

Changes – Inside and Out

*April McMahon
12 January 2017*



Excellence and Change

- So, what's next?
- ...and I can say that in more than one way.
- Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed...
- Or good grief, what's coming now?
- Yes, Higher Education is changing radically. It's not over yet, either in terms of external factors or what they mean for Kent.
- But how we react to change (shape it or suffer it) is **up to us.**
- Do we succeed in spite of change or because of it? Does being good at change make us good at other things?

Priorities 2016-17

- Obviously there are many priorities in the University Plan 2015-20. I am focusing on Education and the Student Experience today.
- In this area as in others, many changes are motivated by external factors.
- **Implementing the new Education and Student Experience Strategy.**
 - NSS and TEF.
 - Assessment and Feedback.
 - Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.
 - Lecture capture.
 - Simplifying Kent project on Programme Approval and Curriculum Review (led by Simon Kirchin).
 - Recognition and reward for teaching excellence...

NSS 2017– *new sections*

Q4 - My course has challenged me to achieve my best work

Learning Opportunities [Questions 5-7]

My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth

My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics

My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt

Learning Community [Questions 21-22]

I feel part of a community of staff and students

I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course

Student Voice [Questions 23-26]

I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course

Staff value students' views and opinions about the course

It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on

The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests

TEF Objectives

- To ‘drive up the standards and status of teaching’ (White Paper para 23).
- To ‘provide students with...better information on the quality of teaching...make informed choices’ (paras 6, 19).
- To ‘link the funding of teaching to quality’ (p.5).
- To recognise and reward excellent teaching and raise esteem for teaching.
- Three aspects of quality = **Teaching Quality, Learning Environment, Student Outcomes and Learning Gain.**

The Higher Education and Research Bill

- Continued emphasis on marketisation and student choice, and therefore on straightforward access for new providers.
- Changes to REF as well as the introduction of TEF; establishment of UKRI.
- Major shifts in the governance landscape for universities, with HEFCE giving way to the Office for Students.
- What happens to oversight of the whole mission of a University?
- What happens to 'UKHE'? What happens to the sector agencies?

TEF Timeline

Gold: Silver: Bronze (20/30 : 60/50 : 20)

| TEF Year | | Rating | Fee level |
|----------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Yr 1 | 2016/17 | Meets expectation | £9000+ 100% inflation yr1 |
| Yr 2 | 2017/18 Submit: Jan 2017 | Gold, Bronze and Silver | + 100% inflation yr2 |
| Yr 3 | 2018/19 | Gold and Silver Bronze | + 100% inflation yr3 + 50% inflation yr3 |
| Yr 4 | 2019/20 | Gold and Silver Bronze | + 100% inflation yr4 + 50% inflation yr4 |

TEF Year 2: driven by 6 Core Metrics

**Core metrics
(benchmarked by Kent's student population characteristics)**

NSS Qs 1-4
Teaching on my
course;

NSS Qs 5-9
Assessment and
feedback

NSS Qs 10-12
Academic support

Non-continuation rate
(HESA)

% in Employment or
further study (DLHE)

% in Highly skilled
employment or further
study (DLHE)

Metrics split by Age, Gender, Polar Quintiles, Ethnicity (including within BME)

