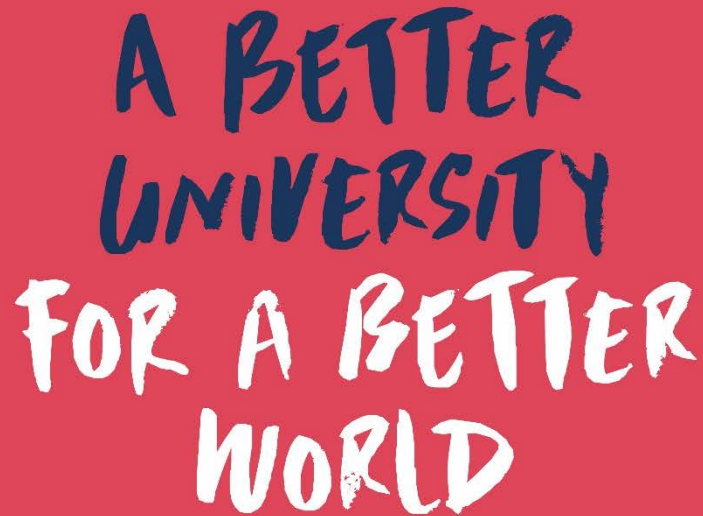


UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Teaching Excellence Framework - Year 4 Provider Submission



A BETTER
UNIVERSITY
FOR A BETTER
WORLD

DISRUPTIVE BY DESIGN

'It took me some while to appreciate fully the extent to which my mind had been reordered, as it were; even now I continue to draw on that bold, optimistic notion of a new map of learning. I think that such intellectual ambition was wonderful, even heroic, at the inception of this university, and I still think it's the best guarantee of pulling through now.'

Ian McEwan, Booker Prize winning author, English BA 1970

At the University of Sussex, we are proud of our history of pushing forward boundaries since we gained our Royal Charter in 1961, and having a distinguished tradition of disruptive and experimental interventions. We have grown into a leading research-intensive university with an international reputation, supporting students from more than 120 countries.

We currently have more than 18,000 students across 11 Schools plus the Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Of the total student population, 76% are Home/EU students and 77% are full-time, undergraduate students. Many of our students live on our beautiful

campus, with its iconic buildings designed by Sir Basil Spence, on the edge of the South Downs National Park.

Our students and graduates are proudly helping us to achieve our vision of making the world a better place. Just to give a few examples: Joannah Mamombe, a current MSc student, has become the youngest female MP in Zimbabwe; Alinery Lianhlawng, an MBA 'International Female Leader' scholar, has launched a social enterprise aimed to increase education and youth empowerment in rural India; Molly Masters, a recent BA English student, won the Student Entrepreneur of the Year 2018 award for her 'Books That Matter' enterprise aimed at empowering women and girls; and Leilah Clarke, a recent Product Design student, designed a 'floating farm' to help in the fight against rising sea levels.

The achievements of these and many of our students align to our strategic framework, **Sussex 2025 – a better university for a better world**. This reimagines the pioneering spirit of the original purpose of our university, but for new times and for a new generation. Our five core values are defined as: kindness, integrity, inclusion, collaboration and courage, and these

This submission was produced by Professor Kelly Coate (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students), the TEF Steering Group and the Students' Union, with support from students and staff from across the University

will shape our shared endeavour in creating an even stronger university. Our emphasis on doing things differently and on interdisciplinarity has helped produce creative thinkers who have shown themselves to be adept at tackling some of the biggest challenges facing humanity in novel and progressive ways.



Each of the aims of Learn to Transform – our education strategy – has an associated set of action points, from short-term task-and-finish groups, to longer term strategic developments for the enhancement of the student experience. To give just a few examples, the ‘Be collaborative’ aim has an associated action which was the establishment of a new Student Experience Sub-Committee of our governing Council. This Sub-Committee ensures that the student perspective and student voice feeds into the deliberations of our Council as much as possible. The ‘Be kind’ aim has an associated

The main aims of Learn to Transform:

Be collaborative: engage our students as co-creators in their learning experience

Be inclusive: dismantle borders, create opportunities, add value and deliver fair outcomes

Be disruptive: deliver an inspirational and transformative learning experience that transcends the classroom

Be courageous: deliver a distinctive, digitally advanced education that dares to be different

Be kind: ensure our students are respected and recognized for who they are, adding value to their learning experiences and delivering positive outcomes

set of initiatives around promoting pedagogies of kindness in the curriculum. We are confident that these aims are helping us to continue to deliver the distinctive Sussex education that is our proud legacy.

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

‘I love Sussex, I’m so happy that I chose to study here and feel like I have been pushed academically whilst being supported by staff. I could not recommend Sussex more.’
Student quote from NSS 2017

Our education is built on a deep partnership with our students; a transformational learning experience; a commitment to inclusion; and an excitement about learning and the thrill of discovery. Our NSS results for ‘teaching on my course’ remain high, with satisfaction levels at 85.4%, which is just over the benchmark. Active, engaged and interested students are core to our success and the student voice is at the centre of Sussex 2025.

The legacy of the ‘**new map of learning**’ that was launched in the Sussex curriculum in the 1960s is still relevant to many of our undergraduate degree programmes today. The interdisciplinary approach to the American Studies degree programme, for instance, is a critical examination of the history, politics, literature and culture of one of the most important nations in the world, and was first in the UK in this field in the Complete University Guide 2018.

The School of Global Studies is fundamentally interdisciplinary, comprising the Departments of Anthropology, Geography and International Relations, and a teaching and research programme in International Development which draws faculty from across the Departments and beyond the School. Vibrant interdisciplinarity exists within and between each of these departments, with topics in the curriculum spanning decolonisation and decolonial approaches, climate change, global governance, sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, human rights, migration, global health, gender, conflict and security, the international order and international political theory.

