



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

2016-2020

Reference:

Version: 1.00

Status: Final

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Date: 15/12/2016

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

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Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

1. Background

1.1 This document outlines the strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) 2016-2020 undertaken by UCEM to reflect the expectations of the Royal Charter, UCEM's Mission & Vision, UCEM's Research Strategy, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), and obligations as a Higher Education Institution (HEI) with Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP).

1.2 UCEM's Royal Charter states that UCEM was established:

'...to constitute, a central educational establishment for the training and education of students for the professions, vocations and callings... (in the Built environment, land and real estate), and thereby to endeavour to raise the standard of such training and education and to instil into such students a high sense of the duties of their current or future professions, vocations or callings.'

'...to develop and publish curricula, syllabuses and examinations.'

'...to exercise powers to confer or grant diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions of... (the institution).'

1.3 The strategy is further framed by the institutional mission and, as part of a Five-Year Strategic Plan (2014-2019), states the following:

UCEM's core purpose is: 'To provide truly accessible, relevant and cost-effective education, enabling students to enhance careers, increase professionalism and contribute to a better built environment.'

UCEM's vision is: 'To be the leading, vocational, online university.'

1.4 Following from these central tenets are six UCEM primary and foundational organisational goals, several of which directly impact upon the institution's LTA strategy, i.e. Independence, Growth, Academic Excellence, and Operational Excellence, each with specific targets set against student satisfaction within the institutional metrics that monitor if these are being met.

1.5 UCEM's Research Strategy and the associated Code of Practice: Research and Advanced Scholarship outline the requirements of pedagogic research in informing LTA practice and research informed teaching and scholarship. Coupled with the role of the Research Coordinator and the Research Centres (Online Learning and Property and Construction), this drives the research agenda, building research capacity and disseminating findings.

1.6 Additional institutional compliance requirements of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) are being initiated, as a consequence of the White Paper 'Success as a Knowledge Economy', published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in May 2016, which, if/when enacted, will require UCEM to continually enhance its LTA (see Appendix A). Within the White Paper, TEF (page14, paragraph 26) has the stated aim:

"...to provide clear information to students about where the best provision can be found and to drive up the standard of teaching in all universities. The TEF will provide clear, understandable information to students about where teaching quality is outstanding. It will send powerful signals to prospective students and their future employers, and inform the competitive market."

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2. Strategic Objectives

2.1 In order to meet UCEM's overarching aims of the Strategic Vision, and to enable meeting the associated primary, foundational goals and compliance requirements, UCEM has four core strategic objectives for LTA:

2.2 To place students at the centre of UCEM's LTA.

- The pursuit of student-centric pedagogical approaches is firmly at the core of UCEM's LTA. Students are UCEM's reason for being, from the institution's founding to its present organisational purpose and goals.
- UCEM will meet the specific educational needs of all students, and where possible present them with personalised learning opportunities.
- UCEM will work in partnership with students in its LTA, and will ensure that students are able to participate in the design, review and enhancement of the programmes of study.
- UCEM seeks enhancements in its LTA to improve all students' learning opportunities and employability. Therefore, to inform this, UCEM will ensure that it will gather and use information to assess the impact of study with UCEM on students' learning gain and employability, with the ability to cross reference this to their socio-economic background and location.
- The focus of the recent UK government White Paper, 'Success as a Knowledge Economy' (2016) puts student satisfaction at the heart of Higher Education. UCEM recognises and agrees with the importance of this approach, and will continue to set stretching targets relating to student satisfaction.

2.3 To provide learning, teaching and assessment that is accessible.

- UCEM's LTA will be constructed with the aim of widening participation and promoting engagement from students from all geographical locations and prior educational experiences. LTA methodology, delivered through appropriate technological media, will promote the application of learning and knowledge that is specifically relevant to a student's own local and individual experience.
- Learning materials will be presented in accessible formats, and a variety of approaches to teaching and assessment will be used in order to be inclusive, to the extent that UCEM engages students from differing backgrounds and learning approaches, while ensuring equality of LTA experience for all students.
- UCEM is committed to providing flexible learning opportunities to students, from the design of the programmes to the pace, place and timing of study that students undertake.
- UCEM will utilise consistent approaches in LTA to ensure students are not presented with unreasonable barriers to progression through their studies.