Possible Awards: Gold, Silver, Bronze

Assessor Guidance

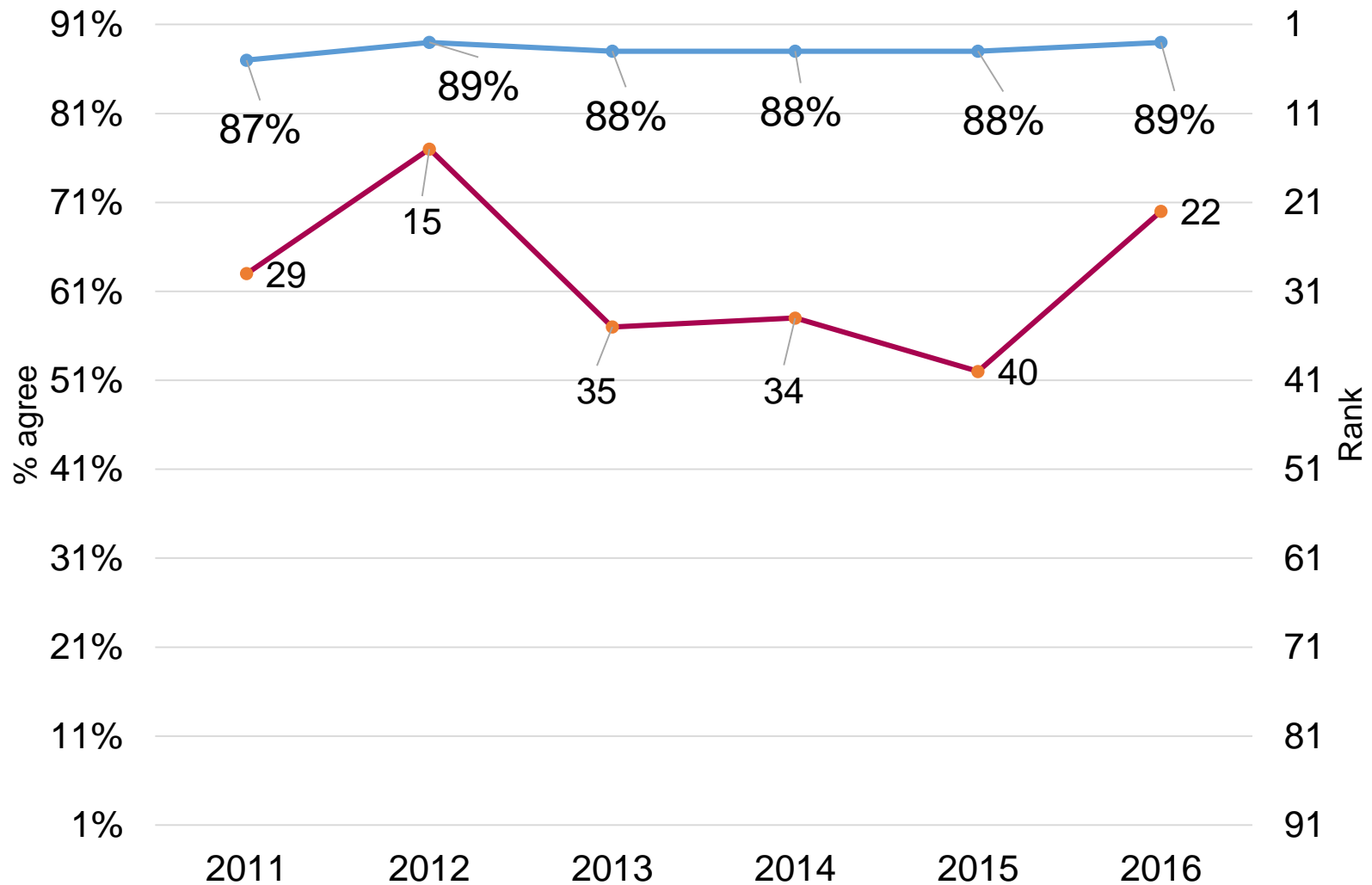
- ‘Assessors should be careful not to overweight information coming from the NSS...in some cases, stretching and rigorous course design, standards and assessment could adversely affect NSS scores.’ [7.21b]
- ‘Assessors should give particular weight to metrics on retention and highly skilled employment.’ [7.21c]
- ‘Performance...particularly of those from disadvantaged backgrounds...could lead to an adjustment.’[7.16]

The 'Provider Submission'

