



**SOLENT**  
UNIVERSITY  
SOUTHAMPTON

TEACHING  
EXCELLENCE  
AT SOLENT UNIVERSITY

"All in all, I have had the best experience of my life at this university, and...would recommend anyone to go there, as I think that the place keeps improving year after year."

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Former student commenting  
in the NSS





# TEACHING EXCELLENCE

I am delighted to introduce 'Teaching Excellence at Solent University' as a way of showcasing just some of the outstanding learning and teaching that takes place here.

Our Strategic Plan *Building an excellent university*, places real-world, research-informed teaching and learning at the very heart of what we do. Just two years into the five year strategy, we are seeing the rewards with more students achieving firsts and upper second class degrees and going on to high performing jobs in their chosen professions or to continue their studies.

This success is in no small measure due to the expertise and commitment of our staff: the professional teachers and researchers who are not only subject experts but who have strong connections with business and industry. They work hand-in-hand with the large numbers of staff across the University who support student learning in different ways. We are privileged to have students who are talented, creative and entrepreneurial. It is the combination of the exceptional people that make up the Solent community, the innovative curricula and our award-winning teaching spaces and specialist facilities that make teaching at Solent truly excellent.



**Professor Graham Baldwin**  
Vice-Chancellor





# ABOUT SOLENT

Solent University is an employment focused, lively, inclusive academic community with a diverse student body serving a region that is characterised by low educational attainment and subsequent low participation in higher education (Solent LEP 2015).

The University's vision is to **'enable learners from all backgrounds to become enterprising citizens and responsible leaders while also promoting economic and social prosperity for the communities we serve'**.

We are an agent of social transformation as indicated by the Student Mobility Graduate Index, ensuring graduates from the least advantaged groups gain professional employment, whilst also adding value through boosting salaries. The most recent results from the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey show that 95.2% of our graduates are either employed or studying six months after graduating from Solent. The national Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data shows that Solent is the 12th best British university for boosting graduate earnings (Economist, 2017).

The University appointed a new Vice Chancellor (VC) in 2014 and launched its 2015-20 Strategic Plan with learning, teaching and student achievement as central aims. Two years in, we are ranked in the top 10 universities for the number of graduate start-ups and in the top 50 for graduate employment.

Professor Graham Baldwin, one of the few teacher trained VCs in the UK, systematically drives teaching quality from the top. The Plan maps a route to ensure that whether students are from the 71% who are first in family to attend university, the 50% with BTEC qualifications (national average: 24%), the 18% from an



**95.2% OF OUR GRADUATES ARE EITHER EMPLOYED OR STUDYING SIX MONTHS AFTER GRADUATING**

Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey



**12TH BEST BRITISH UNIVERSITY FOR BOOSTING GRADUATE EARNINGS**

(Economist, 2017)

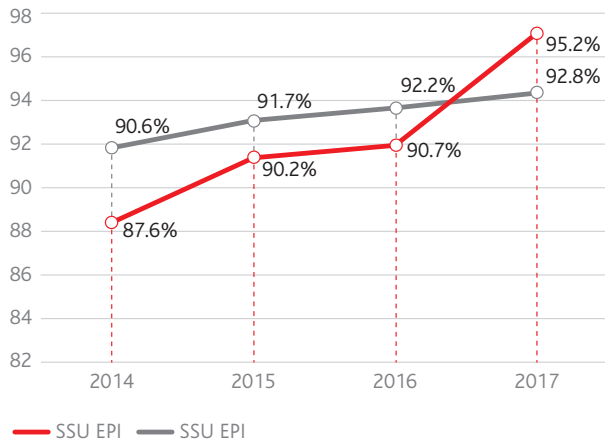
ethnic minority background or the 20% with at least 136 UCAS points, they experience excellent teaching and applied research in state-of-the-art, award-winning facilities.

With 11,062 students across five Schools (Business, Law and Communications; Media Arts and Technology; Sport, Health and Social Sciences; Art, Design and Fashion and The Warsash School of Maritime Science and Engineering), we provide traditional undergraduate and postgraduate programmes alongside innovative foundation degrees and apprenticeships, responding to local and national skills agendas and widening access. Designed with employers, our programmes respond to particular industry needs. For example, we are one of only three universities providing flexible, bespoke academic provision accredited by the Merchant Navy Training Board and meeting the International Maritime Organisation regulations.

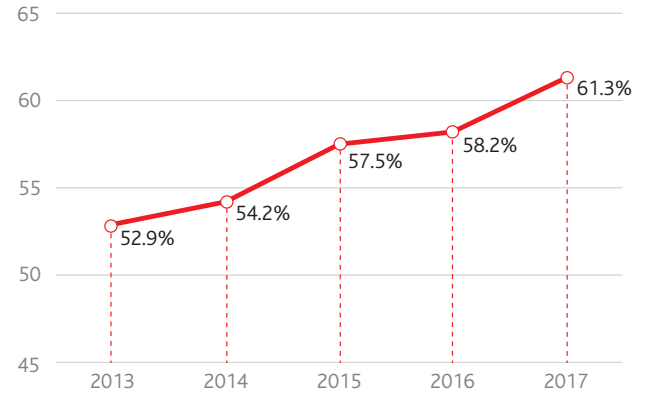
This document offers an insight into some of the excellent work that our students and staff are producing together.

The University's Strategic Plan Building an excellent university places Solent as the applied university of Southampton and the regional hub for higher level skills. Solent graduates are the passionate, creative professionals of the future, bringing expertise and energy into their communities and workplaces.

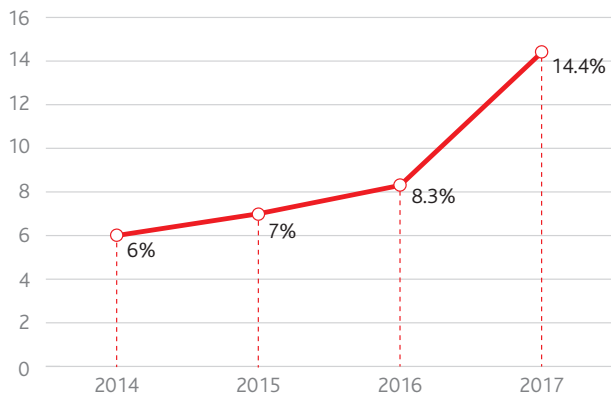
INCREASE IN SOLENT'S 'EMPLOYABILITY  
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR' (HESA)