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2.4 To create outstanding online learning underpinned by research and at the forefront of educational technology.

- UCEM will use and expand its current expertise in technology-enhanced learning to ensure that module¹ development, communication (between students and tutors, and student to student), and assessment methodology draws on the most up to date, leading edge and innovative technological developments.
- UCEM is committed to using and undertaking research through the Online Learning Research Centre and the Property and Construction Research Centre. This will ensure that LTA is informed by evidence-based UCEM best practice, the emerging developments in advanced online learning, subject-specific knowledge and educational technology.
- UCEM's expertise in learning technology and developing approach to learning analytics will allow the dual benefits of offering an increasingly bespoke and individualised learning experience for students. This will ensure student support is targeted to students' particular needs, with economy of scale and consistency delivered by using technology to standardise module set up and management.
- UCEM will use robust understanding of the advantages and limitations of technology enhanced learning to ensure that those designing and delivering online learning at UCEM explore the benefits of various approaches, such as flipped learning and blended learning to enhance student engagement and retention.

2.5 To design and provide learning, teaching and assessment that actively reflects and responds to the demands of the built environment, land and real estate industry and its constituent professional bodies.

- UCEM will ensure that programmes are designed to enable students' entry into, and progression through, the built environment, land and real estate industry and its associated professional bodies.
- UCEM will build upon its active and established links with the built environment, land and real estate industry, both in the UK and globally, to involve industry representatives in module and programme design.
- All UCEM programmes will have professional body accreditation, or where appropriate recognition, and will continue to support and value the recruitment of teaching staff from industry, including those who maintain established professional careers alongside their work for UCEM.
- UCEM will ensure the programme learning outcomes link to vocational and professional skill requirements and that assessment, wherever possible, is derived from real world scenarios and working practice.
- UCEM's commitment to providing engaging and work-relevant LTA is based on an approach which facilitates students to develop as autonomous learners. Module creation and delivery, assessment and feedback is designed to support this approach and reflect proven best practice across the higher and further education sector, particularly with regard to vocational and in the subject area of the built environment, land and real estate.
- UCEM is equally committed to ensuring that it provides the opportunities to develop employability skills, to support students who are either not employed in the industry

¹ Where reference is made to 'modules' this should be taken as reference to 'units' for purposes of level three delivery.

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and wish to enter it, or are employed in the industry but seek to progress or change career pathways within it.

3. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

3.1 In this section, a number of specific objectives are identified to focus and direct UCEM between 2016 and 2020 to deliver the LTA strategic objectives. It should be noted that in many cases, work to achieve these aims is already in progress at the time of writing this strategy, including No Student Left Behind (NSLB)².

3.2 Enhanced Student Learning Opportunities

3.2.1 To devise and implement an explicit programme of preparation for study at UCEM.

UCEM recognises the importance of potential students making an informed choice about when, how and what to study, and the implications this will have for retention, completion and success.

- UCEM will also aim to provide guidance on the requirements and demands of online study before potential students enrol.
- Through general public-facing and personal guidance, UCEM will seek to ensure that students select the right level and subject of study, which takes into account their previous academic and personal experience, and career aspirations.
- UCEM will provide an individually relevant and level-specific induction programme to support their transition into online and higher education study.

3.2.2 To design learning programmes which explicitly link to the emerging demands of the built environment, land and real estate industry, in line with UCEM's organisational goals.

UCEM will expand and develop its range of programmes in areas such as;

- apprenticeships and other work-related qualifications;
- providing a broader reach, both geographically and to address a wider range of subjects under the built environment, land and real estate. This would focus particularly on the largest segments of the sector market not covered in the current offer, with the proviso that there is both market/industry demand and professional accrediting body support;
- cognate Master's programmes, to provide progression opportunities for UCEM's current students and to the wider market;
- internationally focused study with the intention of broadening the career and professional opportunities of UCEM's students.