Another example of interdisciplinarity in the curriculum, which spans the arts-sciences divide, is the **BSc in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence**. Students on this course

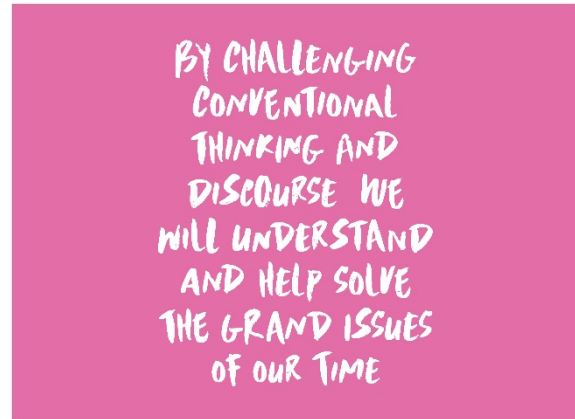
have the opportunity to take modules from a variety of disciplines relating to cognition and cognitive science, gaining the capability to approach the study of the mind and intelligent behaviour from a variety of perspectives. Philosophers within the department deliver optional modules on the philosophy of cognitive science and consciousness; modules from other schools cover topics from neuroscience, psychology and linguistics, relating to brain functionality and behaviour. This programme has provided a solid foundation for an interdisciplinary curriculum, attracting faculty who are truly interdisciplinary in their outlook and methods.

Another cross-disciplinary, well-established subject area is **Gender Studies**. Gender studies is based in Sociology but it is one of our most interdisciplinary areas of expertise. Colleagues contributing to teaching in aspects of gender studies are drawn from across the University, and the subject comprises both theoretical and substantive areas which cover a range of highly topical matters such as gender identity, sexual dissidence (which was pioneered at Sussex) sexuality, health, work, family and sexual violence.

Through our **Sussex Choice** scheme, students are provided with the opportunity to personalise their programme of study. Students are able to customise most of our single-honours degrees and enhance their main subject by exploring other disciplines. Electives are term-length modules from a subject area that enable students to spend time in their first two years exploring different subject areas. A pathway is a combination of electives from a single subject area that is distinct from the main subject. A pathway taken over the first two or three years of a course results in a certificate with the other single subject area recorded. The benefits of Sussex Choice include the opportunity to broaden the students' studies beyond the boundaries of the core subject and allow more scope for personal and professional development.

A number of the elective modules in Sussex Choice are innovative and are fully aligned with our aims in the Learn to Transform strategy. For example, **Exploring Community Engagement and Volunteering** is an elective run in partnership between the Students' Union and the School of Education and Social Work. This module provides an opportunity for students to gain valuable experience, give something back

to the local community and develop a sense of engaging in a community. Students gain insight into the workings of local not-for-profits and the voluntary sector, developing an ability to understand how these organisations tackle prominent social issues and campaign to change their root causes.



Our education is also enhanced through our **world-leading research**. Development Studies is ranked number one in the world in the QS World University Rankings. The results of the last REF confirmed that over 75% of our research activity is categorised as world leading or internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour. Our Geography department had the most top-quality impact case studies of any UK Geography department. Psychology, Biological Sciences, International Relations, Anthropology, Politics, English and Media and Film were all ranked in the top 15 research departments in their field. We also embed opportunities for students to undertake research in the curriculum through dissertations, lab-based research projects and student collaborations with staff on research projects.

Each year, the **Sussex Undergraduate Research Office (SURO)** gives a group of outstanding Sussex undergraduates the chance to become Junior Research Associates (JRA). Each JRA undertakes an intensive eight-week, full-time research project and receives comprehensive training to ensure they have the skills needed to carry out high-level research, supervised by an academic and mentored by a postgraduate student. We want all undergraduates to have an equal chance of undertaking a JRA project, so we also provide bursaries to help our students study full time over the summer. In 2018, these bursaries amounted to £1,600 for living costs and £200

for research expenses. The JRAs are then supported to present their work at the British Council for Undergraduate Research annual conference.

The International Junior Research Associates scheme enables undergraduates from our partner institutions overseas to participate in the JRA scheme. We host about 20 undergraduates from prestigious institutions around the world, who undertake supervised research at Sussex during the summer.

Several JRA projects have been developed and expanded, eventually emerging as academic papers, PhD theses or book chapters, and many projects have been presented at academic conferences.

Sussex students also avail themselves of the many opportunities to undertake internships, placements and/or study abroad opportunities, with some students taking advantage of more than one such opportunity, for instance by doing their internship in another country. We have a long history of offering **study abroad opportunities** for our students, being one of the first universities to offer an exchange/year abroad component as part of its degree programmes. Dr Hywel Ceri Jones, who worked in the School of European Studies at Sussex in the 1970s, was a 'founding father' of what is now known as the Erasmus programme. Our partner institutions around the world, such as the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Australian National University, and the University of California Santa Cruz offer transformational intercultural experiences for our students. In the last five years, and facilitated through Sussex Choice, there has been a focus to encourage undergraduate students to broaden their studies and enrich their student experience through considering applying for study abroad opportunities, where such opportunities are not already an integrated part of their degree.

Through the flexible **voluntary study abroad year** model, introduced into the academic framework in 2012/13, students can apply to study abroad for a full additional year, leading to a course duration of four years for Bachelor students. The year abroad is normally taken between the second and third year. As an 'extra' year of study, students have greater flexibility with what they can study whilst abroad. They are expected to do at least 50%

of their main degree subject, but can, destination allowing, explore other subject areas alongside their main degree. The year is assessed on a pass/fail basis and the study abroad year is recognised in their degree through the suffix 'with study abroad year'.

