



Edge Hill
University

Strategic Plan

2021-2025



FOREWORD BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



How we will secure and enhance Edge Hill's Sustainability as an increasingly successful university.

This document represents the sixth Strategic Plan produced since incorporation as an independent provider of higher education under the 1988 and 1992 Education Acts, and it is being published at a time of very great uncertainty in society and in the sector; greater uncertainty than at any time in most of our lives.

The first four Strategic Plans contained much detail concerning Edge Hill's vision and mission, our key strategic aims, operating objectives, performance measures and timescales, following the conventional strategic planning model first established for manufacturing industry in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s and widely adopted by public sector bodies, businesses and commercial operations – and most MBA programmes – since the 1950s. This is a valuable exercise in terms of process, but such an approach can have its disadvantages. If an organisation is to succeed one must no longer see targets as fixed or immutable over a five year term, and, living through a global pandemic, the need for constant review has never been more paramount.

It is also the case that excessive detail can diminish the effective communication of key messages when seeking to secure engagement across the full range of stakeholders, given individuals' differing roles, levels of interest and desire to assimilate and act on a complex set of business drivers. In effect each of the past four strategic plans had very short implicit messages; for 1993-1997 the priority was to survive and strengthen; from 1997-2002 and 2002-2007, to become a university and then acquire research powers; from 2008-13 to become a better university by growing both our reputation and our size. It is perhaps a mistake that they were never stated so explicitly, though excellent progress was made in each case.

The Strategic Plan for the period 2013-2020 took a different approach, aligning closely with more recent management theory, with a much stronger focus on vision and high level strategic objectives, on culture and ethos, and on the paramount need for agility. Our sense was that this worked effectively, culminating in a plethora of sector-wide awards, including the coveted Times Higher University of the Year title.

In some senses, running a university is a 'simple business' rhetoric, it requires focus on: high quality and fitness for purpose; markets, brand and reputation; financial and business integrity; and, the need for collective commitment and shared endeavour. Pleasingly, we increasingly saw that understanding and commitment in an environment that has been typically more cohesive than is necessarily found throughout the sector.

That simplicity extends into defining the key priority for the next five years – to secure the University's position and demonstrate significant relative progress in very challenging times. We are a very different, and much stronger, institution than that which sought to justify its existence in the first Strategic Plan we produced almost three decades ago. But what we had to achieve then we have to repeat now, and in a different, pernicious, environment.

To assist us in this challenge a simplified mission, building on the University's motto and our sense of values, is supported by a set of five key strategic aims. They are: Learning and Teaching and the Student Experience (the University's key driver); Research Capacity and Impact; External Partnerships and International Engagement; our People (the deliverers of our deliverables); and, most important of all, how we will secure and enhance Edge Hill's Sustainability as an increasingly successful university.

Effective structures and systems are vital to any substantial organisation, and, in these regulatory times, they are certainly no less essential here. But we are operating in an uncertain, chaotic even, environment, and we must also learn to live with, embrace, and shape and thrive on that 'chaos'. This can only be achieved by continuing to further engage all staff and all stakeholders in the development of our University; by enhancing understanding and freeing every person to use her or his initiative whenever possible; by encouraging and facilitating individuals to help shape, and share in, the future direction of our University. This is best achieved in organizations where there is a widespread sense of ownership and an enabling culture and ethos. This is the environment that, through our Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Aims, we seek to develop, strengthen and sustain.