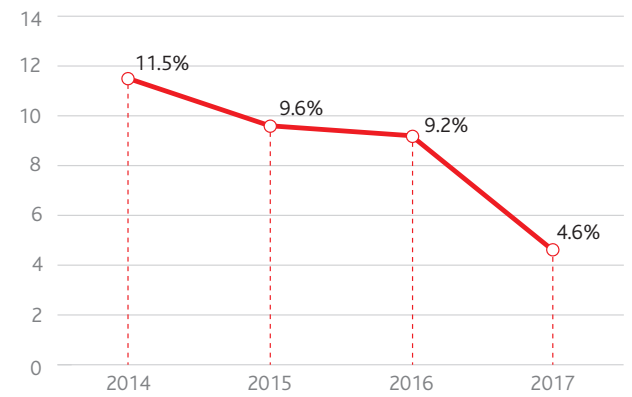
INCREASE IN % OF SOLENT LEAVERS  
IN HIGHLY SKILLED EMPLOYMENT



INCREASE % OF SOLENT  
LEAVERS IN FURTHER STUDY



DECREASE IN % OF SOLENT  
LEAVERS UNEMPLOYED



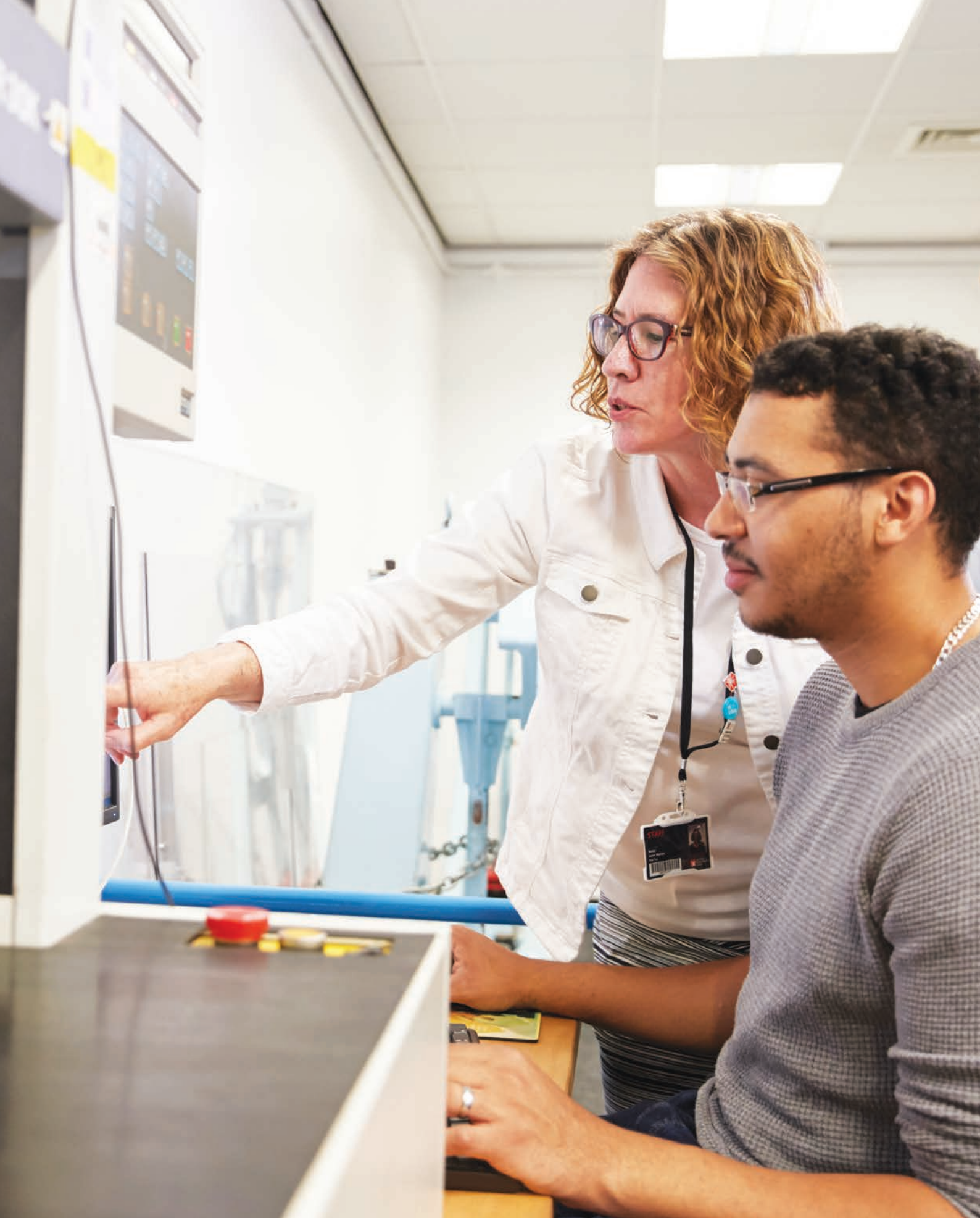




Our Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy (LTSAS) defines and drives forward a distinctive, challenging curriculum offer, inspiring teaching and a relentless student achievement focus. The LTSAS themes are referred to in bold throughout this document. Two years into this strategy there is clear evidence of sustained impact on student outcomes with substantial increases in student retention and achievement and graduate employment and further study.

Learning and teaching are key priorities with school-based Learning and Teaching Leads working as part of the School Senior Management Teams to ensure that pedagogy, curricula and assessment are inspiring, engaging and industry focused. The Strategy is closely monitored through a Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Committee chaired by the DVC who is a National Teaching Fellow and Professor of Higher Education. Interventions are systematically planned, piloted, evaluated, discussed in partnership with students and launched more widely where we see impact.

Service departments support teaching through student-focused annual business plans. Innovative in-house agencies such as Solent Creatives, Solent Productions and Solent Music provide students with real world learning, professional networks and live briefs and work closely with academic teams. Good practice is developed, shared and monitored by the Director of Learning and Teaching who heads the Solent Learning and Teaching Institute (SLTI) that encompasses the library, learning services and enhancement and reports directly to the DVC.





# A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO TEACHING QUALITY

Throughout this document examples illuminate ways that LTSAS themes have a positive impact on student outcomes and the quality of teaching. Projects and targeted interventions reflect a university culture that partners with students and engages large numbers of academics in celebrating success, creative curriculum development and reflection on teaching quality while challenging students to engage in real world learning and exciting, transformative experiences. We show how our distinctive real world curriculum framework ensures all programmes provide a rigorous employer-facing learning experience that permeates the University.

## OUR STUDENTS

We know our students well and the LTSAS responds to their particular needs. Of the relatively high numbers of our students who are local, over a quarter come from the lowest POLAR quintiles, but this is not the whole picture: our home undergraduate population consists of nearly 1,400 white working-class males studying sport, media technology, maritime science and engineering. The national picture for this particular student demographic is one of underachievement (HEPI, 2016). The LTSAS reflects our determination to ameliorate this and our data indicate success in terms of attainment, retention and employment. Our focus on the quality of teaching and a proactive, analytics driven Student Achievement Team were highlighted as best practice by OFFA.

"Solent University is here for the students. When you join in year 1 it's scary for people like me. You've no idea what's going on. Some lecturers really understand our mind sets and are there for us whether it's personal issues about the work or explaining how to improve work even more."

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Student

Student contributions to this document, collected by the Students' Union, reflect an appreciation from those who are first in their family to enter HE: 'Solent University is here for the students. When you join in year 1 it's scary for people like me. You've no idea what's going on. Some lecturers really understand our mind sets and are there for us whether it's personal issues about the work or explaining how to improve work even more.'

(Student quote)



# EXCELLENT TEACHING THAT EXCEEDS NATIONAL QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

Experiential, immersive learning promotes critical reflection, academic curiosity and strong engagement with underpinning theory and research. We believe learning and teaching should be personalised and that student-centred teaching, using a coaching model, is critical to student success.

We encourage innovative teaching to develop in partnership with students and industry leaders and thus LTSAS themes are aligned with a wide range of projects, interventions and student opportunities as the examples show. They build an institutional culture of creativity, confidence, community, challenge and innovation that is driven by the performance indicators we work towards and monitor. For example, a recent evaluation study highlighted lecture capture having an identifiable positive impact on the achievement of lower performing part-time students on our distinctive work based maritime engineering courses with a mean improvement in grades from 49% to 66%. Progress is reflected in the NSS with 11 of our programmes recording 100% student satisfaction in 2017 and six subject areas in the top ten nationally.