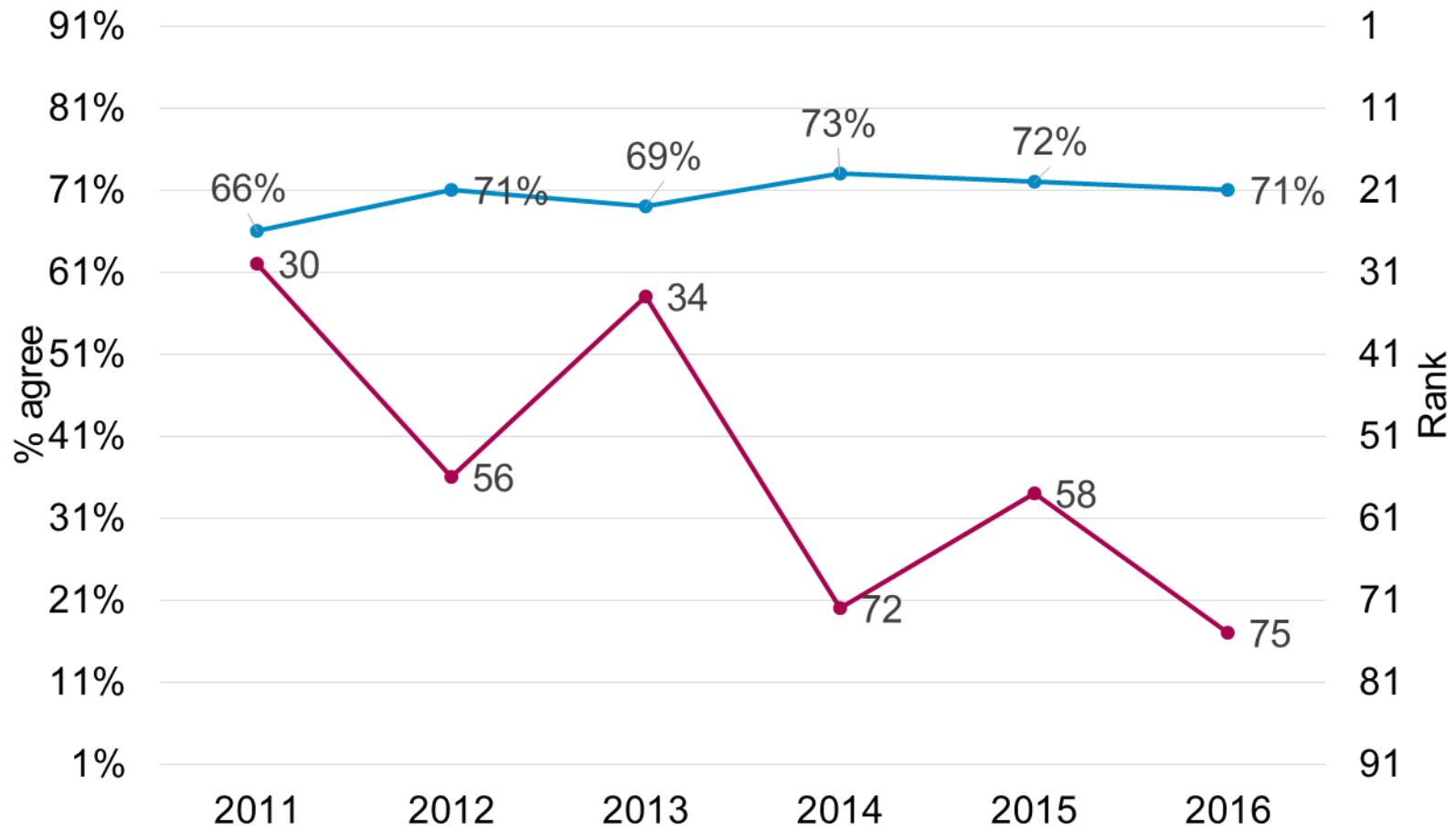
- Factors that affected the metrics
- Additional evidence of excellence against the criteria
- 15 page limit
- All submissions will be published.

- TEF 3 and thereafter
 - more changes to come
 - subject level assessment
 - PGT included?

Teaching: % agree and rank trend



Assessment & Feedback: % agree and rank trend



Largest decreases in rank (2016)



Q5 - “The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance” (at 75%, -1%, -10 places to bottom quartile)

Q7 - “Feedback on my work has been prompt” (at 66%, -3%, -36 places, bottom quartile)

Q9 – “Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things” (at 66%, -2%, -25 places, third quartile)

Assessment and Feedback

- Assessment and Feedback is a strategic theme for us during 2016-17
- This is one of five key themes for the Kent Union Education Strategy
- So even independently of NSS and TEF, we know this is an area of concern for students
- Assessment and Feedback Steering Group – disseminating the new Policy and monitoring its implementation (includes exam feedback)
- The Academic Audit Committee has set up an Audit Team – **2 and 3 March 2017. How can we best get colleagues and students involved?**

Assessment and Feedback

- Issues raised by students (including through Digital Rep) include:
 - whether feedback is delivered when we say it will be
 - how detailed the feedback is
 - whether it allows students to take it into account for their next assignment.
- Broader issues include anonymous marking (pilots taking place this year);
- Also the vexed question of winter exams...
- This is an area we know we need to improve because of both external and internal factors.

Education and Student Experience Strategy

- Considerable discussion last year, but we needed a high-level, ambitious and aspirational strategy by the end of 2016, not least to allow us to enter TEF2...
- So it is very good to be able to say that Senate **approved** the new Strategy on 23 November!
- Closely aligned with both the University Plan 2015-2020 and the Kent Union Education Strategy.
- ‘...sets out how Kent students and staff will work together to promote and ensure student success through **inclusive, inspiring** and **positively challenging** opportunities’.

A Strategy with people in it...

- ‘In one way or another, it is everyone’s job in the University community to recruit and retain excellent students who are able to benefit from being at Kent; assure and deliver excellent teaching; and enhance the environment for student support, academic and co-curricular experience.’
- ‘Many academics have come into the profession because they were inspired by their own university teachers and supervisors...Professional services staff, in their interactions with students, also add value to both curricular and co-curricular activities, as well as enriching the sense of community on our campuses.’

We will work to achieve...

- Coherence between the curricular and co-curricular elements of student life;
- Clarity of our curriculum offer through effective communication at all stages of the student journey, with a clear differentiation of our different campus communities, each promoted on its own merits;
- Equality of opportunity for all students through inclusive teaching practices;
- Co-production with Kent Union and student representatives of a well-supported and clearly articulated framework within which students can construct their own unique student experience.

Implementation

- Having the Strategy approved is **only the first step**.
- We are producing a version for wider circulation – but **what really matters is implementation**.
- We will keep the Strategy live through regular action plan monitoring via Education Board, Student Experience Board and their sub-committees.
- Integration with the University's other strategies is crucial.

And next...

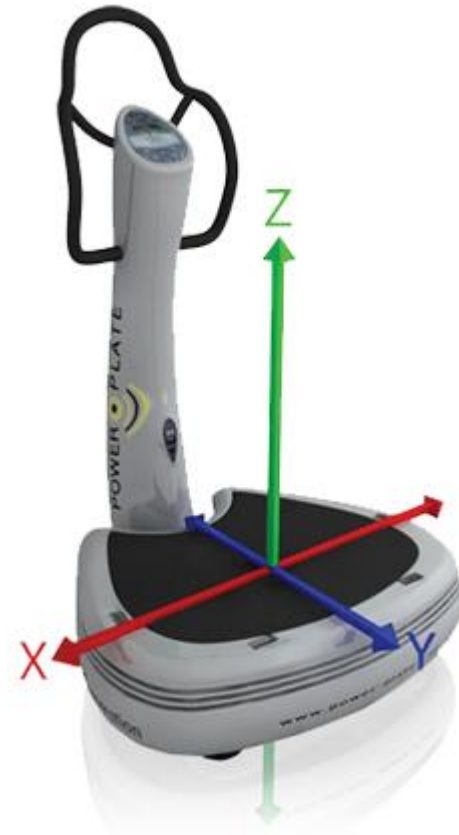
- We can't get completely fixated on the Strategy. If it's a live document, it needs to be susceptible to a bit of flexing.
- As we all know, that can be because of external changes and pressures.
- But equally important is sorting out **what we want to excel at**, and **how we get there**.
- Where do we want to be leaders in the sector? Where can we be? How do we spot trends and jump ahead rather than always being in responsive mode?

How do we see change?

- ‘Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change’ (Mary Shelley).
- ‘Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself’ (Tolstoy).
- Or maybe, everyone thinks of the world changing, but no one thinks of changing themselves...
- Is what we do as good as it could be? If not, why not? Are there patterns and views in the University that we should be trying to shift?
- How can we tell our students they need to be flexible, resilient, and prepared for a changing world, if we embody a resistant and negative attitude to change?

Change is the only constant

- Embracing the instability and adjusting to the shifting environment produces increased **power**, **strength** and **flexibility**.



Simplifying Kent

- A range of projects under a general umbrella of aiming to make what we do at Kent smarter, sharper, faster, less resource-intensive.
- Do we have too many committees? (Where do they all report? Are lots of the same people on different ones?)
- Do we have the right number of programmes of study, and the right level of student choice?
- Are our services for students accessible in the right way for students now? Which students?
- Do we waste time and money by doing things in different places and different ways?

Simplifying Kent

- This is a good example of the University taking the initiative on change, but only if we do it properly.
- How can we get involved?
- Starting conversations ('Coffee with colleagues' is a great start). Getting away from 'us and them'. Accepting there are different priorities.
- Do we think things work well now just because we're used to them? Would a bit of energy invested in changing them now mean the end result is better and more streamlined?

Longer term 1 - Consistency, or the lack of it...

- Diversity and inconsistency are not the same. Inconsistency can be a major risk.
- The 2015 QAA report identifies a number of recommendations, many of which coalesce around issues of consistency and variability of practice.
- One size does not always fit all, but there need to be well-understood arguments for departures from agreed principles and ways of working.
- Expectations are important here (and not just because of the CMA).

Consistency and the student experience

- Unexplained and unnecessary variability in practice is one of the most common sources of complaint and dissatisfaction for students.
- Kent Union Education Strategy 2016-2020 – ‘My lecturers...do not record their lectures which makes revision hard. It definitely puts me at a disadvantage to my friends in other Schools’. We are formulating and consulting on a **lecture capture policy**.
- Do we sometimes automatically resist anything that happens centrally, when doing something once, well and consistently can be good for students?

Longer term 2 - Academic communities

- Kent Union have a focus on students' sense of belonging to an academic community.
- How do we create common ground intellectually? How do we encourage and enable all student cohorts and populations to be involved?
- How does this relate to Curriculum Review, core modules, pathways and student choice at different levels? (And on to timetabling, space management and prioritisation, state-of-the-art equipment in teaching spaces...).

Longer term 3 - Institutional value of teaching

- Are Education / Learning and Teaching and Research valued equally at Kent?
- Education and Student Experience Strategy: '...whilst research is crucial to our reputation, it is maintaining student numbers and student satisfaction...that will keep Kent sustainable'.
- Certainly there is a compelling financial argument (e.g. £14m research grants and contracts 2014/15, total R income **£28m** – but HEFCE T plus tuition fees totalled **£154m**).
- About 80% of the University's income comes from student fees and associated grants.

Valuing teaching

- Research **is** vital reputationally, but **TEF will mean the same is true for teaching**. ‘Panel members will be looking for evidence that the leadership, strategy and ethos promotes and values teaching excellence’ (TEF Technical Consultation, p.13).
- Are recognition and reward structures right for teaching?
- ‘Our challenge is to raise the profile of teaching by committing to create an environment where teaching excellence is valued equally to research and their interaction provides a world class experience for students’ (Education and Student Experience Strategy).

Valuing teaching and support for teaching

- THE 15-21 September 2016 – launching a survey on teaching standards. ‘Is teaching valued at your institution?’ John Gill: ‘While research has been king in higher education for many years, there is an increasing sense that teaching’s time has come.’
- Is there a clear **and well-used** route through to Professor for teaching-dominant staff (on T&S or T&R contracts)? Do colleagues believe it?
- Do we tell stories externally and internally about excellence in education, as for research?
- Project on recognition, reward and encouragement for teaching excellence with HR, Spring 2017.

Longer term 4 – *The student experience?*

- Of course there is no single student experience. THE student experience is a myth. So is THE student (and THE public).
- Is there a core, Kent University experience? Is the student experience something we *provide*, or something we *help students construct*?
- Building on the Student Success Project.
- Link to the Medway Strategy – marketing each campus on its merits.
- Students supported to take up opportunities which enhance employability and develop skills, and to integrate curricular and other experience in a tailored and individual way.

Change as a route to excellence

- We have a tremendous number of positives to build on at Kent, but we're not as good as we could and should be at everything.
- And although investment in the Estate is vital (e.g. the new Student Hub), not all improvements flow from this. A lot is about people and where we choose to invest our time and talent.
- Everyone is busy, but if we really want to improve, how can we work smarter? What can we stop?
- 'The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking' (Einstein).

THE UK'S EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY



www.kent.ac.uk

University of
Kent