John Cater
December 2020



MISSION

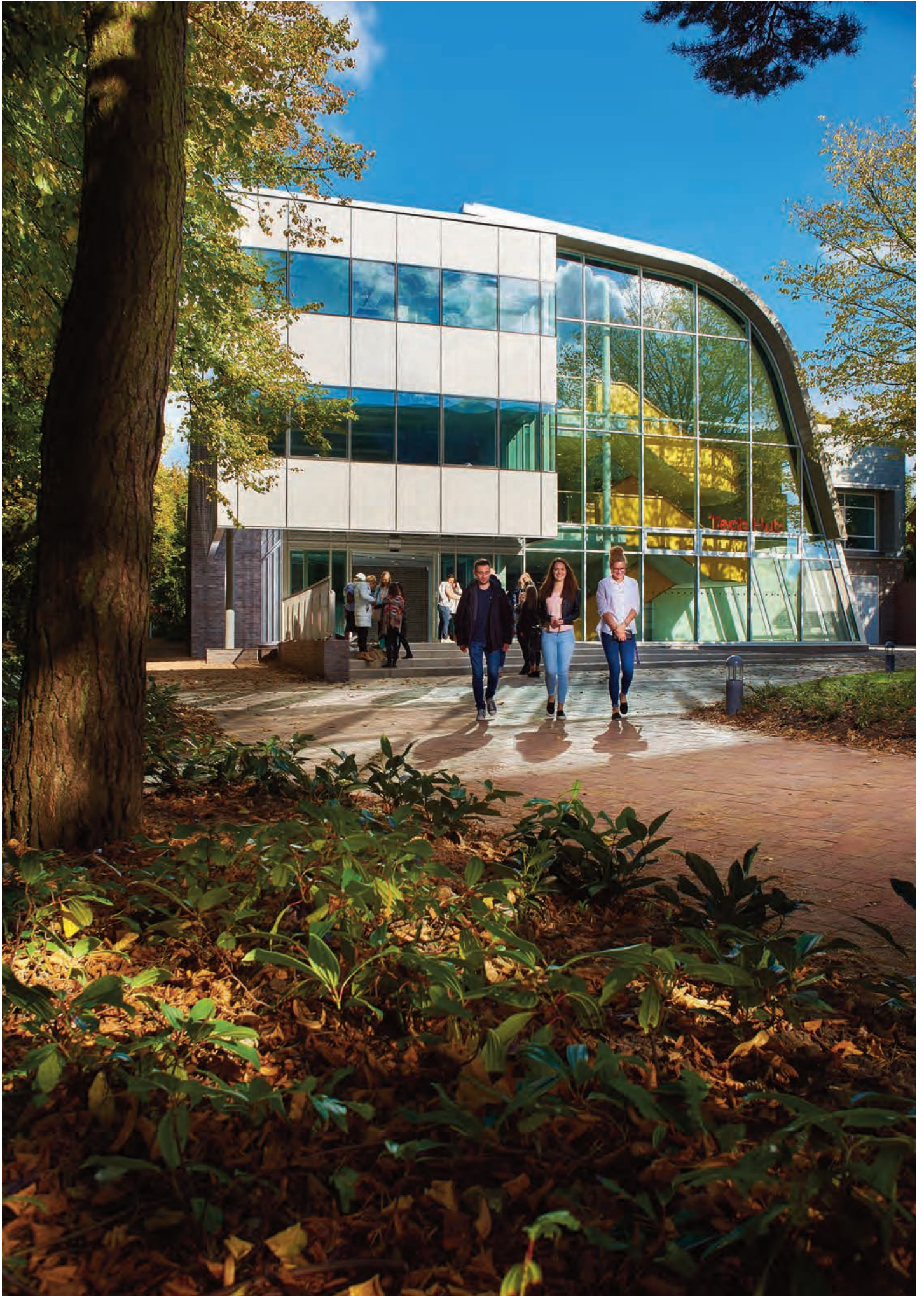


In Scientia Opportunitas

(through knowledge, opportunity)

University Mission Statement

Edge Hill University will provide an intellectually stimulating, creative and inclusive environment for its community. Teaching and learning of the highest standard, supported by pure and applied research of international significance, will provide a firm foundation for its graduates and other stakeholders in a rapidly changing world. Knowledge and understanding, a global perspective, and a life-long capacity to learn and adapt are the surest ways of securing the individual's and the nation's future.



UNIVERSITY VISION 2025



Edge Hill University will:

- Provide an outstanding student experience, underpinned by high quality learning and teaching; listen to the 'student voice' and further develop our strong sense of community.
- Harness the creativity, knowledge and commitment of our staff to promote our values and enhance our activities.
- Continue to build our research capacity, and further develop our research in cognate fields which have a demonstrable impact on discipline and society.
- Further strengthen our links to employers and the region and enhance student employability and self-employment.
- Selectively establish additional national and international partnerships to enrich university life, deepen understanding, and benefit the region, the UK economy and society.
- Continue our measured investment in the campus and facilities to further enhance what is already an outstanding environment for learning and living.



VALUES



Our core values lie in our wholehearted commitment to our students, staff and stakeholders, and our constant efforts to improve in all we do. Our approach is inclusive; we celebrate diversity and will tirelessly strive to enhance the life opportunities that a good education provides for our students.

The University will aim to be both financially and environmentally sustainable, seeking always to reinvest our resources to enhance: the student experience; our research capacity; our engagement with the public and third sectors, business and the region; and our commitment to our local communities. We will be decisive and focused in all we do, and plan with a realistic ambition founded on our strong progress to date.

The Edge Hill community will:

- embrace challenge and seize opportunity
- expect and celebrate creativity and excellence
- act responsibly and with integrity
- show determination, resilience, ambition and adaptability
- work together to deliver our Vision



STRATEGIC AIMS



Our strategic aims are gathered together under headings that reflect both our vision and values. They are:

- Teaching and Learning and the Student Experience
- Research that has Impact
- External Partnerships and International Engagement
- Our People
- Sustainability.

We will measure our success qualitatively and quantitatively, encapsulated in the performance drivers detailed below.



TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



The University will:

- Provide an exceptional student-centred experience founded on outstanding teaching, internationally significant research, pedagogic best practice, access to opportunities funding and personal commitment
- Seek to be ranked in the top quartile of mainstream English universities for student satisfaction as defined by the National Student Survey and any successor measures
- Provide a focussed approach to student employability and enterprise, aiming to secure graduate employment rates that are above sector norms, and continue to enhance the employability of our students by enabling them to develop transferable skills and by designing programmes which directly address employers' needs
- Broaden our appeal and attract and support a wider geographical and social mix of students from diverse backgrounds
- Sustain and further strengthen improvements in student retention and attainment, with results statistically significantly above Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework or successor benchmarks
- Diversify our modes of delivery, develop our blended and virtual offer and strengthen research-informed innovation in teaching, whilst continually refreshing our approach and assessing the appropriateness of current and emerging technologies
- Broaden and further develop our taught postgraduate capacity and offer across all Faculties
- Work collaboratively with the student body and the Students' Union to understand and meet our collective needs and strengthen our civic mission
- Promote education for sustainable development, equipping our graduates with the skills needed to support economic, social and environmental well-being



TO GROW OUR RESEARCH AND HAVE IMPACT



The University will:

- Address the global challenges articulated in the UK Government's Industrial Strategy
- Further increase our research capacity through the recruitment of exceptional individuals, and the nurture and development of our current staff
- Embed impact in our research to ensure that it reaches partners and beneficiaries regionally, nationally and internationally
- Provide a stimulating research environment that supports the production of, and engagement with, excellent research through challenge, discussion and exchange via the provision of national and international conferences
- Selectively invest in projects to support new researchers, pump prime new initiatives and support cross-institutional research
- Provide training support and development to our academics to grow our supervisory capacity to provide an excellent experience for our growing PGR community
- Work to make our offer more distinctive, using the Research Centres to further strengthen our standing and reputation in public and professional practice, the creative industries and wherever the University can beneficially demonstrate national and international impact
- Build on the establishment of the Medical School and the growing diversity of the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine to continue to strengthen links to regional trusts, hospitals and health professionals and the communities we serve
- To invest in research capacity in the Faculty of Education to produce high-quality research that meets the needs of our partners and collaborators, and which builds on recent growth
- Encourage and incentivise interdisciplinary and cross-Faculty research within the University to enhance its reputation and broaden our impact
- Seek out partners and collaborators internationally with complementary interests where, together, we can make a positive difference in those countries
- Significantly improve our position relative to other United Kingdom Higher Education Institutions in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework



TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY OF OUR PEOPLE



The University will:

- Continue to communicate with and listen to our stakeholders, internal and external, and work to ensure that decisions and plans are informed and influenced by all
- Encourage an outward-looking, engaged and pro-active approach from all staff
- Secure the future of the organization by identifying, nurturing and developing potential leaders
- Reap the positive business benefits of a strategic approach to health and wellbeing to enhance staff motivation and engagement
- Enhance the knowledge and expertise needed to deliver innovative learning and teaching of the highest quality
- Support the further improvement of research capacity and the skills which facilitate knowledge exchange and transfer
- Invest in the development of our administrative and support teams to ensure that services delivered are high quality, flexible, add value and are fit for purpose
- Recognise and reward strong performance



TO EXTEND AND STRENGTHEN OUR EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT



The University will:

- Establish ever closer working relationships with stakeholders including schools and colleges, health care settings, businesses, government agencies and local authorities, and use these partnerships to enhance student employability and self-employment, applied research, and the provision of continuing professional development
- Establish a strong reputation for expertise, professionalism and as a useful resource for business and the public sector
- Increase the number and range of University knowledge exchange activities and promote translational research to meet the needs of business and society, including the use of incubator and spin-off companies
- Further enhance the cultural and intellectual life of our local and regional communities through public lectures, drama and music performances
- Further develop engagement with our alumni base, increasing our use of them as ambassadors and influencers, and strengthen our links to employers and the region
- Work to embed international perspectives across the Institution
- Through partnership, increase the proportion of overseas students of high calibre and potential in our student body
- Provide linguistic, cultural, pastoral support and services to ensure that international students gain the maximum benefit from their time with us
- Provide opportunities and pathways for UK based students to study abroad
- Build and deepen relationships with key strategic overseas partners to enhance student exchange, research opportunities and staff development
- Recruit staff globally



TO BUILD SUSTAINABILITY



The University will:

- Pay close attention to the recruitment and subsequent retention of our students
- Regularly review and, where appropriate, refresh our academic portfolio at all levels to meet student and employer demand
- Seek to develop new markets and to diversify income where appropriate and sustainable
- Continue to build a distinctive Edge Hill brand and an outstanding reputation
- Seek to generate sufficient positive out-turns for continuing investment
- Retain sufficient cash balances to protect the University in an increasingly turbulent environment
- Invest wisely in the campus to enhance the student experience and our research profile
- Recognise and act on responsibilities as a leading university to enhance environmentally sustainable practice, with the aim of being carbon neutral within the life cycle of this plan

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES



The Strategic Plan will be supported by the following principal strategies and their implementation plans:

- Learning and Teaching Strategy (Academic Board)
- Research (Academic Board)
- Knowledge Exchange Strategy (Academic Board)
- International Strategy (Academic Board)
- People Strategy (Governing Body)
- Estates Strategy (Governing Body)
- Finance Strategy ((Governing Body, Annual Budget and Five-Year Forecast Returns)

Annual academic planning will specify the challenges, expectations and risks involved for academic areas, within the framework determined by the Strategic Plan.

The University will monitor delivery of the plan through the Academic Planning Committee and the Executive structure and report annually to Academic Board and the Governing Body.

The University Governing Body will monitor and measure institutional performance against the strategic aims and key performance measures, which are detailed below:

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES



Progress towards achieving the University's vision needs to be measured through an agreed series of Key Performance Measures. The six Measures listed below fully align with those in the Annual Risk Register, which are:

Learning and Teaching

- NSS, its successor, and internal survey ratings
- Graduate employability
- Sustaining or exceeding sector standards in the award of good degrees
- Student retention rates
- Student entry tariffs
- National teaching awards

Student Experience

- Student Union NSS (or successor) ratings
- Volume of SU activities (societies, events, etc)
- Organisation and Management and Student Voice scores in NSS
- Student satisfaction with campus environment and learning resources
- % of Estate in condition A/B
- % of first year students housed on campus
- Targets specified in our Access and Participation Plan

Research with Impact

- Proportion of academic staff returned in the REF
- REF ratings by academic return
- External research grant income
- Number of PGR students and their completion rates
- Grant income from industry and commerce

International Engagement and External Partnership

- Number of active UK strategic partners (including schools, trusts and hospitals)
- Volume of CPD work delivered
- External footfall on campus, including to Sporting Edge and the Arts Centre, in accordance with a developing cultural partnerships plan
- The number of knowledge exchange activities with external businesses, organisations and the community
- Size of active alumni base
- Facilitate and develop international collaborations