Our excellent SSRs (15.5 compared with a sector average of 17.2) are appreciated by our students. 'It is an advantage having an open-door policy where you can visit your tutor at any time for any query from academic to personal. This is the benefit of a low student-lecturer ratio.' (Student quote).

"It is an advantage having an open-door policy where you can visit your tutor at any time for any query from academic to personal. This is the benefit of a low student-lecturer ratio."

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## Student

Combined with our innovative, personalised pedagogies and proactive Student Achievement Team they ensure a relentless focus on achievement and curricula which meet the needs of a diverse student body and local and national employers. For example, we work closely with our partners in healthcare, involving them in curriculum design and delivery to ensure that our programmes prepare students for careers in a rapidly changing workforce.



11 OF OUR PROGRAMMES RECORDING  
100% STUDENT SATISFACTION IN 2017  
NSS 2017



SIX SUBJECT AREAS IN THE TOP TEN NATIONALLY  
NSS 2017





## CURRICULA WHICH MEET THE NEEDS OF INDUSTRY AND PREPARE STUDENTS FOR CAREERS

56% of our students are on courses with professional recognition. Where professional accreditation is not possible, courses offer industry standard additional qualifications such as those from Adobe or the British School of Coaching. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) regularly comment on teaching quality and student engagement with programmes informed and enriched by research and scholarly activity. The British Psychological Society report commended us for outstanding student support: 'Students were very articulate about their psychological literacy skills and how they could use them in a number of different career pathways. This grounding and understanding of their skills will help with future careers.'

PSRBs recognise that the type and quantity of teaching contact is highly personalised. This is supported through high quality award-winning teaching space and equipment (see pp26-27). Curricula are systematically designed and evaluated to ensure opportunities for real world learning through placements, internships, work-based learning and live briefs. Creative Skill Set, the accrediting body for Media Technology, noted the: 'Excellent depth of industry contact at all levels of this course formally and informally. All staff are active practitioners and the students reported being offered numerous opportunities to work alongside their tutors on extramural projects.'

Solent is one of only three UK universities identified as beacons of good practice in creativity (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce Report). The Society of British and International Design stated 'I am keen to hold the university out as the high achieving destination of innovation and creativity that it is.'

# RIGOUR AND STRETCH

Feedback from students, external examiners and employers confirm that our strategic themes of employability, enterprise, professional development and technology enhanced learning are having an impact. Activities are embedded in workplaces as diverse as the Merchant Navy, Glastonbury Festival, the University itself and after-school football clubs in the local community. These demanding immersive learning experiences are supported by lectures, seminars, studio work, virtual learning environments and work in laboratories that stretch learning through applied research, scholarship and theoretical debate. This external examiner comment is typical: 'Links to industry are fantastic. This is transferred to the student learning and teaching experience. When I met students from the programme I was impressed at their maturity, networking skills and knowledge of the industry they desire to work in.'

Amber Hamson, the first female to graduate as a Marine Electro Technical Officer (METO) and the first Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) female METO officer cadet (2016) explains her experience: 'I particularly found the workshop rewarding, especially applying what you are learning in the classroom. I found the advanced maths challenging but now see it was all relevant and crossed-linked to our learning.'

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## External examiner

Themes are reflected in the range of opportunities across all programmes. Student feedback from the National Student Survey (NSS) indicates how much students appreciate this strategy: 'I've been stretched personally. Incredible support for course and outside problems. Pushed to focus on ideas I wouldn't have thought of to begin with. Helped to work outside the box.' (Student quote)

World-class employers frequently endorse our excellent quality and standards: 'We are proud to work with Solent and be able to offer opportunities to experience our organisation and the many challenges that operating a global maritime business presents. In turn the knowledge and ideas we get from students help us develop how we think about our future generations of guests. As such Solent is not only helping us find future talent but is shaping our thinking around our products.' (Director, Carnival UK)



“The industry recognition is incredible, I’ve really enjoyed my time at university so to receive an award for my work really is the icing on top of the cake of an amazing three years.”

April Rapley, has been named as a winner at The Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists’ (CIAT) 2017 Architectural Technology Awards.

“We are proud to work with Solent and be able to offer opportunities to experience our organisation and the many challenges that operating a global maritime business presents. ...Solent is not only helping us find future talent but is shaping our thinking around our products”

Director, Carnival UK

Recognising that most of our students need to work while studying and do not have professional contacts, in-house agencies such as Solent Creatives provide relevant paid professional freelance work locally. Unique within the sector when it launched six years ago, Solent Creatives has offered 1,100 new projects to almost 2,000 students over the last three years. In this way, we enable students to extend their cultural capital, learning in real world situations. This creates exceptional engagement because students recognise the relevance and impact of their learning and the demanding nature of professional work. ‘Solent Creatives has been that exciting and different thing that I couldn’t replace with anything else as an experience at the University. I would recommend this to everyone as it puts you out of the comfort zone as it is really good for your professional development.’ (Student quote)



SOLENT IS NOW A TOP TEN UNIVERSITY  
FOR GRADUATE START-UPS.

Our strategic approach ensures that other opportunities are woven into the very fabric of the University with students managing university events, social media campaigns, web design, marketing projects, research projects and change management initiatives working alongside university staff. The impact of this is shown by four years of improving professional / managerial employment rates and reflecting the creativity, entrepreneurship and business acumen of our students, Solent is now a top ten university for graduate start-ups.

This focus on teaching quality results in enhanced attainment, employment, progression to further study and prizes. Examples include students gaining the Association of Independent Professionals ‘Freelancer of the Year’ Award; The Creative and Cultural Skills ‘Award for Outstanding Music Graduate’, and first and second place in the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technology (CIAT) ‘Student Award for Excellence in Architectural Technology’. In previous years students have won Valspar’s ‘Young Interior Designer of the Year’, England and Wales Cricket Board’s ‘Young Coach of the Year’, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency’s ‘Trainee Officer of the Year’.



# EXCELLENT CURRICULUM DESIGN

Real world learning is integral to course design. Re:So is a unique retail store in the centre of Southampton run by students from our fashion-related courses, the first of its kind in the UK. They get involved with every aspect, from stocktaking, merchandising and store design, to promotion and retail management. The store sells items designed by our students and graduates. Re:So has a 'learning zone' managed by students hosting guest speakers from the fashion industry, as well as workshops, photo shoots and exhibitions, all with an emphasis on developing retail, enterprise and employability skills. Re:So brings together students and academics who value creativity, interdisciplinary working and applied learning. The impact on the student experience and learning is demonstrated by three fashion courses increasing NSS scores to 100% satisfaction and in the highly skilled jobs attained by graduates. 'The Live Project and International Communications were amazing units. The experience of working with actual brands in Re:So and live briefs was great. Perfect balance of academic and industry related.' (Student quote)

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Student

The Solent Personal Training Initiative matches students studying for fitness industry qualifications with members of the local community as personal training clients. This provides invaluable practical real-world experience and authentic assessment. Utilising the health and exercise laboratories and a purpose-built gym dedicated to practical teaching, students achieve professional awards and undertake research for final dissertations. Students report increased skill levels and confidence with the latter rising from an initial average of five out of ten to nine out of ten.