Students can also apply to study abroad for a term in their second year. Some Schools, such as Global Studies, have created a 'mobility window' in the second term of the second year, with no core modules required in their programme at that time in order to encourage students to study abroad. Studying abroad plays a critical role in improving language skills, developing cultural understanding and a global mind-set. Study abroad also equips students with a multitude of 'soft' skills, such as confidence, tolerance, self-awareness, problem-solving, adaptability, flexibility, curiosity and decisiveness. In 2017-18, nearly 250 students took advantage of the opportunity to spend a term or a year abroad, whilst 83 students had an integrated year abroad as part of their programme.

The Sussex Abroad team has built up an extensive network of over 160 student exchange partnerships with universities in Asia, Australia and Europe, as well as North, Central and South America. **Summer schools** at our partner universities abroad are becoming increasingly popular, with 136 students attending a short course in a partner institution in 2017/18. Most students who have attended summer schools in the last four years have benefitted from scholarships through either our Global Excellence Summer Programme or the First-Generation Scholars scheme.

The number of **students on placement** has risen by 68% from 2017/18 to 2018/19. Between 2017/18 and 2018/19 the Business School has seen a 79% increase in student placement uptake, with 113 students on a placement year in 2018/19. Within our population of First-Generation Scholars students (first in family to attend university, or those from a lower income background), 44% undertake funded internships and work placements.

We have launched and are in the process of developing more of our first **online, distance learning** courses and are rapidly expanding our portfolio. September 2018 saw our initial cohort embark on the new MSc in International

Marketing, the first Sussex programme to be taught entirely online. Another three programmes are due to launch in January, July and September 2019, with a 'pipeline' of further programmes in place. All students have access to a dedicated support network and are provided with a highly interactive experience, and we will endeavour to ensure that the rich content and new pedagogical approaches afforded in the digital environment are imported into the learning experiences of our on-campus students.

We believe in a transformative education for our students, and in return many of them commit to transforming **the communities** around us. As examples, students regularly take part in Brighton street cleans and beach cleans. Students in the Law School give free legal advice to local people in their Legal Clinics. Student volunteers run an entire programme of children's activity camps on campus during the summer. The Community Ambassador scheme that we ran last year sent 20 students out to visit 1,500 homes in local areas, to talk to residents about the ways in which they can engage with the University. The Ambassadors also helped student residents settle into local areas. As one Ambassador said: 'I think that having a strong community spirit is important for the well-being of students and residents and I want to be a part of building that community spirit.'

ENGAGING STUDENTS

'I have never been more excited to learn. I feel like a reset button was hit in my subconscious. I love learning at SUSSEX!'
Student quote from the 2017 Student Barometer

Engagement with our students is now embedded in formal structures and informal activities. The University Education Committee has ultimate oversight for the student experience, and the School Teaching and Learning Committees report into it. All Schools have a Director of Teaching and Learning and a Director of the Student Experience. These are academic posts with remits for quality assurance and enhancement, and student support. Each School holds regular Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings with course representatives. The actions and responses from these meetings are typically

posted onto the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to help close the feedback loop, and many Schools use a variety of formats to communicate actions in response to student feedback. A Student Experience Forum is convened with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students and the Director for the Student Experience each semester, in order to discuss issues that our Student Representatives have been working on in their Schools. Directors of other services are invited to attend if the students wish to discuss particular issues, such as the Library provision or IT.

Student Representatives are included across the relevant University committees, and are members of quality assurance processes such as Periodic Review panels. The importance of the student perspective to the work of the University was endorsed by our governing Council, when they asked us in 2018 to establish the Student Experience Sub-Committee of Council referred to above.

One example of how we respond to student feedback is in our work to review and restructure the academic year, which culminated in a Summit in late 2017 to agree a new structure for the academic year. From September 2019, the academic year will be organised to enable assessments to be spread more evenly through the year in order to improve the quality and timeliness of feedback, and is a response to student feedback about the clustering of assessments in the timetable.

We have a very large and active body of over 200 **Student Representatives**. Student Representatives are overseen by the Students' Union (USSU), who offer training for the role. The Representatives seek out the views of their fellow students and bring relevant issues to their department, their School and the University. Student Representatives gather views through a range of methods, from informal chats to Facebook and other online forums, and they collate and present these at committees and in meetings with University and Union staff. Student Representatives are often able to work with academic colleagues to bring about change. In Sociology, for example, Student Representatives successfully collaborated with staff over the pacing of assessment deadlines. One of these Student Representatives said that the changes 'greatly

improved the chances of third-year students doing well'.

The Schools have Student Experience Leads and/or Student Experience Champions, and they play a leading role in relation to ensuring that we gather student feedback and respond to it. The annual Student Experience Conference brings together Professional Services staff from across a number of different areas to hear students' perspectives and to share ideas about engaging with students.

The TEF metrics have helped us to continue to highlight the areas where we have room for improvement, especially in relation to assessment and feedback. We have been holding high-level focus group discussions with staff and student representatives in each School to understand the nature of students' concerns about assessment and feedback. These discussions are enabling us to develop strategies for addressing their concerns, such as the development of marking matrices which are used to provide students with a set of clear expectations and consistent feedback.

The Student Surveys Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students and including student representatives, reviews the formal mechanisms for gathering student feedback, such as the NSS, the Student Barometer and our own online, end-of-term evaluations. Part of the remit of this Group is to consider whether we are asking students the right questions at the right time, and making the most efficient use of the data we gather, as well as feeding back to students how we have responded to their feedback.

ENGAGING TEACHERS

'The lecturers are very passionate and committed to their subjects of study and this makes it so much more interesting to learn.'
Student quote from the 2017 Student Barometer

An outstanding student experience can only be achieved by passionate teachers who are supported, valued and recognised for their outstanding contribution to education.

