces, and investment in information technology.
2. The University participates in regional widening participation networks covering Lincolnshire and the East and North East Midlands and makes an important contribution to the socio-economic prosperity of the region by engaging with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Economic Partnership (GLLEP) to address the education, training and skills needs identified in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).<sup>1</sup>

#### Local and regional context

3. Lincolnshire's east coast contains districts that are among the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally. Urban centres such as Lincoln, Gainsborough, Grantham and Boston also contain districts with significant deprivation.<sup>2</sup> At 21%, Lincolnshire has fewer people qualified to Level 4 and above than both the East Midlands (24%) and England and Wales (27%)<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, the proportion of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A\* to C in 2014-5, at 65.2%, is less than that for England (66.5%).<sup>4</sup> A smaller proportion (7.1%) of Lincolnshire's residents were born outside the UK compared to both England (13.8%) and the East Midlands (9.9%). Analysis of ethnicity shows a very similar picture to country of birth. While 14% of the population nationally identify with a minority ethnic group, 1% of the Lincolnshire population describe their ethnic background as 'Asian' or 'Asian British', and 0.4% as 'Black'.<sup>5</sup>
4. The University's student population, drawn primarily from Lincolnshire (44%) and the East Midlands (63%), is reflective of the socio-economic characteristics of the county; 84% of BGU students<sup>6</sup> identify with one or more 'widening participation' characteristic<sup>7</sup>.
5. The combination of lower than expected qualification rates and participation in higher education (HE), high levels of multiple deprivation, poor social mobility prospects<sup>8</sup>, and low-skilled employment across the region means that BGU plays an important role in raising aspirations and supporting students to achieve and secure employment and further study.
6. The University's successful track record attracting and supporting students to achieve positive outcomes is confirmed in the latest Access Agreement monitoring report<sup>9</sup>. Between 2010-11

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan

<sup>2</sup> Lincolnshire County Council (2015) Indices of Deprivation 2015; English Indices of Deprivation 2015

<sup>3</sup> Lincolnshire County Council (2013) Qualifications levels in Lincolnshire

<sup>4</sup> Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), January 2016

<sup>5</sup> Lincolnshire County Council (2013) Country of birth, ethnicity and nationality of Lincolnshire Residents

<sup>6</sup> BGU student enrolment records 2015-6; BGU Access Agreement 2017-8

<sup>7</sup> low-income background, low-participation neighbourhood, mature, disabled, BME, or male

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education (2016) Social Mobility Index

<sup>9</sup> BGU (2017) Access Agreement monitoring report - 2015-6

and 2014-5, BGU consistently met, or exceeded, its target for recruitment of students (young, full-time, undergraduate entrants) from NS-SEC classes 4-7. In 2014-5 43.9% of BGU students were recruited from this category compared to a target of 39.4%. Similarly, BGU's target to recruit 16.7% of the student population from low participation neighbourhood (POLAR 3) has consistently been met or exceeded; with 17.4% of the 2014-5 entrants being drawn from these neighbourhoods.

7. The University has further developed its approach to widening participation and outreach activity by leading the Lincolnshire consortia (LiNCHigher) of education providers participating in the HEFCE-funded National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). LiNCHigher builds on BGU's successful track record and reputation for providing opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study and succeed in HE. LiNCHigher is targeting six 'Gap Areas' which demonstrate low levels of participation in HE by young people overall and where progression to HE is lower than expected.

#### Strategic approach to excellence in Teaching and Learning

8. The strategic themes of the University's Five Year Strategy (2014-19)<sup>10</sup> are supported by a 'People Strategy' that addresses 'academic reward and recognition' and 'workforce planning'.<sup>11</sup> The Workforce Plan is reviewed annually, as part of the business planning cycle, to ensure appropriate staffing is available and deployed to support excellence in teaching and learning. This process is underpinned by a Learning Development Policy<sup>12</sup> that encourages engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) and provides support for progression to Reader and Professorial title.
9. The senior leadership team (SLT)<sup>13</sup> provides strategic leadership for the development and enhancement of teaching and learning excellence. SLT is supported by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) comprising Heads of School and managers with specialist portfolios. The latter includes specialists in teaching, learning and research, located in two Centres; the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the Research and Innovation Centre (RIC). The Academic Enhancement Committee (AEC), and its sub-committees,<sup>14</sup> maintains oversight of teaching, learning and quality enhancement and reports directly to the Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.
10. In 2015-6 the University participated in several external reviews, inspections and audits.<sup>15</sup> The outcomes of each review confirmed that BGU demonstrates appropriate leadership and management oversight of teaching and learning; is compliant with professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements; and that it is meeting, in full, the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and relevant subject-specific requirements for accreditation.

#### Student engagement

11. The University is proactive in engaging students in the enhancement of teaching and learning and quality assurance processes. BGU's student engagement agenda is overseen by the

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<sup>10</sup> Learning and Teaching, Student Engagement, Enhancement of the Academic Portfolio, Research, Participation, Internationalisation, Employability and Enterprise, External Engagement, Partnerships and the Community, Environment and Sustainability and Change Management.

<sup>11</sup> BGU People Strategy

<sup>12</sup> BGU Learning Development Policy

<sup>13</sup> Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Secretary, Executive Deans, and the Director of Resources

<sup>14</sup> BGU Deliberative Committee Structure – 2015 - includes: School Boards; a Joint Board of Studies; Learning and Teaching Committee; Research Committee; Internationalisation Committee and relevant sub-groups.

<sup>15</sup> HEFCE (2016) Assurance Review (HAR); QAA (2016) Higher Education Review (HER); Ofsted inspection of ITE (2015, 2016); British Psychological Society (BPS), Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and Matrix Standard accreditation.

Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and its Student Engagement sub-Group (SEG). The key role played by the SEG was noted in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) 2016 Higher Education Review (HER) of Bishop Grosseteste University report (referred to hereafter as QAA (2016) HER report) *“The SEG has an equal student and staff representation and allows students to constructively raise issues as well as play a role in the development of new engagement and enhancement initiatives.”* (p.25).

12. The University’s commitment to student engagement is further evidenced in the appointment of a Student Engagement Facilitator (SEF). The SEF works with staff and students to improve the student learning experience and enhance the dialogue and engagement between staff and students. The strength of the relationship between the University and the student body was highlighted in the QAA (2016) HER report *“...the Students’ Union refers positively to the relationship between the University and the Students’ Union. Students reported a high level of satisfaction with the nature and extent to which the University engages with them..... The review team recognised that this reciprocal manner of communication effectively fosters a positive culture of mutual respect between staff and students.”* (p.29).
13. In keeping with this approach, BGU’s application to the Teaching Excellence Framework is a joint collaboration between the University and Bishop Grosseteste University Students’ Union (BGSU). Students have been fully engaged in all stages of the discussion and development of the University’s application including; membership of working groups and committees where the written submission was discussed<sup>16</sup> and attendance at briefing events and conferences.<sup>17</sup>

## Teaching Quality

### Teaching on my course

14. The University takes a flexible and inclusive approach to learning and teaching, which enables and empowers all students to achieve their individual goals and aspirations<sup>18</sup>. The construction of learning and teaching activities appropriate to students’ diverse needs is a key factor in the design of programmes and is supported and scrutinised within validation, monitoring and review processes.<sup>19</sup>
15. University staff are drawn from a variety of backgrounds, which provides a diverse range of experience and knowledge to support the learning process and meet individual learning needs.<sup>20</sup> Reflective practice, research, and scholarly activities are undertaken throughout the academic year by individuals<sup>21</sup> and through collective action and sharing of good practice at University organised events.<sup>22,23</sup>
16. Individuals and subject teams use a variety of data, feedback, and evaluation mechanisms to inform current and future learning opportunities and teaching practices.<sup>24,25</sup> These data include the Bishop Grosseteste University Student Satisfaction Survey (BGUSSS). Completed annually

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<sup>16</sup> TEF Task and Finish Working Group, AEC, Senate and University Council minutes; DVC-BGSU meeting minutes; Student Council minutes; staff-student consultative committees

<sup>17</sup> NUS Regional Activists Network- East Midlands, 28 Nov 2016; HEFCE TEF Provider briefing, 29 Nov 2016

<sup>18</sup> SLT paper - Outcomes of Review of Academic Portfolio Review - July 2014

<sup>19</sup> Code of Practice for the Validation of Programmes; Code of Practice for Annual Monitoring of Academic Programmes

<sup>20</sup> Human Resources annual report to University Council FE & GP Committee, June 2016

<sup>21</sup> CELT Staff Development and Training Log 2014-15; SoH and SoSS Records of Staff Development 2014-15

<sup>22</sup> Learning and Teaching Conference Programme – June 2015

<sup>23</sup> CELT Staff Development Schedule September 2015 - January 2016

<sup>24</sup> Notes of Guidance for AMR – SoH and SoSS; Notes of Guidance for AMR - TD

<sup>25</sup> BGU Statistics Handbook 2014-15

by all undergraduate and postgraduate students, it gathers feedback from students about all aspects of their learning experience and the provision of services.

17. Undergraduate students completing BGUSSS in 2015-16 reported very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of teaching and learning. For example, 91.2% of students reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the 'clarity of teaching' (2014-5 = 89.5%; 89.0% satisfaction in 2013-4), while 87.5% of respondents confirmed that 'staff make the subject interesting' (2014-5 = 85.3%; 2013-4 = 87.4%). Both course content and course delivery received similarly positive endorsements, with 83% of students reporting satisfaction with the 'structure of your course' (2014-5 = 88.5%; 2013-4 = 82.4%) and 86.5% reporting satisfaction with the 'quality of course materials' (2014-5 = 88.2%; 2013-4 = 82.1%). There is no significant difference in satisfaction reported by gender, ethnicity or disability.

#### Student engagement in teaching and learning

18. Jointly developed by the BGSU and the University, the BGU Student Charter sets out students' responsibilities for engaging with learning opportunities and outlines agreed expectations of both the University and students for engagement in teaching and learning. In this context, BGU students are effectively stimulated and challenged by appropriate teaching and learning activities and supported by easily accessible academic and learning support services such that students engage with, and actively commit to, their studies.
19. Students are encouraged and supported to provide feedback throughout the academic year, on modules,<sup>26</sup> existing<sup>27</sup> and developing processes through participation in a range of quality assurance and enhancement and teaching and learning developmental activities, committees, conferences and working groups.<sup>28</sup> The outcome of this comprehensive integration of the 'student voice' in teaching and learning development is seen in the BGUSSS 2015-6 survey results where 90.2% of undergraduate students reported satisfaction with their course overall (84.9% in 2014-5; 86.7% in 2013-4).
20. The positive impact on the student learning experience of the embedded, and committed, contribution students make to teaching and learning was recognised in the QAA (2016) HER report as "... *the realisation by students of their full potential through meaningful engagement with the learning process, and taking responsibility for their learning.*" (p.27).
21. Information on the performance of academic programmes and professional support services is discussed with students through the sharing of Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs). AMRs are considered in a range of committees<sup>29</sup> with students in attendance as full members<sup>30</sup>. Particular emphasis is placed on discussion of the enhancement of teaching and learning and includes formal sign-off, by a representative of the BGSU, of the University's annual academic Enhancement Plan<sup>31</sup>. The highly effective contribution this approach makes to students learning was highlighted in the QAA (2016) HER report; "*The comprehensive and integrated annual monitoring process, which engages students and enhances their learning opportunities, is **good practice.***" (p.37).