Students use composite material and material testing facilities to undertake undergraduate research for yacht racing teams, investigating and reporting on the use of recycled carbon fibre in maritime structures. Similarly, first year students complete a series of integrated problem-based activities, including manufacturing scale models of their own yacht designs, testing them in a series of races to provide a link between theory and practice.

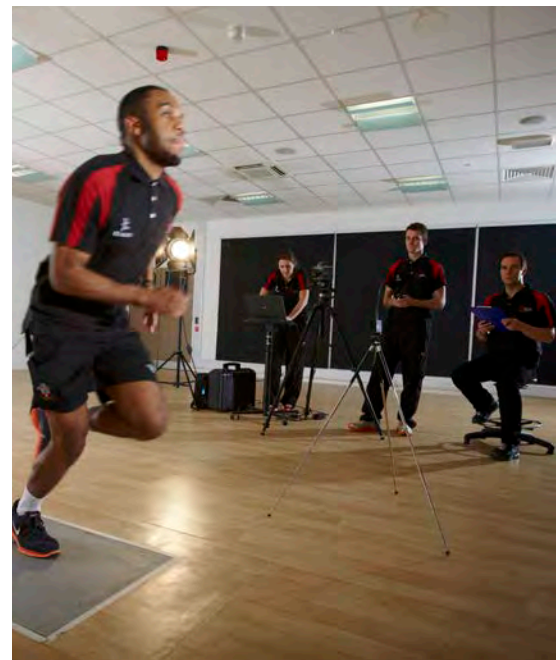
The media arts curriculum offers demanding and rigorous opportunities to work in professional circumstances across discipline boundaries. Centralised specialist facilities ensure that many students have access to industry standard equipment (on average 100,000 equipment loans each year). For example, a wide range of students become skilled at operating in our custom built outside broadcast vehicle. This means that students graduate with BBC credits on their CV from the filming and sound provided at Glastonbury Festival.



“There is a lot of people with a lot of experience and knowledge, so it’s a great place to learn. The other thing that helps a lot is all of the modern equipment.”

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Stefan ŠtêkiÊ,  
MA Student, Erasmus Mundus Emship

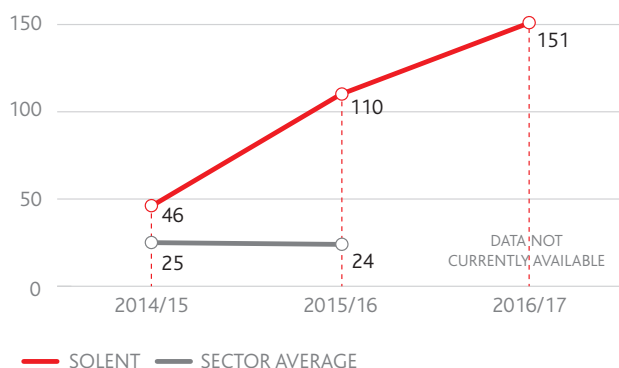


Students are encouraged to work in a cross-disciplinary way, sharing skills and creating synergistic curricula outcomes. Computer Games students are utilising motion capture equipment and are working with students and staff in Sports Science. Students in Engineering are training Special Effects Design students and staff on equipment. Fashion and Beauty students have worked on a research-based project with IBM Watson in which they pitch for and then develop prototypes for applying IoT and cognitive technology within fashion and beauty products. The students are supported in their projects by the IBM Design Studio.

Our students' career pathways increasingly involve freelance work in creative and media industries and Solent Futures, the University careers service, works with course teams to offer programmes of workshops, training days and funding to support student business start-ups.

Support has been in place for a number of years: in 2016 for example, over £67,000 was awarded to 45 different student start-up projects; there were also 110 intensive enterprise surgeries and six boot camps. This is reflected in our graduates' success: there were 110 graduate start-ups in 2015/16, an increase of 64 from the previous year. This was the ninth highest in the sector, and over four times higher than the sector average of 24. This number will increase to 151 in the reported 2016/17 HE-BCI cycle. Solent Sparks Society is Solent's popular entrepreneurs' student society. SENSE (Solent Entrepreneurs' Network for Sustainable Enterprises) is an established training and networking group that meets monthly for current and past students. The University was shortlisted for the 2017 Times Higher Outstanding University Entrepreneurship Award.

NUMBER OF GRADUATE START-UPS  
(HE-BCI SURVEY)



£67,000 AWARDED TO 45 DIFFERENT STUDENT START-UPS IN 2016



SHORTLISTED FOR THE 2017 TIMES HIGHER OUTSTANDING UNIVERSITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARD



# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN RESEARCH

Our students are also **research-informed and confident in applying theory in the real world**. This aspect of the LTSAS is led by the professoriate and SLTI which include one of only two UK Professors of Research Informed Teaching, appointed in 2016. All courses include research skills and research-based modules and the University's Curriculum Framework ensures that there are significant links between research-based teaching, student learning and the development of professional and entrepreneurial skills. Two years into the LTSAS there is an increase in students progressing to further study (see graph p4) and contributing as assistants on staff research projects, co-creating knowledge and applying specialist skills in professional settings.

The Solent University Research Internship Scheme (SURIS) enables students to work with staff as research partners. In 2016, 97 students registered to take part and 17 academic research projects were supported. Students are also engaged in academic student societies and attend events with visiting scholars. This ensures that they are exposed to research at the forefront of knowledge. For example, Solent Productions' investment in broadcasting technologies has created a critical mass of applied research that has spawned Solent TV. This is an online channel run by students with an associated research project investigating online viewing tastes and preferences. Further examples include:

- In Sport, Health and Social Sciences 17 peer reviewed journal articles have been co-written with students over the last three years. The articles are based mainly on research undertaken for dissertations and students are lead authors. A further four articles are undergoing peer review and six are in preparation.
- Diegesis is a print and online publication produced in the Film department with an editorial board comprised of undergraduate students and staff. Students research and write all the content for the print magazine and website and work with the student and staff editors in refining their work.
- A range of undergraduate programmes include student-led research conferences and 17 of our students presented at the British Conference for Undergraduate Research (BCUR) in 2017, the fifth largest contingent at the conference.
- Engaging the local public with research and scholarship is also an important part of Solent's civic mission, its research strategy and the LTSAS theme of **research informed teaching and social justice**. In the School of Art, Design and Fashion, for example, students participated in a two-year research project to design a focal path, as part of Southampton City's Decent Neighbourhoods Initiative. Outputs have included journal articles and conference papers and an exhibition co-curated by students.



“It’s very encouraging to see real-time knowledge transfer partnership in action between the talent of the University and businesses in the innovation centre.”

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Director of innovation centre

- Working with business, Solent students set up a temporary test laboratory at an innovation centre in Southampton that is home to 40 businesses. Testing new websites that were due to go live, the students assessed the usability of desktop and mobile interfaces, focusing on conversion rate effectiveness, eye tracking and content strategy. The research aimed to improve conversion rates for businesses, maximising returns on web-investment. The benefits were clear to the director of the innovation centre: ‘It’s very encouraging to see real-time knowledge transfer partnership in action between the talent of the University and businesses in the innovation centre.’



# POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR ALL

An emphasis on teaching quality ensures that course design responds to those who might nationally underachieve such as the large cohorts of male students described earlier. Academic staff in Sport have sought to create a closer bridge between academia and industry through The Coaching Innovation Programme. This programme offers students opportunities to design, deliver and evaluate their own sport-for-development projects within the Southampton community, allowing students to apply theory to practice. Students collaborate with a range of industry practitioners in order to identify and address an array of social issues, with the programme facilitating around 20 projects each year. The projects address specific issues faced by a diverse range of populations, from holistic sessions within schools that combine the curriculum and physical activity through to walking football sessions for the elderly community as a means of tackling social isolation. It makes a significant contribution to the local sport-for-development landscape with around 500 people benefitting from the programme each year. The CEO of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity commented: 'Our challenge is to have a workforce that has the correct knowledge, skills and behaviours, and the work that is undertaken through the Coaching Innovation Programme is ensuring that the next generation of sport and physical activity Solent professionals are able to hit the ground running in this new era.'

"Our challenge is to have a workforce that has the correct knowledge, skills and behaviours, and the work that is undertaken through the Coaching Innovation Programme is ensuring that the next generation of sport and physical activity Solent professionals are able to hit the ground running in this new era."

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## CEO of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity

The SLTI was awarded HEFCE Catalyst funding to explore the impact of learning analytics on pedagogic practice and students' learning behaviour. 500 students in ten different modules utilised a dashboard based on Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) activities. Early outcomes indicate that engagement with analytics has a positive impact on student continuation. Vlogs were recorded by 50 students alongside academic staff focus groups and questionnaires. The SEAtS attendance monitoring system was introduced in 2016/17 with a workflow designed by Solent and has resulted in a 12% improvement in average attendance in 2016/17.





Nationally, the University is at the forefront of learning and teaching research and scholarship linked to real-world learning, retention and curriculum design. SLTI annually funds pedagogic research in particular areas linked to LTSAS through seed funding to the value of £2,500 per project. One identified best practice for using blogs as a tool for promoting early student engagement which informed the ways blogs are used in courses. In 2017 a national conference on our effective work on retention held at the University attracted more than 100 delegates from 40 universities.

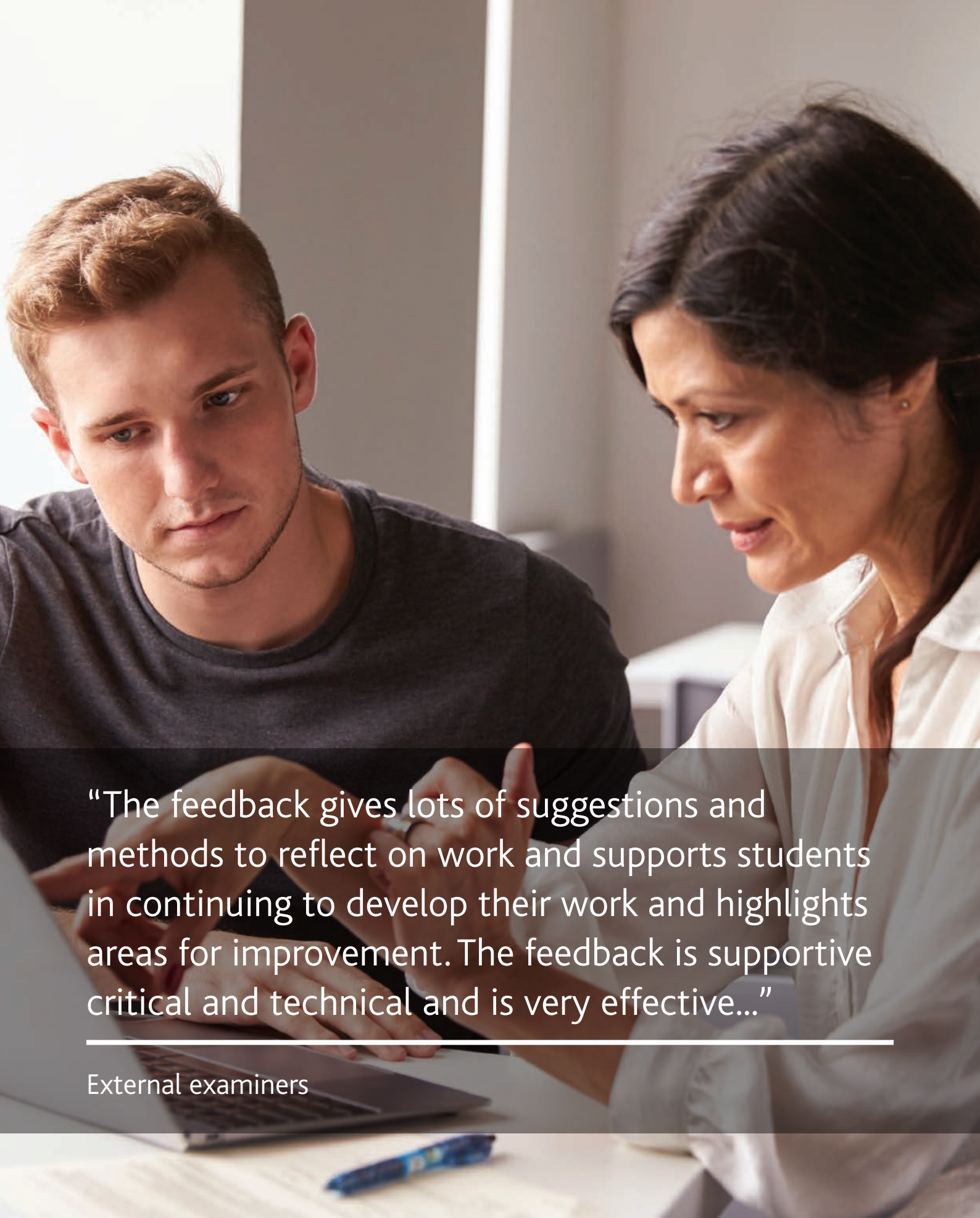
In line with the global theme of LTSAS an adapted curriculum ensures a stimulating experience through an international dimension to studies. We offer shorter mobility options and financial support, recognising the constraints faced by our students. They return to the UK describing a 'life changing experience'. As part of the UUKi commitment we are developing this work further to increase the number of UK-domiciled students, particularly from lower POLAR quintiles, who have an international placement by 2020. Latest figures show a rise of

182% in the numbers of students accessing outward mobility opportunities. International Week, One World Fair, and study abroad sessions extend the opportunities for students. With more than 10% of our undergraduate cohort from the EU, the classroom regularly provides a space for global perspectives in the discipline.

"As a part of the degree I spent the second academic year studying in Spain, which expanded my horizons, introduced me to new cultures of other exchange students, and broadened my knowledge about other countries. I would like to say that my course at Solent University has been a wonderful journey and a good experience."

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Graduate



“The feedback gives lots of suggestions and methods to reflect on work and supports students in continuing to develop their work and highlights areas for improvement. The feedback is supportive critical and technical and is very effective...”

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External examiners



# ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

The development and use of **effective assessment and feedback** have had a great deal of attention at University, School and course levels. We provide assessment for learning and effective and timely feedback. This theme is underpinned by interlocking projects which address the issues identified. Since 2016 the University has committed to implementing TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment) led by our expert Professor for Research Informed Teaching. Graduate interns work with the Professor to address assessment issues systematically in programmes with lower NSS scores. There have been improvements in NSS assessment and feedback in many of our biggest subjects, including fashion, football, journalism, photography and merchant navy cadet programmes. Curriculum design includes a review of assessment practices with the aim of instituting programme based assessment to ensure maximum learning gain.