To celebrate the launch of the Learn to Transform strategy, we have designed a new student-led teaching award scheme (the

Sussex Education Awards) which is aligned to the main aims of the strategy. Students will be able to nominate their lecturers under the categories of collaborative, inclusive, disruptive, courageous and kind. In the previous scheme we usually received around 150 nominations each year, but this year we will promote the scheme more widely and will celebrate the award winners at a special event in the summer.

Our commitment to an outstanding student experience is matched by our commitment to the professional development of our staff. We have a range of provision for new and continuing lecturers, to develop and enhance their teaching. Doctoral students who teach are required to undertake the **Starting to Teach** module. Completion of the full set of five workshops and assignment leads to Associate Fellowship of the HEA. Members of staff on temporary or fractional contracts can also participate in Starting to Teach. The course is extremely popular and ran eight times in 2018, with waiting lists all year round.

New, probationary lecturers with less than three years' consecutive teaching experience must complete the **Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in HE** (60 credits). Feedback on this programme is very positive, and the programme recruits around 80 participants each year, not all of whom are required to do it. Successful completion of the programme leads to Fellowship of the HEA. We are also committed to supporting staff to gain Fellowships of the HEA at the level appropriate to their experience and role. We are currently supporting ten centrally funded applications for Senior Fellowship of the HEA, with a series of writing and developmental workshops to enable as many staff as are able to prepare their applications for Senior Fellowship. We have two Principal Fellows of the HEA: the Head of Technology Enhanced Learning and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students. All staff engaged in the activity of teaching and supporting learning, from librarians to learning technologists, are encouraged to gain HEA-accredited qualifications, which offers them the confidence to contribute to aspects of course design and curriculum development in relevant areas such as resource lists, student engagement and embedding skills support.

The development of academic practice and a culture of innovation across the University is further nurtured and supported by the **Technology Enhanced Learning team**. A comprehensive programme of face-to-face and online professional development opportunities is produced each term by our team of Learning Technologists, complemented by a seminar series of invited external experts, and an online repository of case studies of good practice from across the institution. We also offer the TEL Digital Practice Awards, which is an annual programme of funding open to staff and students to support scholarly research or projects incorporating the use of technology. Feedback on the work of TEL is very positive; for example, one Senior Lecturer said: 'The TEL team does such an amazing job – with disseminating ideas, supporting staff in their teaching and marking. TEL staff are enthusiastic about trying new things in teaching.'

In line with many research-oriented universities, we have recently launched a new **Education Leadership Pathway to promotion** for all staff with teaching in their contracts who wish to progress on the basis of their contribution to education excellence and leadership. The pathway follows the traditional academic career structure from Lecturer to Professor based on evidence of the excellence of contribution to our education provision, and to education beyond the University. Staff who are currently on Teaching Fellow contracts will also be able to move to the appropriate academic level and progress through the academic promotions route, showing how they meet the criteria for education leadership.

The annual Sussex Teaching and Learning Conference takes place in the Spring every year. Last year's conference focused on feedback practices, given that our NSS results consistently point to levels of dissatisfaction with feedback that we need to improve. The conference is an opportunity to share good practice, insights and innovations with colleagues.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

'Everything about the atmosphere at Sussex was 'cool'; from the incredible range of courses, to the faculty, the location, and above all, the students. I remain amazed at how much fun the whole experience was, both educationally and socially. The University's ethos rewarded initiative, accepted diversity and actively encouraged risk taking, and I will always be grateful for the confidence this gave me. I left with better life skills, practical knowledge and enduring friendships.'
Luke McKeever, Chief Executive Officer, Capital ID and Sussex graduate

The Library is one of the jewels of our campus, and is a well-loved space where constant improvements are made based on feedback and in collaboration with our student users. Examples of recent changes include folding collections together to free up room for more study space; adding pods to create quieter personalised study areas; extending opening hours; and an addition of a family room, which is designed and equipped to support those who need to study when they have their children with them. Changes that are made in response to feedback are published on the Library website. As well as listening to our students as part of the Customer Service Excellence accreditation process, Library staff undertake regular projects to ensure they are working to respond to the changing needs and behaviours of student users. A recent example is an ethnographic study that explored the experience of foundation-year students through their interaction with the services of the Library and the learning environment in general. A number of changes were made to processes, the physical space as well as the signage as a result of recommendations made.

We completed a large piece of work to increase uptake of the online reading lists. The success of this was measured not only on the increase in lists received but also on the impact of the availability of material for the students. The appreciation of reading lists is evident in feedback from students; for example, a Sociology second-year student said: 'Having an online reading list makes the road getting there so much easier. The structure of it really helps ... it motivates me even more to do the reading because it's really easy to access.'

The **Royal Literary Fund (RLF) Writing Fellowship** scheme provides support for staff and students who want to improve their writing skills for their essays, projects, articles or dissertations. The RLF Writing Fellows are resident in the Library and offer free one-to-one tutorials in which students can discuss their concerns about writing and receive support to enhance their writing capabilities.

A range of methods were employed in a project in a longitudinal study in Special Collections to understand the impact of using archival materials within teaching, and insights were gained into the value of the learning experienced by students. Students commented on the benefits to their research skills to support extended essay and dissertation work, whilst the hands-on experience of working in the archive with Library staff increased their confidence in approaching other archives and research resources. Tutors reported on the success of these teaching sessions, contributing to enrichment of the learning experience in which students were enabled to actively take responsibility for their learning.

Canvas is our new Virtual Learning Environment, which went live this academic year and is pivotal to our ambitions to provide our students with a digitally advanced education, enabling us to significantly enhance our digital teaching and learning space for students and staff. We have listened to what students have to say about the importance of reliability when it comes to our study resources, so Canvas is cloud-based to enable work to take place anytime, anywhere and is able to handle heavy traffic at the busiest times of year. We have used the transition as a vehicle to promote more active, creative and experiential learning and assessment methods, harnessing the capabilities of the new platform to drive forward the student learning experience.