² NSLB promotes and encourages enhancements to the students' journey with the institution, and in raising awareness of this, and of retention and success issues, ensures that all employees make appropriate interventions to their practice and processes to improve the students' experience and learning opportunities.

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- the advancement of sustainable built environment, land and real estate practice, so that students leave their study with UCEM conversant in best practice in nurturing a sustainable built environment.

3.2.3 To employ approaches to enable personalised learning.

- Innovations utilising advanced technological media will be mindful of the impact upon support for personalised LTA of individual students.
- Intervention approaches and training pertaining to them, to enable tutor analysis of students' needs in order to make specific suggestions on learning approaches.
- Assessment of students' needs based upon learning analytics, to identify a potential variety of learning approaches, to suit individual needs.
- Enabling student self-assessment, where the students select from a variety of learning methods to suit their individual needs.
- Flexible programme and module design, including study approaches on the VLE, to enable personalised learning journeys.
- UCEM will offer a blend of asynchronous and synchronous activities to suit the individual.

3.2.4 To develop learning skills for life in confident and independent learners.

- UCEM will engender in students a robust and reflective approach to learning and to the unique challenges of part-time, online study, in order to aid retention and success.
- UCEM module design, teaching and assessment will develop the learning skills of students, to grow them as critical and analytical thinkers. This is intended to ultimately benefit them in the current workplace, as they continue to study at higher levels with UCEM, for their continuous professional career development and lifelong learning.
- UCEM will also seek to develop high level academic skills in learners, particularly in relation to placing their study in the wider academic canon of research.
- Peer support and collaboration between students will be supported through learning design, teaching approach and assessment methodology.

3.2.5 To provide academic support for students.

- UCEM will provide personalised and responsive support for students whilst studying. This will cover academic issues, and also those which relate to the management of study alongside personal and professional commitments.
- UCEM will continue to enhance the guidance and support offered to students whilst studying, and ensure this guidance is extended to academic progression within UCEM or in the wider academic world.
- UCEM will use data analytics to monitor individual student progression. This is with the purpose of offering both directed and to enable self-directed timely and bespoke support to aid retention, completion and facilitate students to reach their educational potential.

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3.3 Teaching excellence

3.3.1 To enhance teaching skills.

- UCEM will continue to both value the use of and utilise subject experts with up to date professional expertise, to design and deliver learning opportunities.
- UCEM will enable the development of pedagogical skills at an early stage of working as a tutor, for those without them – either through participation in a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) offered by an established HEIs, alongside focused UCEM materials to support online learning – or through the development of bespoke PGCert in online learning (potentially in conjunction with other similar providers).
- UCEM will support all staff seeking Higher Education Academy (HEA) membership at the appropriate level, such that all academic staff and Online Education Team staff have membership within 3 years of joining.
- For mainstream face-to-face tutors who join UCEM, the institution will provide bespoke training for online learning.
- UCEM will support and expand its use of mentoring to support new tutors, and utilise peer review to support and enhance established tutors, in order to inform their teaching and prepare their engagement with their students.
- All tutors will need to be supported to use collaborative approaches and to work with other tutors in the delivery of modules. They will be required to use facilitation and methods of teaching to promote active learning in their students, and support students to become autonomous and confident learners.

3.3.2 To build and recognise the varied roles required to design, write, support and assess online learning.

- Given that the technology of online learning becomes continually more advanced, UCEM will deploy a broad range of academic staff to design, deliver and assess, in order to support excellence in online learning.
- To provide students with the best online learning experience, UCEM will recognise and build teams to specialise in different roles in the learning process, such as subject/vocation experts, online learning specialists, teaching practitioners and researchers in any of these areas.
- To ensure continued enhancement of the learning experience, utilising innovative and appropriate learning technology and online pedagogical practices, UCEM will continue to develop the skills and expertise of the Online Education Team.
- All UCEM staff will be provided with training in order to have sufficient understanding of the unique requirements of supported online learning, to ensure that they provide students with excellence in learning experience and support their learning opportunities. In addition, UCEM staff will need to appreciate the different learning experiences a supported online university offers, compared to a traditional face-to-face university.