People

- Developmental opportunities to ensure our staff have the skills required to deliver our objectives
- Outcome of staff survey
- Participation in performance review and development
- Equal pay audit (including statutory gender pay audit report)
- Sickness absence and staff turnover

Sustainability

- Ratio of applications to places
- Conversion rates
- Scale of retained surplus
- Levels of borrowing
- Cash balances
- Annual targets to identify and support progress towards carbon neutrality
- Support for and progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals within our own context

APPENDIX: STRATEGIC TARGETS FOR 2025



We live in very turbulent times. It is difficult to predict the context for higher education even one or two years hence, and decidedly fraught if we try to guess its state in 2025.

We might expect HM Government to seek to switch more students away from a three-year, full-time residential model, and Covid-19 will have accelerated the use of blended (but not necessarily entirely virtual) learning, but it is important not to be overly specific in determining institutional goals a quinquennium hence and in ways that could inhibit those responsible for managing and governing the University at that time.

That said, a long-term strategy is vacuous when couched entirely in generic terms. Given this, we illustrate the Plan by a set of 'attainable aspirations' that are represented below and which would review annually. The Strategy itself will be reviewed every year to ensure that it remains relevant.

LEARNING AND TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Aim by 2025

NSS (or successor) Ratings	Ranking within top quartile for sector
Graduate employability	Employability above sector norm
Proportion of good degrees	Exceed expected benchmark relative to entry tariff ('added value')
Student retention rates	To exceed the Office for Students (OfS) set benchmarks
National Reputation	Further increase number of National Teaching Fellowships

RESEARCH WITH IMPACT

Progress on REF

Aim by 2025

Significantly increase the percentage of academic staff anticipated to be returnable in the next (2028) REF

Impact Agenda

Secure a full range of well-developed impact cases for each proposed Unit of Assessment, especially in professional fields such as Education; Health, Social Care and Medicine, Policing, Social Work

Research Environment

Double current grant income (in real terms)

Postgraduate Community

Secure a minimum of 200 additional PhD completions by REF2027

Interdisciplinary Research

Research Centres further strengthened with national and international impact, strongly supporting prospective REF returns

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Aim by 2025

International students on campus

Between 5 and 10% of students of international origin

International partnerships and perspectives

Further strengthen Language Centre

Deepen engagement with a small number of substantive and high-quality partners, including, inter alia, the development of collaborative research of international standing

Operate undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum frameworks that have a clear and relevant international dimension, and further develop opportunities for home students to have an international experience during their studies

Increase the number of staff with international experience

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Employer engagement

Aim by 2025

Continue and embed the work undertaken to secure and strengthen activity undertaken with significant public and private sector companies

Knowledge Exchange

Extend the University's work in knowledge exchange, product innovation and business incubation, incorporating our work with small and medium-sized enterprises

Student Placements

See a five-fold increase in students accessing placements, internships and study abroad opportunities

PEOPLE

Performance management

Aim by 2025

Ensure that Performance Review is completed annually for qualifying staff

Excellent delivery

Provide excellent service (which could, where appropriate, be demonstrated by the Customer Service Excellence Award Scheme or similar) across all relevant departments

Resource management

Ensure evidence that accurate, timely, high quality and relevant staff-related data is available in real time for managers

Staff engagement and recognition

Demonstrated by the Annual Equal Pay and Gender Audits, the bi-annual Staff Survey and the externally recognised by institutional and individual achievement of externally benchmarked awards

Strategic delivery

Achievement of all Key Performance Indicators as identified in the People Plan and reported in the Human Resources Annual Report to the Board of Governors

Staff recruitment

Ensure that all staff recruitment continues to be underpinned by robust methods of assessment and selection testing

SUSTAINABILITY

Aim by 2025

Ratio of Applications to Places

A minimum of four per place

Conversion Rate

A minimum of 25%

Annual surpluses

Surpluses to be in excess of the sector median percentage (reviewed annually)

Cash reserves

To be in excess of £25m

Borrowing levels

Not to exceed £40m or 40% of turnover, whichever is the greater

Investment on campus
and Environmental Sustainability

To continue to ensure facilities rank in the top quartile in the sector and to make significant and measured progress towards carbon neutrality

