

Edge Hill
University

**CURRICULUM
STRATEGY**

2014-2020

Edge Hill University Curriculum Strategy 2014 – 2020

1. Introduction

Edge Hill University's primary strategic aim is to 'provide an exceptional student-centred experience'¹; a key enabler of this and a crucial factor in securing the Institution's future sustainability and success is the attractiveness, quality and effectiveness of our curriculum. In this context, our curriculum development will be cognisant of the following imperatives:

- **Student Recruitment** - supporting our ability to expand student numbers through attracting additional share in our priority markets where we are best equipped to provide an outstanding experience and outcomes.
- **Student Choice** – supporting improved student choice through creative, interdisciplinary offerings.
- **Student Preferences** – ensuring we hear the voice of our students in the design and development of the curriculum.
- **Employer Demands** – ensuring we engage, ever more effectively with the needs of prospective employers in designing and naming programmes²
- **Student Retention and Attainment** - enabling students to achieve their maximum potential by embedding, across all of our curriculum, best practice in learning, teaching and assessment in a stimulating and supportive environment.
- **Student Satisfaction** - delivering the highest-quality student experience in terms of the quality of learning and teaching to enhance student engagement and satisfaction.
- **Student Progression** - enabling graduates to gain access to graduate-level jobs or further study by embedding and supporting the development of key employability skills.
- **Financial sustainability** - maximising our existing assets and resources to deliver a sustainable curriculum.
- **Institutional Brand and Reputation** – building on our established strengths, but evolving with more contemporary offerings which complement our current provision and are underpinned by excellent research to provide an outstanding student experience.

This strategy has been designed to support decision-making around the future development of the University's curriculum. It is intended to provide direction to all those involved in developing new programmes and refreshing existing ones and provides the strategic context within which annual Faculty Academic Development Plans are produced (see 3, below).

Whilst accepting the need to provide a strategic context, it is recognised that these are particularly volatile and unpredictable times; we must therefore remain agile and responsive to developments rather than constrained by an overly prescriptive strategy. We will therefore develop our curriculum in line with an overarching set of principles which should act as enablers rather than constraints:

- Appropriately informed by market intelligence and demand to ensure it is relevant to the markets the University is best placed to serve and grow.

¹ Strategic Plan 2013 – 2020, <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/governance/files/2014/11/StrategicPlan.pdf>.

² We need to be alert to the possible tensions between the language employers respond to and what makes an attractive proposition for a student and reflect these in our award titles.

- Attractive to fee-paying students including those with vocational or non-traditional entry qualifications.
- Designed to support the University's strategic objective to further improve student retention and satisfaction.
- Designed to support students' personal as well as academic development, underpinned by excellent and/or innovative, research-informed teaching.
- Responsive to the needs of both students and employers to support the progression of Edge Hill graduates into graduate-level jobs.
- Efficient in maximising the collective assets, skills and expertise across the University to support our long-term sustainability. In support of this, we will pay particular attention to the issue of internal competition and we will also seek to achieve improved consistency in curriculum size and shape and thus an improved capacity to share modules³.
- Brand and reputation-enhancing in the context of an 'uncapped' market in which higher education providers will compete more aggressively for a share of a shrinking market.
- Consistent with the objectives of the University's 'Strategic Plan 2013-2020'.

2. Priority areas for development - Markets

The primary function of the 'programme offer' is to present a distinctive and market-attractive curriculum which maximises our ability to recruit, retain and support the success of our primary target markets. To achieve this we must define and work towards a number of key priority markets:

2.1 The UK Full Time Undergraduate Market

The most effective way in which to grow or at least sustain the University's current market position is to focus on increasing the numbers of full time undergraduates applying through UCAS. Evidence in terms of retention and progression demonstrates that our institutional capabilities are best adapted and able to serve this market and deliver the best possible student experience. UK full time undergraduate students will therefore continue to be our core market and key priority which we will seek to grow through:

- Extending our market penetration beyond our traditional geography of the North West, in particular seeking to compete in geographical areas adjoining the North West
- A market intelligence-led approach to curriculum development that is more explicit about the criteria and evidence base against which programme proposals are measured.
- The development of at least one new major undergraduate programme per year⁴.

2.2 Collaborative Provision and International Markets

We continue to work in collaboration with partners at home and overseas where such partnerships are likely (on the basis of robust evidence) to support our growth aspirations by providing valuable routes to our priority markets.

³ This requires consideration of how we timetable modules which contribute to multiple qualifications

⁴ A 'major undergraduate programme' is defined as one which will attract at least 50 new students per year.

While UK full time students are our main priority, we recognise the risks inherent in over-reliance on narrow markets and the need for managed diversification. We will therefore continue to pursue international expansion in a planned and risk-managed way which supports diversification whilst mitigating risks to quality, brand and reputation. The University's strategies for internationalisation, international student recruitment and collaborative provision⁵ define our approach to international expansion where our primary offer will be our UK portfolio with limited tailoring in exceptional circumstances in accordance with an agreed business case.

2.3 Postgraduate Taught Programmes

In common with much of the sector, Edge Hill's success in increasing our postgraduate (Masters) student market has been limited. Although we continue to look for opportunities to increase our attractiveness to the postgraduate market the University will require compelling evidence of market demand (or other defined business imperative) and a strategic approach to attracting those markets before making significant investments in postgraduate programme development. Part of the business imperative may relate to the importance of growing our research capability and therefore having PGT opportunities for our own students which will act as a route to PhD study.

In recognition of the changing profile of the HE landscape, we remain committed to delivering diverse modes of study (including part-time) where there is a clear market or other institutional imperative to do so.

3. Portfolio Development Processes (Faculty Academic Development Plans)

In accordance with the principles set out above, Faculties use the University's Spring Planning⁶ process to identify the aspirations of academic departments/areas for new portfolio developments and/or the modification or re-validation of existing provision. Departmental Spring Planning Statements, and associated planning meetings with heads of department/area, enable Faculties to evaluate new programme ideas and prioritise them in annual Faculty Academic Development Plans (FADP) which detail the ways in which they will seek to adapt, increase, refine (or decrease) their portfolios in response to agreed priorities.

FADPs are received by the Academic Planning Committee (APC) which considers them together, confirms their alignment with University strategy and identifies any synergies between programmes or potential for inter-Faculty collaboration. APC's approval of FADPs constitutes approval to proceed with the development of individual Applications for Development Consent (ADCs) which demonstrate that investment in a programme's development will address the strategic objectives of the curriculum detailed above.

4. Programme Development Considerations

As detailed above, our curriculum is designed to support the student learning experience in its broadest sense; it therefore does much more than simply attract new students. Our curriculum enables students to maximise their potential through its design and by embedding excellence in teaching, learning, assessment and student support. Following development

⁵ <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/governance/strategies-policies/>.

⁶ See Quality Management Handbook Chapter 4, available at <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/validation/>.

consent therefore, the design and validation of programmes (and modules) is guided and supported by the following internal reference points:

- **The Academic Regulations⁷**, which contain the University's framework for the setting of academic standards and award of credit and qualifications.
- **The Quality Management Handbook⁸**, which describes the University's processes for programme approval (validation), monitoring and review.
- **The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Frameworks⁹**, which provide a set of guiding principles for programme design and delivery that cover:
 - Graduate and Postgraduate Attributes
 - Induction and Transitions
 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment
 - Personal Tutoring
 - Personal Development Planning
 - Learning Literacies
 - Work-Related and Work-Based Learning
 - Technology Enhanced Learning and Distance Learning
 - Employability
 - International Dimensions
 - Education for Sustainable Development
- **The University's academic strategies and policies¹⁰**, most notably:
 - The Learning and Teaching Policy and Strategy
 - Assessment Policy
 - Institutional Policy for Personal Development Planning
 - The Personal Tutor System at Edge Hill University
 - A Guide to Effective Academic Induction¹¹
- **Other academic-related strategies and policies¹²**, including:
 - Admissions Policy
 - Employability Strategy
 - Enterprise Strategy
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
 - International Strategy
 - International Recruitment Strategy
 - Research Strategy
 - Retention Strategy.

⁷ Available at <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/governance/strategies-policies/>.

⁸ Available at <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/about/>.

⁹ <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/curriculum-frameworks/>.

¹⁰ <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/ct/homepage/about/strategies-and-policies/>.

¹¹ Available at <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/ufr/Home> (EHU log-in required).

¹² <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/governance/strategies-policies/>.

5. Curriculum Refresh

Validated programmes in delivery will be subject to ongoing evaluation and review, including annual monitoring and periodic review as detailed in the Quality Management Handbook (see above). Periodic Review provides an opportunity every 5 years for programmes to be re-evaluated with due consideration of the major areas 1-4 above so that they continue to remain current and strategically aligned. Faculties, through their internal quality management and enhancement processes, will undertake regular surveillance of the evaluation and review of programmes and, as such, provide the processes for modifications to curricula during the period between Periodic Reviews. This includes the opportunity to propose revalidation and closure of programmes as appropriate, again with similar consideration of alignment with 1-4 above.

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