A **personalised approach to assessment** is central to our strategy. Student NSS feedback indicates an appreciation of authentic, personalised assessment and opportunities for projects to relate to placement, volunteer or community engagement and personal interests: 'All projects are geared towards students individually so that you produce your best work possible.' (Student quote)

External examiners note the excellent quality of feedback. 'The feedback gives lots of suggestions and methods to reflect on work and supports students in continuing to develop their work and highlights areas for improvement. The feedback is supportive critical and technical and is very effective...'

We understand the importance of students having confidence in our assessment expectations. Responding to student feedback, TESTA calls on course teams to adjust the presentation of assessment and to personalise it where possible. In Fashion, for example, every module produces short videos explaining the assignment brief 'live'. One School has gone a step further ensuring learning outcomes align with assessment. A 'Living CV' is refined as students increasingly engage with feedback and meet more complex learning outcomes. This is being piloted across the University. 'Wow! I hadn't realized I knew so much. It took someone to point out all the things I've got to offer. This has given me so much more confidence when looking for a job. Thank you.' (Student quote)

"Wow! I hadn't realized I knew so much. It took someone to point out all the things I've got to offer. This has given me so much more confidence when looking for a job. Thank you."

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Student



# VALUING TEACHING

Valuing teaching and caring for the student experience are embedded in the 'People Experience' strand of the Strategic Plan and the recognising and rewarding teaching excellence theme of the LTSAS. The Strategy is firmly based on the concept of students and staff as members of the same community of learners and partners in the lifelong pursuit of knowledge. Throughout their careers, our academics continue to develop their teaching, research and/or professional credibility. All academic staff are engaged in research or professional practice and reflect upon and develop their teaching expertise as part of performance and development review.

HEFCE data shows that at 68%, Solent has a high proportion of staff meeting the UK Professional Standards through appropriate teaching qualifications. This is significantly higher than the sector average of 44%.

Staff new to teaching must complete the HEA accredited PGCert (HE) and staff with teaching experience must gain HEA Fellowship as a condition of employment. Those who support teaching are also expected to engage with the SLTI and many are associate fellows of HEA and contribute to the University's annual learning and teaching conference. The HEA's 2016 re-accreditation report noted: '... a clear institutional commitment to supporting staff to engage with professional development which is closely aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF); individual's objectives are linked to the institution's strategic priorities

demonstrating a commitment to using the PDR (Performance and Development Review) process to support personal development related to the UKPSF; the introduction and embedding of the 'Peer Practice Exchange' (teaching observation scheme) to support the professional practice of staff aligned to the UKPSF.'

Teaching excellence is an important element in staff promotion and as a result of the LTSAS **student voice theme** we have partnered with students to develop clear, stretching and transparent expectations for teaching at all levels. Recognising teaching excellence, Solent Career Pathways include a teaching and professional practice route to professorial title. All academic interviews include a simulation exercise to students who provide feedback to appointment panels. Many staff working in vocational and professional areas are professionally qualified practitioners, retaining strong industry links and recognised as outstanding contributors to the field. They include ships' captains, lawyers, social workers, former BBC editors and award-winning film makers. A number of academics have won national awards such as the 2015 Higher Education National Enterprise Educator award and we have two Principal Fellows of the HEA and a National Teaching Fellow.

Academic workload is planned centrally and monitored rigorously. The majority of teaching is undertaken by staff on permanent contracts, which ensures that they can commit fully as teachers. Data for 2016/17 shows 85% of academics are on permanent

contracts (compared with a sector average of 64%). Staff are expected to engage with Performance and Development Review (96% completed in 2016). We motivate our staff through the setting of clear objectives and regular feedback.

Academic staff development in SLTI supports teaching, from the enhancement of digital skills through to experimental approaches to teaching. CPD workshops are delivered by SLTI experts and national and international externals. Teaching staff attend the workshops that they feel are most appropriate to their development, or they can choose to take a structured programme of workshops culminating in HEA fellowship applications.

Peer practice exchange ensures that all academics both observe teaching and host an observer themselves. Reflections, along with evidence-based research papers are presented at the annual Learning and Teaching Conference which regularly attracts more than 250 staff. In line with the LTSAS, we have moved to course and school-based approaches which have greater reach. Every School has one or more learning technology advisors working directly with academics and curriculum teams to embed the latest digital resources and enhance engagement with the VLE. All staff undertake equal opportunity and Prevent training.

Solent works in partnership with students to enhance the university offer. **Student partnership** is a theme of the LTSAS and feedback is sought regularly through formal and informal channels and results in changes in learning and teaching outlined below. Over the last two years the course rep system has been developed by the Students' Union supported by the Executive Dean (Student Experience). Course reps meet regularly with course teams and contribute to deliberative committees such as Learning and Teaching and Student Achievement Committee. Student feedback is also sought through module and course surveys.

Changes to teaching in response to feedback are recorded in annual course reviews and reported annually to LTSA Committee. They are shared with students in the autumn term 'you said/ we listened' campaign through posters, our VLE and social



85% OF ACADEMICS ARE ON **PERMANENT CONTRACTS**

2016/17 (compared with a sector average of 64%)



STAFF ARE EXPECTED TO ENGAGE WITH PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW (**96% COMPLETED IN 2016**)

media. Changes have included increased library hours, increased student social study space, new specialist design software, better spaced assessment deadlines, lecture capture and a plain English campaign. 'My tutors encouraged us to give honest feedback on which things worked for the course and elements that didn't. They would take on our feedback and adjust the course accordingly.' (Student quote)

The monthly Vice Chancellor's Group meeting with the Students' Union explores learning and teaching concerns as they emerge, develops joint solutions and feeds back on changes. The Education sabbatical officer works directly with the DVC on (the low numbers of) student complaints and areas of strategic focus such as the TEF submission. The SU also runs the very popular annual Teaching Awards for inspirational teachers and other university staff who have made a difference.

# LEARNING ENVIRONMENT - PERSONALISED LEARNING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT

In line with the LTSAS, the Student Hub and Student Achievement Team were created in 2015/16 to strengthen academic services, increase online digital solutions and improve student progression using predictive analytics and specialist staff. This coordinated and high quality academic support focuses on the **fulfilment of potential** LTSAS theme. NSS scores for our full-time students are above benchmark and the quality of academic support is noted in PSRB reports. For example the British Psychological Society noted in its 2016 report the '...welcoming and supportive learning environment, and high quality academic and pastoral care which is appreciated by the students.'

The Student Achievement Team (SAT) provides personalised learning, tailored to the individual and working closely with the Student Hub and Access Solent, led by the Executive Dean (Student Experience) and academic course leaders, so that attainment support connects with personal and financial support. The SAT focuses on understanding trends in retention and achievement, identifying students with lower progression/achievement rates, investigating the reasons for this and implementing intervention programmes targeted to meet at-risk groups. It provides data and skills support to Schools, to inform and support retention and achievement plans which are monitored as part of LTSAS.

There is evidence of the impact of this work: in 2016 an increased number of students engaged with information and

advice following assessment results and subsequently took resits, resulting in an 11% higher achievement / progression rate. Students returning from having suspended their studies were offered a programme of support and this group showed a 9% improvement in those eligible to progress. Retention of repeat level students (369 students) improved by 14.4%. 393 students perceived to be at risk of not completing their studies were referred to the Student Achievement Team as part of the Early, Winter and Spring intervention programme. This programme received 100% satisfaction scores in evaluation. University interventions in student achievement have been extended in 2017 to include encouraging stretch in high achieving students on the cusp of a first or 2:1.

More specialist and intensive support is available through the 'On Track' programme which is a collaborative case management system supporting vulnerable students at risk of non-continuation. The programme is open to all students, but typically students include care leavers and students with a declared complex disability such as a mental health issue, autism, ADHD etc. whose attendance and achievement are at risk. Students are assigned a key worker whom they meet regularly and who coordinates their support. Of the students supported in 2016/17, the engagement of four students had improved to the extent that they were no longer judged at risk of non-progression, 38 progressed on their course and 23 students graduated.



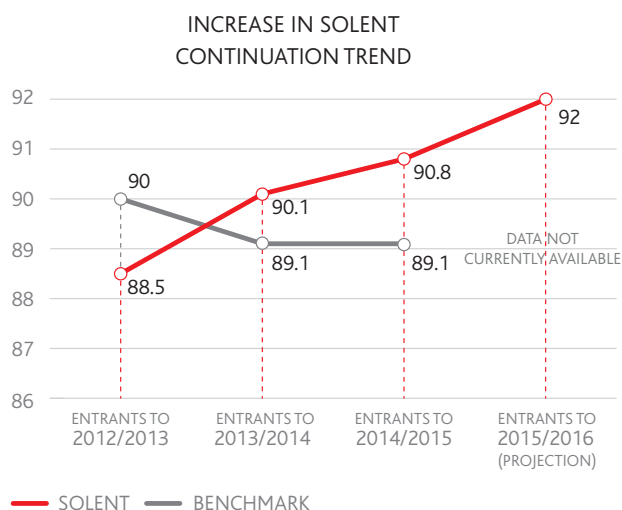
Our strategy included the move by the Warsash Maritime Academy to a new state-of-the-art campus closer to the University, enabling student cadets to make full use of all the facilities and expertise the University has to offer, including online provision when at sea. Academics who teach on the programme developed a highly interactive online course for first-year students to sharpen their maths and statistics skills. This particular online course experienced nearly 5,000 sustained page views within two weeks of its launch in 2016.

Recognising the needs of our distinctive student demographic and particularly the high number of students entering with BTECs or other vocationally oriented qualifications, we have developed succeed@solent which provides structured and interactive online learning skills material. Student engagement with this is demonstrated by 9,000 different students using this resource in the last two years, or 17,000 when including repeat users.

“The support team is brilliant too, any issue they are just an email away and are happy to offer brilliant services such as counselling. The University really cares about our well-being and success on the course.”

## Student

This kind of active support is a critical factor in our rising student continuation figures and improved student achievement. Such initiatives are entirely appropriate for the kinds of challenges many of our students face. ‘I feel as if the lecturers really do have your best interests in mind and want us to succeed and do well in the course and after we graduate. The support team is brilliant too, any issue they are just an email away and are happy to offer brilliant services such as counselling. The University really cares about our well-being and success on the course.’ (Student quote)



Access Solent delivers specialist academic support to students with Specific Learning Difficulties, on the autistic spectrum, and with mental health disorders. It provides assistive technology, encourages use of lecture capture and creatively considers adjustments to allow disabled students to achieve their potential. We are proud that we are close to closing the attainment gap for disabled students.

The Wellbeing Team handles up to 30,000 enquiries annually, presented by students with complex, multi-faceted circumstances. In the last two years the number of queries needing referral to other services has decreased from 20% to 2%.

As part of a strategic approach through LTSAS to extend support across the University, students are trained as peer educators, supporting awareness around mental health, managing academic stress, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

# HIGH QUALITY RESOURCES TO ENHANCE LEARNING

The learning environment at Solent is outstanding and students benefit from a high-quality estate with ready access to specialist equipment and facilities. The University spent £38 million on teaching facilities over the last three years. This figure includes the innovative Spark building which sets new standards for learning and teaching space. In 2017 The Spark won the Best Student Experience award at the Education Estates Awards.

Schools are set annual budgetary targets to generate surpluses for investment in the learning environments for students. This is driven and monitored centrally through the planning process. This means that investment in outstanding resources aligns to courses and student needs as well as through large scale centrally funded projects. The quality and student experience relating to Solent's physical and digital resources are evidenced by our consistently high scores in NSS for the learning environment which exceed sector average scores. The score in the 2017 survey was 88%, three percentage points higher than the sector average.

University policy has determined that all facilities should be made available to as many students as possible. The University has invested more than £16.5 million over the last three years in specialist equipment and facilities which are accessible to all students. 60 technical staff provide high quality support and training to students to prepare them for industry practice. Specialist facilities include TV studios, maritime simulators and engineering, audiology and sports science laboratories. In media

"We have access to some incredible equipment and facilities, including industry-standard cameras and other technical equipment, and access to all the software we need to produce and complete our work."

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## Student

alone ,equipment is loaned to 2,600 students on a daily basis. 'We have access to some incredible equipment and facilities, including industry-standard cameras and other technical equipment, and access to all the software we need to produce and complete our work.' (Student quote)

Solent is one of only ten English universities to have BASES accredited sports labs. These £1.3 million facilities are used by individual clients, including the Team GB wheelchair rugby team and Southampton Football Club. Systems such as 2D and 3D motion analysis cardiopulmonary testing systems are used in teaching and directed practical sessions, as well as in student and academics' research projects. In 2019 we will open a new £28 million indoor sports complex to complement the existing external facilities.

Art and Design students have the very latest and traditional specialist equipment including etching and letter presses and a state-of-the-art multi-material printer. Students have 295 square metres of bookable studio space supported by lighting, IT and specialist technical support and a large, industry standard infinity cove. A highly popular self-service and technician supported set of laser cutting facilities supports students' projects.

A built environment suite offers a soil testing lab, fully equipped concrete manufacture and testing facilities. Civil engineering is supported by traditional theodolites, LIDAR scanning and infrared and thermal camera technology. A whole range of specialist software and complementary PCs/Macs are available to students to support their studies including the full Adobe suite, Rhino, Autocad, Solid Works, AutoDesk REVIT, V-Ray, Sketch Up Pro and Lumion.

The University's Hydrodynamic Testing Centre, incorporating the towing tank, is one of the UK's best facilities of its size, and final year project students run experiments analysing vessels and maritime structures. Students have recently been involved in high-profile superyacht design and testing at the invitation of a Monaco-based company which is developing a range of designs to take to market. Our ship handling centre at Timsbury Lake is unique in the UK and one of only five worldwide. It provides a realistic environment in which ships masters and officers can develop advanced skills using scaled manned models.

Solent has three television studios, a mock courtroom, 12 radio studios and eight photography studios. We have a dedicated Multimedia Newsroom/teaching space containing multiple workstations and technical facilities that meet industry standard requirements. Students benefit from 'open access' video editing workstations and additional workspaces for production work.