Our **Future Technologies Lab**, a state-of-the-art engineering and robotics centre, was opened in 2017. It includes a new student-focused hub, with a suite of high-specification computers and new teaching and project workspaces. The lab allows students to learn about advancements in robotics and autonomous systems, working with the latest technologies behind innovations such as auto-pilots, drones, space robotics and driverless cars.

We are leaders in the use of digital technologies to enhance our learning experience and our Learn to Transform strategy sets an ambitious agenda to establish a learning community of confident but critical users of digital solutions to enrich the education experience. We have embraced emerging technologies, including virtual and augmented reality, supporting initiatives across our campus which take our students beyond the role of mere consumers of digital content to producers of digital experiences, while developing digital skills much sought after by employers. Our innovative **GoBag Kits** (loanable backpacks that include cutting-edge Fusion GoPro cameras, iPad Pros and Google Cardboard) enable our learners to create, share and benefit from truly immersive experiences. Our digital assessment workflow is sector-leading in its integration with our virtual learning environment and we have extended our support for more creative methods of assessment through the implementation of the ePortfolio solution Mahara. Our digital humanities and quantum technology research themes bring students into leading-edge knowledge discovery.

The InQbate Creativity Zone is a fully technology-enabled, but not technology-driven, space that provides teaching staff with personal, pedagogic and technical support, along with resources that can be used in a variety of configurations. This facility supports more innovative and effective teaching and learning, particularly in relation to both the teaching of creativity and creative approaches to teaching and learning.

The online **Skills Hub** continues to be a one-stop shop for students for academic skills support, and has been further developed with the recent addition and enhancement of the sections on Digital Skills and Numeracy. The Academic Skills team has been expanded and is providing additional student workshops both in and alongside the curriculum. The usage has risen consistently over the last few years, with about 90,000 page views in the first few months of the 2018/19 academic year.

The Student Centre project aims to develop a physical space on campus which supports us to transform ways of working, systems and processes across the University, so that there is choice, flexibility, accuracy, clarity and value for money in all interactions. The Student Centre will reimagine the way students can engage, and the project will invite students to take ownership of and determine the priority use of the building. This highly visible flagship project at the heart of the campus will create momentum and engagement across the University to delivering services of the highest possible standard to all our students.

The Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts (ACCA) was re-opened in 2016, following an extensive refurbishment. Named as a tribute to our former Chancellor Lord Richard Attenborough and his family, the Centre embodies a creative spirit and will carry on their legacy, guided by the visions championed by Lord Attenborough in his life and work: human rights, social justice, creative education and access to the arts for all. His son, Michael Attenborough, is the Patron of ACCA. The Centre supports innovation in research, teaching and community engagement through its artistic programmes and artist residencies across University departments. ACCA is an interdisciplinary arts hub connecting us with Brighton & Hove and the wider national and international arts communities. The Centre presents a programme including performance, dance, live art, film, music, family events, installation, debate, and digital and lens-based practices. ACCA is the home for showcasing outstanding work by our drama and performance students, plus many others.



Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts

The Keep is a world-class centre for archives that opens up access to all the collections of the East Sussex Record Office (ESRO), the Royal Pavilion & Museums Local History Collections and the internationally significant University of Sussex Special Collections. The availability of these combined collections, both in print and online, offers our students a magnificent resource as well as a state-of-the-art archive centre to work in and examine historical resources. We integrate the holdings into pedagogical initiatives throughout the student journey. For example, the Virginia Woolf manuscripts were central to the work of third-year English students in curating an exhibition at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill, called '1935', commemorating events that took place around the Pavilion's opening. Students have also collaborated with staff on projects from the archives, such as the 'Observing the 80s' project which has become a Jisc case study and an open education resource used by a number of different modules, such as '1984: Thatcher's Britain'. Led by Professor Lucy Robinson, the Observing the 80s project involved students working with academic staff, librarians and IT staff to collect and curate archival materials from the last 'pre-internet' decade. Through this project, students developed a more nuanced understanding of how history is made, and a better understanding of the relationships of different types of evidence.

The Sussex Centre for Language Studies (SCLS) provides open courses in modern languages for the general public and supports language pathways. Students can study autonomously in our Language Learning Centre, which has a digital language suite and multimedia workstations for the private study of over 50 world languages. SCLS staff are passionate about all aspects of language, language learning and language teaching, and believe that learning to speak a second or third language provides a window into another culture, and that cultural awareness and intercultural communication are essential for the promotion of peace, co-operation and understanding in the world today. In addition, the study of a language gives meaningful access to the media, films and literature in that language, opening up limitless paths of discovery.

Perhaps most importantly, the learning environment at Sussex is enriched by **staff commitment** and student pride in Sussex. A recent investigation into the University's institutional culture, involving around 900 members of the University community, found that 'the most important message that emerged from our research is how passionate Sussex staff and students feel about the institution.' The words that were most frequently used to describe the Sussex culture were 'friendly', 'diverse', 'supportive', 'open', 'liberal' and 'ambitious'. A recent staff 'pulse' survey also found that over 70% of the Professional Services staff respondents said they felt proud to work for the University. We know from student feedback that pride in the institutional culture is infectious and enhances their experience, as is illustrated in some of the quotes provided throughout this submission.

LIFE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

'The University of Sussex, it's the best place to learn and build the pillars for a strong career, as the academic teaching is constantly focused on the employability of its own students.'

Quote from the 2017 Student Barometer

The metrics of **employment or further study** remain very high at 95.5%, against a benchmark of 94.0%. In highly skilled employment and further study we performed 10.1% points above our benchmark, with a rate of 83.8%.