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<sup>26</sup> Level 4, 5, 6 Module Evaluation Forms

<sup>27</sup> BG U-Say is a portal for reporting institution-wide enhancements as a result of student comments in surveys.

<sup>28</sup> AEC Membership and ToR – 2015-16; Senate Membership and ToR – 2015-16; Enhanced Period Review of IT Services – 16 April 2015

<sup>29</sup> For example: Departmental Committees, School Boards, LTC, AEC and Senate

<sup>30</sup> Code of Practice for the Annual Monitoring of Academic Programmes

<sup>31</sup> Annual Report on the Academic Health of the Institution (2015-6) incorporating Summary Academic Enhancement Plan

22. The University has embraced the ethos of students working alongside academic staff as co-creators of learning.<sup>32</sup> This approach has resulted in the development of modules<sup>33</sup>, student 'Digistars' working alongside staff to embed digital literacies across the University<sup>34</sup>, and the development of the 'Students Creating Change' (SCC) Framework.<sup>35</sup>
23. The SCC Framework provides student-led opportunities to undertake research and develop recommendations and innovative projects to enhance student learning opportunities, develop teaching and learning practices and further enhance student employability. All academic staff are required to report their engagement with the SCC Framework and the progress of specific projects within AMRs.<sup>36</sup> Project outcomes are embedded as institution-wide activities through the University's annual academic Enhancement Plan and presented at the annual Student Engagement Conference, where staff and students share best practice and take part in developmental activities.<sup>37</sup> The outstanding contribution the SCC Framework makes to supporting student learning was highlighted in the QAA (2016) HER report; *"The strategic embedding of the Students Creating Change scheme across schools and professional services, which engages students and enhances their learning opportunities, is **good practice**."* (p.29-30).

#### Valuing teaching

24. The University has developed an institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching.<sup>38</sup> BGU staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to support the delivery of programmes and to respond to the students' academic, personal and professional learning needs.<sup>39</sup> Regular performance review and peer observations enable judgments regarding teaching rigour to be made by peers and line managers.<sup>40</sup>
25. Three quarters (75%) of BGU academic staff hold a teaching qualification. This compares favourably with the sector average 44%, and places the University as one of the top ten HEFCE-funded HE institutions for the proportion of academic staff 'qualified to teach'<sup>41</sup>. Among those 'qualified to teach', 50% hold a formal qualification or have been accredited as a teacher of their subject by a UK professional body (compared to the sector average 40%) and 42% are recognised as a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), compared to the sector average 34%.
26. As further evidence of its commitment to nurturing and supporting continued excellence in teaching and learning, the University successfully re-accredited its Professional Accreditation of Teaching (PAT) Framework<sup>42</sup> with the HEA in order to maintain its alignment with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and embed the completion of BGU's Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE), as a condition of probation, for all academic staff new to BGU that do not have a formal teaching qualification.<sup>43</sup> This further enhancement to developing excellence in teaching and learning was affirmed in the QAA

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<sup>32</sup> Students Creating Change Plan – 2015; AEC 20 May 2015 - Summary Report of LTASDG Sub-groups; BGU Learning and Teaching Conference Programme – June 2015

<sup>33</sup> EDU322 ' Collaborative Research Practice Module Specification; Assignment Brief; Weekly Session Planner

<sup>34</sup> Changing the Learning Landscape Project – Institutional Story Report Template

<sup>35</sup> Students Creating Change Plan - 2015

<sup>36</sup> Code of Practice for Annual Monitoring of Academic Programmes

<sup>37</sup> Student Engagement at BGU - Presentation to Student Engagement Conference, 2016

<sup>38</sup> BGU People Strategy

<sup>39</sup> Annual report to University Council Finance, Employment and General Purposes Committee, June 2016

<sup>40</sup> BGU Performance Review Procedure; BGU PARTners (Peer-Assisted Reflection) Guidance

<sup>41</sup> HEFCE (2016) Teaching qualifications data for academic staff in HE institutions 2014-5.

<sup>42</sup> PAT Framework Notes of Guidance

<sup>43</sup> BGU Induction Booklet for New Staff; Academic Staff Probationary Review Form

(2016) HER report; *“The University assures itself of the appropriateness of the qualifications of staff involved in teaching or facilitating learning through its Professional Accreditation of Teaching (PAT) framework, ..... The review team affirms the steps being taken to develop a PGCHE, which will form part of an enhanced Professional Accreditation of Teaching Framework.”* (p.25).

27. All staff are encouraged to be reflective and considered practitioners, which enables them to engage better with a diverse range of student needs, facilitating the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential. The comprehensive programme of pedagogical CPD activities and events<sup>44</sup>, coordinated by the CELT<sup>45</sup> and mapped to the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) and Student Engagement strategies<sup>46</sup> and annual academic Enhancement Plan<sup>47</sup>, is designed to provide a coherent approach to the identification, development, reward and recognition of excellence in teaching and learning. Learning and Teaching Advocates, assigned to each School, ensure that implementation of LTA Strategy priorities, and institutional policies supporting excellence in learning and teaching, are disseminated and consistently embedded throughout the University.
28. The QAA (2016) HER report notes that *“The University encourages the enhancement of learning and teaching practices through staff development events, including the annual Learning and Teaching Conference and Regulations Road Shows. There are approximately 70 such events per year, with the Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching (CEL T) running fortnightly sessions as well as one-off events, linked to regular support for Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation.”* (p.24).
29. The BGSU also supports the reward and recognition of excellence in teaching and learning by coordinating and administering annual 'Student-led Teaching Awards'. Students are invited to nominate academic and learning support service staff for an award in one of eight categories.<sup>48</sup> Each nomination is judged by a panel of students and the SEF against pre-defined criteria. All Schools have been consistently represented in the awards each year.
30. A further initiative, led by the BGSU, designed to support course representatives to provide constructive, real-time feedback on teaching quality has been adopted across all programmes and was specifically referenced in the QAA (2016) HER report as an effective way of engaging student in teaching and learning *“A new Student-University initiative involves the introduction of Teaching, Assessment, Resources, Careers and Organisation (TARCO) Forms, to collect students' views so that any issues can be resolved while a module is in the process of being studied”* (p.25-6).