3.3.3 To ensure all tutors undertaking work for UCEM have successfully completed appropriate training in advance of commencing their role.

- All tutors will need to demonstrate that they have the required credentials and qualifications – including the appropriate level of them – professional body membership, professional experience, subject expertise and a research profile for the academic role they will be undertaking at UCEM.
- All tutors will need to successfully complete and be certificated through mandatory online training, prior to commencing their tutoring role.

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3.3.4 Enhance models of working practice that provide the enabling environment for students' learning.

- Enhanced models of working practice need to take place within the context of a consistent student experience and consistent quality of teaching/facilitation of learning. These may need to consider semester duration, delivery pattern, timings of assessment and related feedback, the timing of module results and tutor workload models, in order to enable it.
- UCEM will take a dual approach to growth that looks to increase student numbers through sustainable increases in student recruitment, requiring the scalability of operations to recruit and deliver to the numbers involved. UCEM will then be required to ensure that the students on UCEM programmes are provided with the learning environment and learning opportunities that enables their retention and success in their studies.
- In order to deliver this growth, and to ensure an efficient use of finance and resources – while maintaining and enhancing academic excellence – attention must be paid to sustainable programme design. This will include using shared modules across subject areas at the lower levels of study, designing modules which can be used across subject area barriers, and reusable learning objects that can be positioned across levels, programmes and potentially CPD for practitioners.

3.3.5 Develop key synchronous and asynchronous approaches to support learning.

- UCEM will look to facilitate student learning through the guidance and direction in the online learning materials, and through synchronous and asynchronous tutor-led learning activities.
- Synchronous and asynchronous approaches are also employed to provide a platform for tutor to tutor support. This allows consistency and quality across tutor groups and a team approach to delivery of learning.
- UCEM will provide technology and facilities to allow student to student learning, as an important part of supported online learning.
- UCEM will provide support for technology-enhanced approaches to in-delivery tutor synchronous and asynchronous facilitation of learning.
- UCEM will ensure its work loading and work patterns reflect the needs of delivering synchronous activities to meet the demands of students.

3.3.6 Capability building and recognition of teaching excellence.

- UCEM will seek to increase the capability of all academic staff in LTA and build a culture which supports, values and recognises LTA enhancement.
- UCEM will develop a nuanced set of academic role descriptors and a career framework that recognises the varied academic expertise and inputs.
- UCEM will implement appropriate workload models for tutors, to enable them to fulfil the responsibilities associated with various roles.
- UCEM will instigate LTA Annual Excellence awards which support, value and recognise enhancements, along with student feedback.
- To build the reputation of UCEM and the confidence of academics, UCEM will establish and report against relevant LTA benchmarks, along with showcasing and disseminating best practice both internally and to external conferences.

3.4 Devising engaging, relevant and rigorous assessment.

3.4.1 To devise, administer and feedback on assessment to inspire and engage students and judge their learning fairly.

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- UCEM will develop assessment for all modules that provides a student with an opportunity to show what they have learned and the skills they have developed, but which also stimulates relevant learning in itself and encourages critical self-reflection linked to personal development.
- Assessment will be clearly related to learning outcomes and follow on explicitly from learning activities within the module.
- The assessment process will be transparent, so that students can see how their work will be judged before they complete it.
- Assessment enhancements will be aimed at further developing feedback to students through:
 - improving the ability to meet the set turnaround time for marking;
 - enhancing the provision of, and ability to give, feedback on all assessments, including final assessment;
 - ensuring that feedback will be clear, timely and provide guidance on how students can improve individually for their next assessment, whether in module or beyond;
 - providing consistency of feedback, in its quality, type, amount and value to aid students to reach their educational potential.
- There will be a consistency of assessment typology across levels, and assessment approaches appropriate to the level of study.
- UCEM will endeavour to make a greater use of formative assessment and learning analytics to provide bespoke guidance for students on which aspects of their learning may need to be repeated, and which resources should be used to support this.