We enable our students to achieve in their lives beyond the classroom through a range of activities. **The Sussex Innovation Centre** provides support for the creation and growth of technology and knowledge-based companies in Sussex. The Centre is now a thriving business environment for nearly 80 high-growth companies and, since its creation, more than 160 companies have been based at the Centre. It runs Start Up Sussex, an annual enterprise programme that launches in October each year. This starts with a series of workshops through the winter term for around 50 students and recent graduates, helping them to validate their business and social enterprise ideas. The best ideas go through to phase two: ten compete for a StartUp Sussex or Social Impact prize, worth up to £10,000, and up to six international

students are supported to apply for a Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur visa.

The **Catalyst Programme** takes on 10-15 new graduates and placement students each year on a full-time contract to work in the Centre's support team. They work on a variety of different projects across a range of industries, prompting them to reflect on what kind of career they want to pursue. As one graduate of the programme said: 'During my time at Catalyst, the companies I've worked with range from an equity crowdfunding Fintech to a gay-friendly wedding venue directory – the diversity is what made this experience so fantastic.'



We have an exceptional track record in fields related to **Politics, International Relations and Development**. From the very outset we expose our students to the study of world history and world economic development. The United Nations (UN) Society has been part of our Students' Union since 1962. The University's second Chancellor, Baron Hartley William Shawcross, was the lead British prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal and the UK's principal delegate to the UN immediately after World War Two. He helped establish the functions of the UN, including the work of its highest body, the Security Council. Our fourth Vice-Chancellor, Sir Leslie Fielding, also a British diplomat, served as European Commission Ambassador to Tokyo and as Director of External Relations at the Commission.

Education imbued with this level of expertise has enabled our students to go on to hold the highest offices in global public policy. Our students have become, *inter alia*, authors of the UN Human Development Report (Sakiko Fukuda-Parr), served as under-secretaries general and executive secretaries of UN institutions (Rebeca Grynspan and Shamshad

Akhtar), head of the Commonwealth's trade policy directorate (Mohammed Razzaque), country ambassadors (Renée Jones-Bos), European Commission directors-general (Jonathan Faull), presidents (Thabo Mbeki, Festus Mogae, Carlos Alvarado Quesada and Guy Scott), and leading politicians (Hilary Benn and Peter Hain). They have been inspired and assisted by our faculty, who have a long tradition of working with and engaging public policy, locally, nationally and internationally.

Our students are supported to develop their employability and transferable skills through an award-winning **Careers and Employability Centre (CEC)**. In 2016, CEC was the winner of the AGCAS (the membership organisation for career development staff) Excellence Award for Student Engagement. This award recognised the successes of the First-Generation Scholars scheme in which students are offered a comprehensive range of unique and funded career development opportunities, including:

- work shadowing for first-year students with support for travel costs;
- paid summer internships for second years;
- funded internships in China;
- places on the Sussex International Summer School;
- funded places on summer schools in universities in South-East Asia;
- paid summer undergraduate research opportunities at Sussex;
- research placements at the University of Pennsylvania.

In the same year, CEC was presented with a NEON Widening Access Initiative (Retention and Success) award at the Palace of Westminster. The National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) is the professional organisation supporting those involved in widening access to higher education. The award was based on figures that show that students on our First-Generation Scholars scheme are outperforming their peers in the jobs market, with 90% in graduate-level employment or further study, compared to 88% across the University as a whole. They also achieved an equivalent number of high-quality degrees of 1sts and 2:1s compared to the

graduate cohort as a whole. In 2018, Sussex was a finalist in the National Undergraduate Employability Award for the Best University Placement Service.

Students can avail themselves of hundreds of events organised by CEC: there were 466 events in 2017/18, and in total 236 alumni and employers visited the University. The events ranged from workshops led by consultants and employers, to placement events. The annual Careers Fair is the largest on the south coast, and enables students to meet a wide range of recruiting employers. Nearly 5,000 individual students availed themselves of the CEC's core provision in that year. Make it Happen is an annual two-week programme of events run in collaboration with the Alumni Office, in which 40–60 alumni from a range of sectors return to campus to give career talks to students. We have also recently launched Sussex Connect, which is an online mentoring and networking platform that connects alumni with students for mentoring and support. Although Sussex Connect is a new initiative, we have nearly 2,500 alumni volunteers registered on the platform, which attests to the fondness that our graduates have for Sussex.

CareerHub is a specialised portal designed for students to access careers advice (via bookable appointments and e-guidance), ask questions and book events and workshops. Recent graduates retain access to all CEC services, including CareerHub, for up to three years after graduation. In 2017/18, nearly 2,500 individual students engaged with this support, totalling nearly 4,500 direct interactions. CareerHub advertised nearly 7,000 jobs to students during 2017/18.

Students can attend a variety of workshops on **Digital Tuesdays** throughout the term. These lunchtime drop-in sessions, which are jointly delivered by ITS, the TEL team, Library and CEC, cover a range of digital skills. The same teams work together on Digital Discovery Week, which is an annual week of workshops, seminars and online opportunities to enable students and staff to experiment with new technology, showcase examples of innovations in teaching and research at Sussex, and horizon-scan for emerging digital innovations which will impact our sector.

Every year we employ an undergraduate student team of **Digital Media Gurus** who are

paid to create social media content and help run our social media channels. There are opportunities to blog, vlog, make videos or create Instagram stories. One of our previous Gurus has explained how his experience helped him find a job: 'Of course, as soon as I began my role, I put it straight onto my CV and LinkedIn. Although I previously struggled in finding a role due to a 'lack of experience', I got an interview at a publishing company in the Marketing department who were very impressed (and curious) about what being a Digital Media Guru entailed. Since then, I am now working in London Bridge as a Digital Content Assistant, applying experience and skills gained from my time at Sussex.'