### Assessment and feedback

31. It is widely recognised across the HE sector that delivering clear, fair, timely and useful 'Assessment and Feedback' represents a challenge to many HEIs. The overall satisfaction reported by all UK students to this sub-category of questions in the 2015-6 National Student Survey (NSS) was 73%. In contrast to the national picture, 82% of final year undergraduate

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<sup>44</sup> For example, participation in the University's PAT Framework; staff development workshops; Learning and Teaching and Student Engagement Conferences; staff induction and mentoring; moderation events; School Development days and external examiner visits

<sup>45</sup> CELT Staff Development Schedule September 2015 - January 2016

<sup>46</sup> Learning and Teaching Conference Programme – June 2015

<sup>47</sup> Academic Health of the Institution report 2014-5 and Annual Enhancement Plan 2015-6

<sup>48</sup> BGSU Student-led teaching awards categories: 'Inspiring teaching', 'Innovative teaching', 'Outstanding support staff', 'Outstanding supervisor', 'Most informative module', 'Most engaging module', 'Outstanding tutor' and 'Outstanding feedback'

students reported overall satisfaction with 'Assessment and Feedback' practices at BGU; this maintains the high levels of overall satisfaction seen during the past three years.<sup>49</sup>

32. BGU students are engaged throughout the assessment process<sup>50</sup>. Self-assessment<sup>51</sup> and peer-assessment<sup>52</sup> are encouraged to help students understand the purpose and value of assessment. Assessment tasks, outlined in handbooks and assignment briefs, along with session outcomes, are clearly linked to validated assessment criteria.<sup>53,54</sup>
33. Students receive regular written feedback from both formative and summative assessment<sup>55</sup> that contains feedforward advice and guidance through the identification of clear targets for future development. This feedback is designed to meet the needs of assessment *for* learning as well as assessment *of* learning.<sup>56,57</sup>
34. The contribution this approach makes to BGU students' learning is also reflected in the satisfaction reported by students to each of the five questions covering 'assessment and feedback' in the NSS; all of which showed higher levels of satisfaction compared to the national average (ranging from six to thirteen percentage points above the sector average). For example, in response to the question 'feedback on my work has been prompt' 84% of BGU students were satisfied or very satisfied compared to the HE sector average 71%, and 81% of BGU students were satisfied or very satisfied that 'I have received detailed comments on my work', compared to 72% of students nationally.
35. The effectiveness of BGU's strategic approach to improving students' learning through assessment and feedback was further confirmed in the QAA (2016) HER report which stated that students *"consider themselves to be well prepared for the demands of assessment, with a clear understanding of assessment criteria for their own academic progress and development."* (p.32).

#### Rigour and stretch

36. Through a robust process of programme proposal, validation monitoring and review, the University ensures that course design, development, academic standards and assessment are effective in challenging students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential. The QAA (2016) HER report confirmed that there is *"effective oversight of the development, monitoring and review of the academic portfolio, enhancement of learning opportunities and the setting and maintenance of academic standards."* (p.9).
37. External examiners<sup>58</sup> report favourably on the general quality of BGU students' work and the appropriateness of the structure and content of programmes. Chief external examiners, employed by the University to comment on the comparability of standards and student outcomes within and across Schools, observed that programmes contain *"Academically challenging assessments that are also professionally relevant."* This view is reinforced in the

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<sup>49</sup> National Student Survey 2016; 2015; 2014

<sup>50</sup> BGU Code of Practice for Assessment of Students

<sup>51</sup> What is a DCP? 2014-15; Introduction to the eRPD Presentation

<sup>52</sup> 'Assessing Others' – BGU student guide to peer assessment

<sup>53</sup> Overview of External Examiner Reports for the Academic Year 2015-2016

<sup>54</sup> Minutes of Learning and Teaching Committee - 30 September 2015

<sup>55</sup> ENG121 Group Discussion Assignment Feedback Sheet; ENG221 Written Assignment Feedback Sheet

<sup>56</sup> What is a DCP? 2014-15; Introduction to the eRPD Presentation

<sup>57</sup> Policy for Student Personal Development Plans (PDP) – 2015; Notes of Guidance for PDPs – 2015

<sup>58</sup> Overview of External Examiner Reports for the Academic Year 2015-2016

Ofsted (2016) ITE inspection report<sup>59</sup> which states that *“Trainees vary hugely in their vocational skills, their professional backgrounds and the extent of their previous academic studies. Aware of this, tutors require all trainees to develop their research and higher-level evaluative skills. This means that those trainees with degree level qualifications on entry benefit from the intellectual challenge of the programme, while others benefit from carefully targeted support to develop their analytical, thinking and writing skills.”* (p.5).

38. Students also recognise the appropriate levels of stretch and challenge provided by the programmes at BGU, as evidenced by the 94.4% of undergraduate students completing the BGUSSS in 2015-6 who reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the 'intellectual challenge' provided by their course (2014-5 = 93.2%; 2013-4 = 93.1%).