3.4.2 Online assessment.

- UCEM's process for assessment will align with the institution's vision to be the leading vocational, online university, moving towards further online marking and assessment.
- UCEM will undertake research of different methods of online assessment, as well as the utilisation of different pedagogic tools to support online assessment.
- Any online approaches to assessment will be mindful of the critical interaction between tutor and students that comes with the provision of feedback on assessment, both formative and summative, particularly surrounding the students' academic development and the building of trust with the institution.
- Online assessment methods must be mindful of and ensure the continued professional accreditation of the programmes.
- Approaches should continue to ensure the security of student authorship.

3.4.3 Vocational relevance.

- Assessments will be vocationally and professionally relevant, commonly using problems, scenarios or case studies from recent real world situations, and wherever possible reflect and/or replicate the vocational requirements of the industry.

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4. Implementation and Evaluation

4.1 Approval

4.1.2 This LTA strategy has been approved by the Academic Board, having been reviewed at Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC) and by the Senior Leadership Team, to ensure congruence with the overarching Strategic Vision.

4.2 Code of Practice

4.2.2 The LTA strategy contained herein will be supported by a Code of Practice: Learning, Teaching and Assessment, providing operational guidance and policy for its implementation.

4.3 Implementation

4.3.1 The LTA strategy will be implemented through the guidance and support of LTEC, including but not limited to the production/review/support of:

- UCEM Consolidated Enhancement Plan.
- Retention and Success Plan.
- Assessment Handbook.
- Teaching Excellence Awards.
- UCEM (Standardised) Module Design.
- Technology Enhanced Learning Plan.
- Academic Development Plan
- Research Centres Plans

Other supporting activities:

- Online Learning Wiki.
- Accessibility Guidelines.
- Annual UCEM Conference.
- Career and Employability Plan

4.3.2 All of these will directly impact upon the design, review and amendments to academic programmes. These, in turn will need to consider the impact against the four core objectives (in conjunction with associated Boards of Studies).

4.3.3 The detailed mapping of the objectives in section 3 and the implementation approaches are in the separate LTA Implementation Plan.

4.4 Review

4.4.1 Implementation of the LTA strategy will be reviewed annually at LTEC and other deliberative committees through reports on:

- Student surveys and feedback.
- Student engagement.
- Students' success through module and programme completion rates.
- Student Retention data.
- Teaching qualification data.
- Learning analytics.
- All TEF-related metrics.

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4.4.2 Broader considerations of the impact of the strategy will be considered at programme review meetings, along with the associated programme reports.

4.4.3 The annual LTEC Report will review the overall progress against the four core objectives and if required suggest amendments to the strategy.

5. References

- UCEM Strategic Vision.
- UCEM's Royal Charter and Bye-Laws.
- UCEM Research Strategy.
- Code of Practice: Research and Scholarship.
- [Click here for QAA \(2013\): Guidance on scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff: Expectations for Foundation Degree-awarding powers and for taught degree-awarding powers.](#) [Accessed 18th March 2016].
- [Click here for BIS \(2016\) Success as a knowledge economy: Teaching excellence, social mobility & student choice.](#) [Accessed: April 2016].
- [Click here for the Quality Assurance Agency for higher education \(QAA\) \(2014\) The Quality Code.](#) [Accessed: 2 August 2016].
- [Click here for the QAA \(2016\) Higher education review \(alternative providers\) A handbook for alternative providers undergoing review from 1 august 2015.](#) [Accessed: 8 August 2016].
- [Click here for Publishing.TEAM@education.gsi.gov.uk \(2016\) Teaching excellence framework: Year 2 specification.](#) [Accessed: 10 October 2016].