The Role Models Project is a 'near-peer' mentoring programme, run by the Students' Union, where students visit local secondary schools to deliver PSHE workshops. A comprehensive training programme, developed by John Parry MBE, ensures that the students are equipped with the tools they need to deliver effective workshops. Through participating in the project, students not only have a positive impact on young people in our local community, they also gain valuable skills in workshop facilitation, mentoring and public speaking.



Role Models Project training session

Student Societies are thriving at Sussex: we have almost 300 student-led societies which range from the Harry Potter Society, the Louis Theroux Society, the K-Pop Society, the Drag Soc, to I Too Am Sussex. One of the most active societies is the Dog Walking Society, which enables students who miss their dogs back home to walk together through the South Downs with dogs from nearby neighbourhoods. The Dog Walking Society also support other student society initiatives, such as last semester when they took the dogs to a Decolonise Sussex student campaign meeting.

Sussex Writes is a creative writing programme which affords opportunities for a number of students to develop not just their own writing skills, but those of others in the community. This programme of community engagement allows us to take creative writing workshops run by undergraduates, mostly from the School of English, to primary and secondary school students in schools across the region. These writing workshops develop storytelling skills, which supplement the creative elements of GCSEs, and increase confidence in writing. The workshops are underpinned by some of our collaborations with cultural partners such as East Sussex Music and Glyndebourne. The Sussex students who participate in these workshops acknowledge the value to their own employability. For example, History student Gabby Grilla says: 'Sussex Writes allows me to gain more teaching experience while spreading my insights and knowledge on creative writing, which is important to me.'

ActiveUS is a low-cost social sport programme which offers students a variety of non-competitive drop-in activities throughout term time. The scheme is jointly run by the Students' Union and the University, and aims to remove barriers around sports, making physical activities accessible and inclusive to all.

The Sussex Buddy Scheme is a peer-to-peer support scheme that is coordinated by the Students' Union. It started as an initiative of the Welfare Officer in 2013 and is based around matching current students or Buddy Volunteers with new students. The Buddy Scheme is open to every Sussex student and helps to integrate international and home students, fostering our ambitions to be a global campus. One student who took part said that 'Having a Buddy Scheme Volunteer at Sussex has made me feel connected to the UK.'

The Sussex Language Café is run by the Students' Union and Sussex Centre for Language Studies and was set up in 2013 to help give students the opportunity to learn or practise a language with other students in a social setting. The cafés are free and open to everyone, and are hosted by students and staff who are given the freedom to come up with their own language-learning activities and games. They are supported by student volunteers on the tables who speak the language fluently to help participants learn.

INCLUSIVE SUSSEX

'The social environment at Sussex is very friendly and inclusive, students are committed to their studies and most people have an open mind set; students also get the chance to meet people from lots of different countries that can offer them different perspectives and help them growing both academically and personally.'
Student quote in the Student Barometer 2017

We are justifiably proud of our commitment to **fair access and widening participation**. Sussex 2025 states that 'we will be recognised globally as an inclusive educational community, widening participation, where the diversity of our student and academic body is celebrated'. We continue to increase the number of students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs), making significant progress to 2017 with students from POLAR 3 Quintile 1 (Q1) neighbourhoods, who are now 8% of our new entrants against a benchmark of 7.5%. We have seen an increase in BAME applications from 25.0% in 2016, to 25.6% in 2017, and an increase in placed students from 19.4% to 20.0%. The 2017 cycle saw the proportion of UK-based applicants defining themselves as something other than White go above 25% for the first time. State school entrants have increased to 88.9%.

Students with a disability are increasingly applying to Sussex: between 2016 and 2017, the proportion of applicants who were eligible for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) increased from 10.3% to 11.2%, and the proportion of placed students with a DSA increased from 10.2% to 12.4%. This also shows that DSA applicants were more likely to convert their application to a placement than non-DSA applicants in 2017. This compares positively to the national picture, where UCAS data shows that those in receipt of a DSA made up a smaller proportion of both applicants and placed students in 2017 compared to Sussex (10.7% and 10.6% respectively).

HESA data for 2017/18 indicates that 7.7% of our full-time first-degree students are in receipt of DSA, which is 1.8% above our 2016/17 Location Adjusted Benchmark. We note that our internal data suggests that 18.7% of our students in the 2017 entry registered with our

disability services on campus. This suggests that not all the students who we support through our disability services are registered to receive the DSA. In 2017/18, 23.3% of our full-time first-degree students had a self-reported disability.

Student case study

'Being a blind physics student meant that I had to rely on other people in order to interpret graphs and images. I realised that I needed to find a way to help others in a similar situation. Grapheel makes science subjects more accessible through Iris, an app that connects vision-impaired learners with sighted volunteers.

'Sussex has helped the creation of Grapheel in so many ways: from my first-year tutor, Professor Kathy Romer, who motivated me to explore my initial idea through the Junior Research Associate scheme; my fellow physics students; and the Sussex Innovation Centre, who supported the start-up. We also had financial help from a local businessman through our Alumni Office. If you're really passionate you can take advantage of so much here. I advise you to embrace every opportunity that comes your way.'

Daniel Hajas, Theoretical Physics MPhys, PhD student, founder and CEO of Grapheel and developer of the Iris app

Students from a care experience background have increased in number over the last few years. In 2012/13, 24 students were in receipt of a care leavers' financial assistance package. The number has risen steadily since, with 40 students in receipt of the same support in 2017/18. The proportion of care leavers in highly skilled employment or further study remained above that of all graduates in 2016/17, at 88%.

Our **First-Generation Scholars (FGS) scheme** has been running since 2012 and provides a wide range of support and initiatives to increase participation in higher education. As part of the FGS scheme, every full-time, UK-domiciled undergraduate student with a household income below £42,875 qualifies for financial support. The scheme explicitly addresses the

issue of improving the employment and/or further study opportunities for our students from the OfS qualifying groups. The FGS Study-Work Programme includes competitive access to work shadowing; funded internships in the UK or China; funded international summer schools either on campus or at a partner institution overseas; and funded undergraduate Junior Research Associate opportunities, again either on campus or at a partner institution overseas. One of the Summer School participants said: 'I would describe my Summer School Programme in Singapore as the time of my life. All the people I met were amazing and the reputability of Nanyang Technological University is enough to boost my CV significantly.'

We have undertaken a thorough, evidence-based review of the FGS scheme to ensure it continues to create real and demonstrable impact, including an impact assessment of our financial support element. About 84% of FGS recipients are of the opinion that the bursary was important for their ability to financially continue with their studies, and allowed them to afford to participate along with fellow students (89.6% agreement), feel more satisfied with life as a student (88.6%), and feel less anxious than they would have otherwise (87.1% agreement). For participants in the China Internship Programme and International Summer Schools, 100% are in highly skilled work or further study. As one Summer School participant stated: 'My time at the summer school was really positive; I learned so much about the Malaysian legal system and even gained an insight into their culture too. I made great friends with the people in my group and through this opportunity, I have developed as a person. I would definitely recommend others to apply!'

We have a well-established evaluation strategy to understand better the successes of our access programme. We use the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) tracking tool to determine the rates of progress to higher education from our cohorts of target participants. We have recently received the first report from HEAT about our performance in this area, tracking our first cohort of 209 students. Overall, our HEAT analysis has shown that we have seen a 43% progression rate to university. Of those who progressed, 24% came to the University of Sussex, with 66% of all progressing students going on to higher-tariff

universities. Of our tracked students, 46% of students who lived in POLAR4 Q1 or Q2 areas progressed, and of this group, 61% went to a high-tariff institution.

Inclusive Sussex was the first enabling strategy to emerge from Sussex 2025, our new strategic framework. It sets out four key goals - equality, diversity, accessibility and flexibility - and outlines how progress will be measured to make Sussex truly inclusive. The strategy pledges to 'provide equal access to excellent learning, research and employment opportunities regardless of physical or unseen disabilities'. It also commits the University to become 'a place that celebrates diversity and tolerance' and is 'flexible by default'.



Since 2005, the Athena SWAN charter has recognised institutions and their departments for commitment to advancing the careers of women in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine). It now also recognises work undertaken to address equality more broadly within higher education and research, not just the barriers to progression that affect women. The University has held a Bronze Award since 2012, and we have Bronze and Silver Awards in the Schools of Life Sciences, Mathematics and Physical Sciences, the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, Engineering and Informatics, and Psychology. Our commitment to gender equality in STEMM infuses the student experience: for example, the School of Engineering and Informatics hosts a chapter of Robogals, which is a society promoting female participation in science subjects and is open to students from all disciplines. Robogals take programmable robots to community events in order to inspire

the next generation of women to consider pursuing a career in engineering.

We have about 200 autistic students who have declared their status, but we know there are more waiting for a diagnosis. **The Autistic Friendly University Project** aims to establish Sussex as the first autistic-friendly university in the UK. Working with the National Autistic Society, we will develop an accreditation scheme for other UK HEIs. Sussex already offers high-quality support for autistic students who have disclosed their autism to student support services, and we have staff with research expertise on autism. Our university is recognised as one of the top five UK universities for students with autism by Study International.

We have become a **Stonewall Diversity Champion** and, by joining the LGBT charity's programme, we are committed to creating an inclusive and accepting campus environment for all students, staff and visitors. This builds on a Sussex tradition of pioneering work in this area: 30 years ago we established the Centre for the Study of Sexual Dissidence, which has supported our numerous student LGBT+

societies since the 1970s. More recently we initiated an internal LGBT+ Staff Network and a University-level trans advocacy role. We sponsor Pride Brighton & Hove and the annual Brighton Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex Conference. Stonewall is also supporting our submission to the Workplace Equality Index 2019 and an action plan that will cover areas such as staff recruitment and training, community engagement, and supporting the LGBT+ Staff Network.

We recognise that creating a truly inclusive education experience for all requires evidence-based practice, targeted interventions and evaluations. We have a number of working groups and steering groups who are examining data, commissioning research, organising events and sharing ideas. These include events such as the recent Kindness Symposium, which drew together researchers, teachers and students who are working on the concept of kindness in education in a variety of ways. We have also established ongoing groups such as the BME Student Attainment Gap Working Group and the Access, Success and Progress Group in order to ensure success for our diverse student population.

SUMMARY

'When I got to Sussex I felt as if I had found a home - a place of curiosity about, and engagement with, the world. It showed me the importance of citizenship, of gaining knowledge for a social purpose, of playing a part and not standing on the side-lines. It set the pattern for my life. I couldn't be more grateful to it nor, still, more excited by it.'

Simon Fanshawe, writer, broadcaster and co-founder of Stonewall, BA Law 1978

'The University of Sussex was the best place I could have studied. Not only did I graduate with a valuable degree, but for three years I was a member of the most welcoming, inclusive and inspiring community. Sussex ignited my passion for politics, social action and the environment, while also giving me a high-quality and enjoyable education. A degree at Sussex is like no other, and I'm so thankful I got to experience it.'

Rebecca Longhurst, BA Media Practice 2018

Since 1961, our students have brought to us a spirit of curiosity, of challenge, of a willingness to ask critical questions with us. Together we have created a community that is passionate and proud to be part of Sussex. As we take forward our vision for 2025, we are embarking on the exciting task of drawing a new map of learning for the contemporary age. The higher education landscape in the UK undoubtedly faces some challenging times ahead, and we believe that maintaining our focus and desire for a distinctive Sussex identity will enable our students and staff to thrive. We have made a firm commitment to put students first, and to work in partnership with them, as we forge a path through this next stage of our history.

This is Sussex. We dare to be different.