### Feedback

39. The University is committed to continually improving assessment and feedback to support students' development, progression and attainment.<sup>60,61</sup> As a result of a University-wide staff development event<sup>62</sup> focusing on marking, moderation and assessment, additional guidance materials were produced as a supplement to the Code of Practice for Assessment of Students and endorsed by both AEC and Senate.<sup>63,64</sup> Both staff and students participated in the exercise. The dissemination and application of the Guidance across the University are championed by Learning and Teaching Advocates in each of the three Schools and further reinforced through workshops at the annual Learning and Teaching Conference.<sup>65</sup>
40. Evidence of the impact of BGU's approach to improving the effectiveness of assessment and feedback for learning is apparent in external examiner reports and the BGUSSS 2015-6 survey results.
41. Chief External Examiners reported that *“The variety and diversity of assessment opportunities were noted variously as strengths”* and found evidence of *“Well aligned targets being set to students”* that are *“progressive in level (undergraduate) and stage (postgraduate)”* accompanied by *“High quality feedback from markers.”*
42. Among undergraduate students completing the BGUSSS in 2015-6, 83.2% reported satisfaction with the 'usefulness of feedback provided on assessed work' (2014-5 = 81.7%; 2013-4 = 81.9%). Students expressed particularly high levels of satisfaction with the 'promptness by which work is returned' (93.3% satisfaction; 2014-5 = 88.0%; 2013-4 = 87.9%), confidence in the 'integrity of marking process' (88.8% satisfaction; 2014-5 = 88.5%; 2013-4 = 87.9%) and the 'clarity of criteria by which work is assessed' (82.1% satisfaction; 2014-5 = 86.9%; 2013-4 = 80.5%). The sustained improvement in levels of satisfaction illustrates the effectiveness of the further enhancements to assessment practices introduced in 2014-5.
43. The University's deliberate, strategic and embedded approach to course design and assessment practices provides scope for outstanding levels of stretch and is designed to ensure all students are significantly challenged to achieve their full potential. The benefits of these integrated strategies and interventions have been judged, independently by external bodies, to be both consistent and sustained in comparison to HE sector norms and relevant benchmarks.

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<sup>59</sup> Ofsted (2016) ITE inspection of Bishop Grosseteste University ITE Partnership

<sup>60</sup> BGUSSS Institutional Response 2014-15

<sup>61</sup> Minutes of Learning and Teaching Committee – 30 September 2015

<sup>62</sup> CELT (2015) Marking and moderation and assessment staff development workshop agenda

<sup>63</sup> Guidance on Marking and Moderation of Student Work - July 2015

<sup>64</sup> Minutes of AEC 8 July 2015

<sup>65</sup> Learning and Teaching Conference Programme – June 2015



44. The effectiveness and impact of BGU's performance across a range of measures of teaching quality demonstrates that the University consistently achieves outstanding outcomes for its students from all backgrounds.

## **Learning Environment**

45. The University undertakes a comprehensive process of programme development to ensure students have appropriate and equal opportunities,<sup>66</sup> including access to resources, to develop and achieve their full potential.<sup>67</sup>

## **Resources**

46. Physical, human, digital and technological resources are considered in validation, monitoring and review processes, and in Business Planning<sup>68</sup>. A 'Learning and Teaching spaces' sub-group of the LTC monitors the University's approach to securing appropriate learning environments. This group ensures that interventions and developments are appropriate to meet students diverse learning needs<sup>69</sup> and that resources are used effectively to aid student's learning and the development of independent study and research skills.
47. The University provides a diverse range of learning opportunities that includes the use of campus resources, virtual learning environments, work-based learning, and opportunities to participate in international exchange visits. All undergraduate students undertake a placement learning experience in all years<sup>70</sup>. Provision of library resources is excellent for the size of the University<sup>71</sup>. Students regularly report very high satisfaction with access to physical and electronic resources for learning, as evidenced in the BGUSSS where 97.2% of students responding to the 2015-6 survey (96.9% = 2014-5; 96.9% = 2013-4) reported satisfaction with the 'Library overall' and 97.7% of students reported satisfaction with 'IT provision overall' (97.7 = 2014-5; 95.7% = 2013-4).
48. The effective contribution this diverse range of learning opportunities, and ease of access to resources, makes to the development of students independent study and research skills and employment outcomes was highlighted in both the QAA (2016) HER report "*Students are able to contribute to their independent learning processes through the negotiation of activities, including research topics and placement opportunities.*" (p.25), and the Ofsted (2015) ITE inspection report "...high quality placements and partnership arrangements enabling ITE trainees to develop appropriate knowledge, skills and professional attributes to prepare them effectively for employment..." (p.5).

## **Scholarship, research and professional practice**

49. BGU students are routinely exposed to, involved with, and co-create, learning opportunities which draw on scholarship, research and/or professional practice that are at the forefront of knowledge in their subject. The QAA (2016) HER report confirms that the University "...supports active and accessible learning in a variety of research-informed and enriched environments, delivering an academic portfolio that equips its graduates for work and further study." (p.24).

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<sup>66</sup> BGU Code of Practice for Students with Access Needs

<sup>67</sup> Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy – 2015-19

<sup>68</sup> BGU Code of Practice for validation of programmes; BGU Business Planning Template

<sup>69</sup> Learning and Teaching Spaces Group Terms of Reference

<sup>70</sup> Placement Operational Handbook March 2015

<sup>71</sup> Benchmarked against the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) institutions, 2015

50. A 'Research Investment Fund', designed to enable students to be employed as research assistants, has allowed staff to not only design teaching and learning activities to be 'research-informed', but also co-research and publish with undergraduate students. The University further encourages undergraduate students' engagement with research through the publication of an annual peer-reviewed journal, 'educationUndergraduate', which showcases excellent research projects undertaken by those at foundation and undergraduate level. *"Originally conceived as a celebration of undergraduate research, perhaps educationUndergraduate's most tangible and direct benefit is as a teaching and learning resource".*<sup>72</sup>
51. Several of the University's courses are accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.<sup>73</sup> As a result, many students, in addition to those studying ITE courses to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), exit BGU with an academic award that is informed by, and meets, the requirements of professional practice. The Ofsted (2016) ITE inspection report<sup>74</sup> confirms that professional practice is embedded into the preparation of graduates *"Leaders and managers have skilfully harnessed the expertise of the university, local authorities and a wide range of colleagues from diverse early years settings and schools, to design, deliver and evaluate the training provided."* (p.7).

#### Academic support

52. BGU students have an extensive range of learning support opportunities and activities available to them including, personal tutors, learning development and study skills tutors, transferable and subject-specific skills development workshops, student finance and welfare advice, development of graduate attributes, placements and co-curricular and extracurricular awards and activities. The QAA (2016) HER report emphasised the valuable contribution this extensive range of services makes to student achievement *"Students spoke highly of the support available to them, including student advice specialists, learning development and disability support. Personal tutors were also highly valued."* (p.28). Similarly, the Ofsted (2015) inspection report states that *"Trainees are provided with outstanding levels of pastoral care and good academic development by university-based staff and school-based trainers."* (p.15).
53. The University's strategic decision to maintain smaller cohort, and teaching and learning group sizes<sup>75</sup> allows for a personalised approach to teaching and learning and intensive academic and professional services support. Lectures average between 30-90 students, supported by smaller tutorial and seminar groups and regular individual meetings with personal and academic tutors. Students completing the 2015-6 BGUSSS reported 92.5% satisfaction with the 'ease of contacting staff' (2014-5 89.0%; 2013-4 = 92.3%) and similarly high satisfaction with the 'ease of obtaining advice and support from staff (2015-6 = 90.1%; 2014-5 = 87.7%; 2013-4 = 90.3%).
54. The effectiveness of this approach was recognised in the Ofsted (2016) ITE inspection report<sup>76</sup> which noted that *"Trainees benefit from high levels of strong personal support given by their tutors and subject mentors. Through their dedication and enthusiasm, tutors and mentors enable trainees to overcome personal barriers to learning and make effective progress. Trainees spoke highly of the targeted guidance and support they received."* (p.4).
55. The benefit BGU students derive from easily accessible, regular and frequent contact with academic and professional support staff is evident in the high levels of retention and achievement, leading the QAA HER review team to conclude that *"The integrated, institution-*

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<sup>72</sup> British Conference of Undergraduate Research, June 2014

<sup>73</sup> For example, British Psychological Society, Joint Negotiating Committee and Chartered Management Institute

<sup>74</sup> Ofsted (2016) ITE inspection report: Bishop Grosseteste University ITE Partnership

<sup>75</sup> SLT paper - Outcomes of Review of Academic Portfolio Review - July 2014

<sup>76</sup> Ofsted (June 2016) ITE inspection report: Bishop Grosseteste University ITE Partnership

*wide academic and pastoral support for students that supports the development of their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.*" (p.28).

#### Personalised learning

56. The University has an inclusive and supportive approach to learning. Teaching, learning and assessment opportunities are carefully considered and constructed to reflect students' prior achievement, learning styles and current learning needs, with academic experiences tailored to the individual, thereby maximising rates of retention, progression and attainment.
57. The University has a well-developed personal development planning (PDP) system,<sup>77</sup> supported by personal tutors, mentors and career advisers, which incorporate a Development and Career Plan (DCP) and electronic Record of Professional Development (e-RPD). The value of this reflective and personalised approach to learning is noted in the QAA (2016) HER report "...*relevant, personalised portfolios of information for each student at School, programme and module levels, as well as comprehensive guides to aid understanding of University policies and procedures...*" (p.46).
58. The value of this inclusive and reflective approach to student learning was noted in the QAA (2016) HER report. "*The University has an inclusive approach to learning and teaching, in line with the Quality Code, ensuring all students are offered equal and effective learning opportunities....a key requirement involves flexible modes of delivery for programmes tailored to the needs of different learner groups while making efficient use of facilities* (p.27). The QAA HER team went on to endorse the effectiveness of the University's approach to personalised learning, stating that "*These activities support students' acquisition of the necessary tools for their academic, personal and professional development and aid retention*" (p.28).

#### Non-continuation

59. The University has a strong and sustained track record in the retention of students. In 2015-6, 97% of undergraduate students were retained at BGU and 91% of undergraduate students progressed to the next level of study or graduated. Since 2011-2 undergraduate retention rates have remained consistently at 96-97% whilst progression and graduation have steadily increased from 88.6% to 93.0%<sup>78</sup>
60. Overseen by a dedicated 'recruitment and retention monitoring group', the University has embedded responses to the widening participation agenda within programme delivery and professional support services. BGU has been successful in developing and maintaining, effective outreach programmes<sup>79</sup> aimed at the transition to HE. These programmes frequently involve students from schools whose populations comprise under-represented groups in HE and are aligned with BGU's widening participation focus. The effectiveness of these deliberate interventions is evident in the data presented in the Access Agreement monitoring report 2015-6<sup>80</sup>.
61. Since 2009-10, the University's non-continuation rate has decreased steadily from 7% in 2009-10 to 5.2% in 2014-5 and has remained consistently below the HE sector benchmark (8.3% in 2009-10 and 7.1% in 2014-5) throughout this period<sup>81</sup>. From a target baseline of 6.9% (2011-2) non-continuation in HE after 1 year, BGU has progressively reduced its non-continuation rate in

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<sup>77</sup> BGU Policy for Student Personal Development Plans (PDP) – 2015; Notes of Guidance for PDPs – 2015

<sup>78</sup> BGU (2016) student retention, progression and outcomes report - 2014-5

<sup>79</sup> Lincolnshire Outreach Network; LiNCHigher

<sup>80</sup> BGU (2017) Access Agreement Monitoring report - 2015-6

<sup>81</sup> BGU (2016) Student retention, progression and outcomes report - 2014-5

all subsequent years to 4.3% in 2014-5 and just 3.7% in 2015-6<sup>82</sup> This is in the context of a growing BGU student population overall, and a greater proportion of students identifying with one or more widening participation characteristic. Furthermore, there is no discernible difference in the progression at each undergraduate level or the achievement of a final undergraduate award, when examined by gender, ethnicity, disability or age.<sup>83</sup>

62. The University's deliberate, strategic and embedded approach to student engagement, appropriately resourced support for personalised learning and the reward and recognition of excellence in teaching is designed to ensure the highest levels of active commitment to learning and study from students. The effectiveness and impact, demonstrated across a range of measures, of this institutional culture of enhancement and support for positive learning environments for all students have been judged, independently by external bodies, to be both consistent and sustained in comparison to HE sector norms and relevant benchmarks.

## Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

### Employability/further study

63. The University has a very strong, sustained, and highly successful track record in preparing students for employment and further study.
64. Employability and enterprise are embedded throughout the student experience, from pre-registration to post award. Both are visible as stand-alone themes within the University's Five Year Strategy (2014-19), and also feature as components of the LTA Strategy. The QAA (2016) HER report confirms that BGU works collaboratively to ensure that all students are significantly challenged to achieve their full potential and acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding that are most highly valued by employers. *"Students and alumni were universally positive about their preparation for employment. Employers also complimented the University's contribution to student employability and were involved in student recruitment, curriculum design, teaching and the development of codes of professional conduct."* (p.52).
65. Students and employers recognise the contribution that BGU makes to securing positive outcomes for individuals and the local economy. For example, 87.5% of students completing the BGUSSS in 2015-6 expressed satisfaction with the 'extent to which course is meeting your needs / interests' (2014-5 = 91.1%; 2013-4 86.3%), while the Ofsted (2015) inspection report<sup>84</sup> noted that *"The partnership makes an important contribution to the recruitment, selection and supply of teachers to local schools and the wider region"* and that *"NQTs are highly regarded by schools in the locality. As a consequence, employment rates are high"* (pp 22).
66. The QAA (2016) HER report confirms that *"Student employability opportunities are extensive and systematic, accompanied by detailed University-wide support."* (p.44). The strategic embedding of a placement experience in all undergraduate programmes in all years; the comprehensive and integrated support provided by the Careers and Enterprise team, academic and learning development staff and BGSU to enable students to achieve positive outcomes and employment are all important contributors to the low proportion of BGU graduates that are neither working, studying or looking for work six months after graduation. Of the total 2014-5 graduating cohort 98.6% (98.9% in 2013-14) were employed or engaged in further study six months after graduating (98.3% of undergraduates and 100.0% of postgraduates)<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> BGU (2017) Access Agreement Monitoring report - 2015-6

<sup>83</sup> BGU (2016) Student retention, progression and outcomes report - 2014-5

<sup>84</sup> Ofsted (2015) ITE inspection report: Bishop Grosseteste University ITE Partnership

<sup>85</sup> Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey, HESA UKPIs Table E1a 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15.

67. Analysis by the Department for Education (DfE) of longer-term outcomes for graduates<sup>86</sup> demonstrates that BGU graduates also maintain outstanding positive outcomes and employability one, three and five years post-graduation. During the period 2003-4 to 2012-3 BGU was singularly, or jointly with one other HEI, the most successful University in securing positive outcomes for its students in eight out of the ten years where data are available. In all years BGU is among the top five institutions for graduate employment or further study one year after graduation. Scrutiny of the data set reveals that no other HEI has this consistency of performance and positive achievements for its students.
68. Examination of the full data set available for three years post-graduation confirms that in each year for eight years between 2003-4 and 2010-11 over 85% of each cohort of BGU graduates have been in employment or further study, placing BGU either first or second in comparison to all other UK HEIs. No other HEI is consistently represented in the top two institutions over this period. The sustained nature of BGU student's success in employment is further confirmed when the data for five years post-graduation are examined.
69. These data provide evidence of the effectiveness of the comprehensive, integrated and embedded nature of services and support for the development of employability skills among BGU students. "*The extensive, systematic and sustained provision of student employability opportunities, accompanied by detailed University-wide support*" (p.2), recognised in the QAA (2016) HER report as a **feature of good practice**, confirms the positive impact this approach has on securing consistently outstanding outcomes for all BGU students. This is particularly relevant in the context of the socio-economic and demographic profile of Lincolnshire and BGU students.
70. During 2014–15, the University took action to further embed employability for students' through the identification of a set of Graduate Attributes,<sup>87</sup> comprising academic literacies; global citizenship; information literacies; digital fluency; employability and being enterprising.<sup>88</sup> The Graduate Attributes, aligned to employer needs and students personal development and / or further study aspirations, was endorsed in the QAA (2016) HER report as making a positive contribution to student outcomes and an effective way of determining the learning gains made by students "*The attributes address the needs of the labour market, local communities, personal development and broader social development. They provide a framework for students to measure their development.*" (p.3).
71. The University is committed to identifying and tracking the improvements in knowledge, skills, work readiness and the personal developments made by students. BGU is one of ten UK Universities participating in a HEFCE coordinated National Mixed Methodology Learning Gain Project (NMMMLGP). The outputs of this project have been designed to be integrated with, and supplement, the already embedded approach to supporting personalised learning and achievement of positive outcomes through the DCP and e-RPD and personal tutor system.

#### Highly skilled employment/further study

72. The University is confident that it is not only equipping its graduates with the skills to secure positive destinations in employment and further study, but also with the skills and attributes to enable students to secure highly skilled employment and further study.
73. A high proportion (84%) of BGU students who graduated into employment (73%), or employment and further study (9%) in 2013-4 secured professional or managerial jobs, earning

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<sup>86</sup> DfE (2016) Employment earnings outcomes of higher education graduates: experimental statistics using the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data: further breakdowns

<sup>87</sup> BGU Graduate Attributes; Graduate Attributes Presentation

<sup>88</sup> BGU Learning and Teaching Conference Programme – June 2015

an average salary of £22,000; higher than the national benchmark figure of £20,000. Among the graduates who progressed to further study, 96% were undertaking higher level studies. Although a small number, all part-time undergraduate students were successful in securing highly skilled employment or further study on graduation<sup>89</sup>.

74. The effectiveness of the teaching and learning opportunities available to BGU students to prepare them for highly skilled employment was confirmed in the Ofsted (2016) inspection report<sup>90</sup> *"The programme prepares trainees well to support their learners' acquisition of the skills they need for employment or higher-level studies."* (p.5).
75. An analysis of employment locations of those BGU graduates in full-time employment shows high level of consistency between 'Student domicile prior to entry' and 'Graduate employment locations'. The majority (88%) of BGU graduates secure employment in the East Midlands and over half (55%) of all graduates remain in Greater Lincolnshire<sup>91</sup>. This further reinforces the significant contribution the University makes to the socio-economic development of the region and contribution to the GLLEP SEP by *"providing the best possible opportunities for residents who want to progress to further and higher education and meet growing employer demand."*<sup>92</sup> (p.4).

#### Positive outcomes for all

76. The University has a particularly strong track record in supporting its students, from all backgrounds, to secure positive destinations, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes.
77. Analysis of sector wide Performance Indicators, shows that there is a strong correlation between the proportion of students from the lowest socio-economic classes and non-continuation.<sup>93</sup> Despite having a higher proportion (44%) of students from the lowest socio-economic classes than the sector average (33%), BGU has a lower proportion of students (5.2%) who are no longer in HE after leaving the institution during the first year of studies than the HE sector average (6%).<sup>94</sup>
78. The same pattern is found in relation to mature students and non-continuation.<sup>95</sup> Institutions with a higher proportion of mature students tend to have higher rates of non-continuation. As with socio-economic class, BGU has an above average proportion of mature students (29%), yet below average non-continuation rates (5.1%), compared to the HE sector average (11.8%).
79. The University's success in attracting and retaining students from low-participation neighbourhoods is confirmed when the University's performance is compared to the national average. BGU has a larger proportion of students from low participation neighbourhoods (17%) compared to the national average (11.4%) but has below average non-continuation rates (5.2% compared to the 6.0% national average).<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Destination of Leavers in Higher Education - 2014-5

<sup>90</sup> Ofsted (2016) ITE inspection report: Bishop Grosseteste University ITE Partnership

<sup>91</sup> Destination of Leavers in Higher Education - 2014-5

<sup>92</sup> Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan

<sup>93</sup> HESA (2016) Socio-economic class and non-continuation of young undergraduate entrants by institution, 2014/15

<sup>94</sup> BGU (2016) Student retention progression and outcomes report -2014-5

<sup>95</sup> HESA (2016) UK Performance Indicators 2014/15: Non-continuation rates

<sup>96</sup> HESA (2016) Low participation neighbourhoods and non-continuation of young undergraduate entrants by institution - 2014/15

80. The University's rigorous approach to maintaining academic standards and effective mechanisms for retaining and supporting all students to demonstrate learning gains and achieve their potential is evident in the proportions of students achieving 'good honours' degrees (first or upper second). In 2015-6 70.8% of BGU's graduating first degree cohort received a 'good' honours degree. These achievements are closely aligned to the 72% HE sector average,<sup>97</sup> and demonstrate the significant learning gains made by students recruited, largely, with non-standard or low tariff entry qualifications.
81. When examined by cohort characteristics, BGU's female graduates appear to be performing better than their male counterparts. In 2015-6<sup>98</sup>, approximately three quarters (72.4%) of female (2014-5 = 66.8%; 2013-4 = 66%) and two thirds (67%) of male (2014-5 = 64.8%; 2013-4 = 62.4%) students graduated with a good honours degree. However, with over four times as many female (n=452) compared to male first degree graduates (n=109), caution is required in over-interpreting the relative difference in achievement, which is not statistically significant overall. Similarly, there is no discernible difference in the achievement of a 'good honours' degree for those with (63.7%) and without (59.4%) a declared disability and young (69.3%) compared to mature (74.5%) students.
82. The University's deliberate, strategic and embedded approach to widening participation, learning gain and developing graduate attributes, particularly employability skills, is designed to achieve outstanding outcomes for its students from all backgrounds. The effectiveness and impact of BGU's performance across a range of measures of retention and progression to highly skilled employment and further study, have been judged, independently by external bodies, to be both consistent and sustained in comparison to HE sector norms and relevant benchmarks.

### Summary

83. The University consistently achieves outstanding outcomes for its students from all backgrounds, in particular with regards to retention and progression to highly skilled employment and further study.
84. Learning resources are actively and consistently used by students to enhance learning. This includes optimum levels of contact with academic and professional support staff, including engagement with developments at the forefront of research, scholarship and professional practice and an outstanding personalised approach that supports active and accessible learning in a variety of research-informed and enriched environments. This integrated approach has secured the highest levels of engagement and active commitment to learning and study from all students.
85. An institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching, coupled with high quality student learning opportunities and positive outcomes achieved by students demonstrates BGU's consistent excellence in teaching and learning for all students. When compared to national norms and relevant benchmarks, there is no area of the University's provision, or category of student, where BGU does not perform, as a minimum, to its benchmark. The University consistently achieves, or significantly exceeds, its benchmark across all three aspects of the Teaching Excellence Framework; Teaching Quality, Learning Environment and Student Outcomes.

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<sup>97</sup> HESA (2017) Higher education student enrolments and qualifications obtained at higher education providers in the United Kingdom 2015/16; HEFCE (2015) Differences in degree outcomes: The effect of subject and student characteristics

<sup>98</sup> BGU (2017) Access Agreement Monitoring report - 2015-6