Music students have five professional specification recording studios (each with a separate control room), four ensemble rehearsal rooms, five individual practice rooms and a group drum teaching room. Facilities include a 200 seat studio space for live



SPENT **£38 MILLION** ON TEACHING FACILITIES OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS



**SOLENT IS ONE OF ONLY TEN** ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES TO HAVE **BASES ACCREDITED SPORTS LABS**

£1.3 million facilities

recording and performance. We are one of only a few universities in the world to have a 3D Dolby Atmos cinema. Film and television students work closely with staff on projects and productions, often through the in-house production company Solent Productions, providing invaluable work experience. Computing students benefit from a virtual Reality studio, the latest software games development kits, network security and hacking labs. Students in Acoustics and Sound Engineering also have their own anechoic sound chamber. Across all Schools the environment is strengthened by well qualified and experienced visitors including honorary graduates and a Visiting Fellowship body of professionals from the top of their fields, which currently includes four Oscar winners and numerous BAFTA winners.

The library is one of only 23 university libraries to achieve the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award. The library consistently achieves high scores in the NSS, outperforming the majority of the sector. NSS scores were 90%, 91% and 90% over the last three years compared with sector scores of 88%, 88% and 87% respectively. Specialist academic librarians link to each School and support students in independent learning and information literacy. The service has excellent, pro-active relationships with the Students' Union and has worked collaboratively with them on initiatives such as video guides for final year students and targeted communication and specialist learning resources for our part-time maritime students. The library and Student Achievement Team identify cohorts of students making unexpectedly low use of library resources and work with academics and their students to increase engagement. The University is committed to providing a high quality IT infrastructure via its strategic capital plan.





“The course prepared me by giving me a very diverse portfolio that meant I was able to confidently apply for positions I hadn’t considered before starting university.”

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Adam Allori,  
BA (Hons) Illustration, graduated 2017

# EMPLOYMENT, ATTAINMENT, LEARNING GAIN

At Solent, learning gain is linked to social mobility and to developing self-confident and highly employable graduates who have maximised their professional potential and the attributes that benefit the economy and community. The University is already seeing clear improvements in graduate outcomes and we are proud of the exceptional success of our graduates.

In 2017, HESA's national 'Employment Performance Indicator' showed that 95.2% of our graduates were in work or further study six months after finishing their course. This performance is above benchmark and the 42nd highest rate in the UK. Mirroring this success, the University's rate of unemployment has decreased for four consecutive years, and in 2017 was the lowest rate that Solent has recorded (4.6%). For the last two years Solent has gone from the top 25 to the top ten in the sector for number of graduate start-ups.

The number of graduates obtaining highly skilled occupations six months after graduation continues to rise and to demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach: the rate of professional / managerial employment has improved for four consecutive years (see graphs p4). The number of graduates going on to do further study has also increased substantially with the introduction of access to financial support.

National Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data indicates further (longer term) employability success. This is particularly marked when comparison is made with universities with similar

student prior educational attainment (which LEO showed to have a clear effect on earnings) when median earnings for all of Solent's subjects ranked within the top 50% nationally.

The University's employability success is demonstrated in more than metrics. We have a reputation for excellence in industries such as sport where our graduates work in 11 of the 20 Premier League football clubs, and many more outside the top division; Media where graduates work at Sky, BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Warner Bros, Virgin Records and the Guardian; and Fashion where graduates work at Zara, Gap, Jimmy Choo and the Arcadia Group, all in professional or managerial positions. More than 50% of the yachts present at the 2016 Monaco Yacht Show were designed by Solent alumni; and among the British and associated 'Red Ensign Group' fleet of superyachts, there are few ships that are not commanded or managed at senior level by alumni. 'The course has helped me create and build relationships with people in the industry. If it were not for my application to the course, this would not have been achievable. Credit must go to the lecturers, as they have been able to shape and form my potential career.' (Student quote)

Solent Futures (SF) is fully integrated into the life of the Schools, with a seamless link between teaching and employability. The Academic Framework was reviewed in June 2017 and enshrined the principle that the curriculum should be 'enriched throughout with real-world learning'. Solent Futures supports course teams by sourcing live briefs and work placement opportunities, course



development, employability events, auditing employability activity, and sharing best practice. The outstanding nature of SF's work to support graduate business start-ups was recognised in 2017 when it was short-listed for both the AGCAS Award for Enterprise and the THE University Entrepreneurship Award.

Cross-institutional initiatives aimed at enhancing employability include the growth of a professional mentoring scheme. In 2016/17, 119 mentors from 66 companies mentored 126 student mentees from 73 courses. 59 of the mentees were female, 25 mature, 40 from a BME background, 29 were disabled and 18 were white males from a low socio-economic background. In 2017, 99% of graduates who worked with a professional mentor whilst at Solent were in employment or further study, and 70% were in professional / managerial level roles. SF provides tailored action plans to support courses. This includes using the University's unique Employability Self-Evaluation to identify areas of intervention based on strengths and weaknesses identified by the students themselves across the areas of human, social and psychological capital.

While the DLHE surveys measure employment six months after graduation, we know that graduate careers - especially in the arts - may take time to develop and offer a 'Careers Advice for Life' service to all our graduates. This gives students reassurance that their career needs will be supported throughout their working life and provides practical assistance to graduates as they seek to further their ambitions.




IN 2016/17, **119** MENTORS FROM **66** COMPANIES MENTORED **126** STUDENT MENTEES

Solent Futures works with a range of employers, from local micro-businesses to global corporations, enabling students to build relationships with them. In the most recent academic year, SF co-ordinated 426 employers who came onto campus as a part of various different employability initiatives.

Academically, our students continue to flourish demonstrated by increases in the award of first class and upper second class honours degrees. This reflects our strategic focus on teaching quality, including a sustained attention to the clarity of assessment briefs and criteria and our increasing investment in supporting students with non-traditional and lower entry tariff points to succeed (noted above). Our standards are endorsed by the very high levels of confidence expressed by external examiners with 99.6% confirming marking consistency and standards in 2016/17. We remain below sector norms for 'good honours' and our rigorous quality processes confirm that grade inflation has not occurred.

We pride ourselves on our inclusivity and on enhancing life chances. Across all cohorts including our BME students, students from low participation neighbourhoods and those who are disabled we see a steady rise in degree classifications. Nationally, we are part of the HEFCE-funded catalyst project on BME attainment. We are also proud of the highly skilled employment outcomes for disabled and disadvantaged students.



A portrait of Memory Mambo, a Black man with short dark hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses, a mustard yellow turtleneck, and a dark blazer. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred office or studio environment with a large screen displaying architectural designs.

“Mentoring has helped me gain more confidence in my own ability, and has given me the right platform to transition from student life to the corporate world.”

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Memory Mambo,  
BA (Hons) Architectural Technology student

# CONCLUSION

In 2015 we launched the five year Strategic Plan with its associated Learning and Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy. We went on to win the 2015 Times Higher Education Most Improved Student Experience Award. Our approach is tailored to meet the needs of our students and the targeted interventions are resulting in exceptional outcomes, ensuring that the support, the stretch and the opportunities needed are on offer across all programmes systematically. Our first class facilities are a major attraction and students recognise that the learning environment and access to real world learning support them to achieve exceptional outcomes, regardless of their route into university. We are proud to be making such progress and to be transforming lives and the regional economy through higher education. We leave our final words to one of our former students commenting in the NSS: 'All in all, I have had the best experience of my life at this university, and...would recommend anyone to go there, as I think that the place keeps improving year after year.' (Student quote).

"The course has helped me create and build relationships with people in the industry. If it were not for my application to the course, this would not have been achievable. Credit must go to the lecturers, as they have been able to shape and form my potential career."

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Student





# SOLENT

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