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Appendix A: Learning Teaching and Assessment Environment and Compliance requirements

TDAP:

The maintenance of TDAP requires UCEM to meet the QAA's expectation that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) demonstrate that they are 'a well-founded, cohesive and self-critical academic community that can demonstrate firm guardianship of its standards' (QAA, 2013).

QAA Quality Code:

The QAA Quality Code impacts upon every aspect of the LTA environment and sets out specific requirements to meet their 'expectations' relating to academic standards for the awarding of academic credit and qualifications, level of qualifications, meeting subject benchmark statements and quality standards. In regards to quality, *B3 Learning and Teaching* has a single expectation:

Higher Education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Higher Education Review (Alternative Provider):

UCEM is subject to a cyclical Higher Education Review (HER) (Alternative Provider), in addition to annual monitoring reports. The HER review will seek to confirm four things, the first three of which directly affect LTA;

- that the academic standards of the awards (via the management of regulations, validations, assessments, external examiners etc.) are properly managed in line with UK HE requirements;
- that the learning opportunities for students (quality of teaching, learning materials, student support systems etc.) are sufficient;
- that UCEM has a planned and well-managed approach to the enhancement of the student learning experience;
- that UCEM's management of public information (via the Internet, intranet, VLE etc.) is in good order.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF):

The proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as outlined in the White Paper 'Success as a Knowledge Economy' (2016), will measure the performance of Higher Education Institutions on a number of metrics of student satisfaction and outcomes. Student responses to the National Student Survey (NSS) will be a key part of this process. The metrics from the NSS used by TEF will relate to responses on teaching on the course, assessment and feedback, and academic support. TEF will also consider student retention as recorded by HESA UK Performance Indicators and student employment, or further study using 6 month Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey.

The following table, taken from the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF): year two specification, shows the likely requirements and provides an indicative list of criteria under each aspect.

Table 8: Possible examples of evidence for each aspect

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Aspect	Possible examples of evidence
Teaching Quality (TQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact and effectiveness of involving students in teaching evaluation e.g. collecting and acting on their feedback • Impact and effectiveness of schemes focused on monitoring and maximising students' engagement with their studies such as the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) and others • Recognition of courses by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) • How the provider is achieving positive outcomes for students, whilst also successfully identifying, addressing and preventing grade inflation • Quantitative information on teaching intensity, such as weighted contact hours • Impact and effectiveness of external examining • Impact and effectiveness of teaching observation schemes • Impact and effectiveness of innovative approaches, new technology or educational research • Recognition and reward schemes, and their impact and effectiveness, including progression and promotion opportunities for staff based on teaching commitment and performance • Quantitative information relating to the qualification, experience and contractual basis of staff who teach • Impact and effectiveness of feedback initiatives aimed at supporting students' development, progression and achievement
Learning Environment (LE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at supporting the transition into and through a higher education course • Quantitative information demonstrating proportional investment in teaching and learning infrastructure • Use and effectiveness of learner analytics in tracking and monitoring progress and development • Extent, nature and impact of employer engagement in course design and/or delivery, including degree apprenticeships • Extent and impact of student involvement in or exposure to the latest developments in research, scholarship or professional practice (one or more) • (For relevant providers) Evidence of Welsh medium provision contributing to students' academic experiences • Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at understanding, assessing and improving retention and completion

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Aspect	Possible examples of evidence
Student Outcomes and Learning Gain (SO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning gain and distance-travelled by all students including those entering higher education part-way through their professional lives• Career enhancement and progression for mature students• Evidence of longer-term employment outcomes and progression of graduates including into highly-skilled employment• Evidence and impact of initiatives aimed at preparing students for further study and research• Evidence and impact of initiatives aimed at graduate employability• Extent of student involvement in enterprise and entrepreneurship• Number, impact and success of graduate start-ups• Use and effectiveness of initiatives used to help measure and record student progress, such as Grade Point Average (GPA)• Impact of initiatives aimed at closing gaps in development, attainment and progression for students from different backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes.