

# Edge Hill University

---

## **‘Doing Things Better, Doing Better Things’: Delivering Teaching Excellence**

### **Edge Hill University’s Learning and Teaching Strategy 2021-2025**

Edge Hill University is committed to teaching and learning of the highest possible quality. This is at the core of our values and substantially underpins our reputation. Excellence will be underpinned by the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching (SoTL) i.e. application and integration of knowledge from research about higher education practice. This is complementary to cognate discipline knowledge and research from practice within professions and constitutes the research teaching nexus. Research activity is thus inextricably linked to excellent teaching and to deep levels of student engagement. Teaching excellence will be achieved through rich development experiences, research, reward and recognition, and opportunities for professional accreditation and qualification.

We promote the growth and development of excellence in teaching because:

- Students deserve the best quality teaching so as to unleash their potential, to maximise their engagement and love of learning, success and continuation to graduation and employment and to assist with lifelong learning necessary in a fast-moving age
- Excellence in Learning and Teaching is vital to sustain the reputation and financial viability of the University and makes a direct and unique contribution to our ethos
- An environment which values and nurtures excellence in teaching is essential for attracting and retaining staff of the highest quality and potential
- Staff expertise in teaching provides the platform on which to build successful programmes and curricula, informed by the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

Any strategy is only as potent as the planning and delivery that it informs. It is thus incumbent on faculties and departments and services to use this document to directly inform their planning, so as to deliver on the University’s aims. As such, faculties and appropriate services will have complementary, auditable, strategic action planning which can be made visible to Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Board.

The following elaborates upon the University’s current strategy (2016) and is divided into the following sections:

1. Context
2. Aims
3. Achievement of the Aims
4. Excellence in Learning and Teaching
5. Learning and Teaching priorities

6. People
7. Resources
8. Teaching Excellence culture
9. Key performance indicators and monitoring.

## 1. Context

- 1.1 Edge Hill is committed to high-quality teaching and to responding to and engaging with national and international research on teaching, learning and student support. In particular, it aims to increase focus on pedagogic and other practice-based research that has direct application to challenges that concern university teachers in their pursuit of teaching excellence and ultimately students' maximising their potential. The University has an important role to play as a resource to the local and regional community by providing highly skilled graduates who have the sociocultural and intellectual capacity to 'change lives' including their own, their families and their communities and to make a positive contribution to society and the economy.
- 1.2 Research and teaching are central to Edge Hill University's mission. Great teaching is underpinned by knowledge gained from research about learning and curriculum which is complementary to cognate discipline research and that derived from professional practice. The student experience is enhanced by being taught by those who are highly professionally developed in the craft of the university classroom, as qualified, enthusiastic communicators and at the forefront of research and practice in the disciplines.
- 1.3 Edge Hill University has long invested in and is committed to excellence in teaching. It achieved its status as a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (the SOLSTICE CETL) in 2006, had one of the earliest Fellowship Schemes and has progression routes to readership equivalence (Senior Learning and Teaching Fellow) and professorships and has had a significant number of National Teaching Fellowships awarded. It has had a higher educational development unit since the last century which now manifests as the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT). We welcomed the TEF as an opportunity to reinforce the importance of learning and teaching in the University and across the sector and will respond to its developments in a similar proactive fashion as before.
- 1.4 The advent of the TEF provided an opportunity to take stock of activities and how these will develop further in the short to medium term. The University has maintained its CETL status through the maintenance of fellowship scheme, the SOLSTICE brand and provision of annual international conferences and the CLT seminar series. The emergence of Start to Success, review of the TEF and NSS and how these will feature in any developments of regulatory functions of the OfS and in league tables looms large at the time of constructing this strategy. As ever, our focus on teaching excellence and the employability and employment of students remains a strategic priority.
- 1.5 The latest iteration of the now Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TESOF) with its associated metrics and qualitative indicators has provided an opportunity for the University to continue, based on the considerations above, to do what is right and to do the right things. To the University, collegially, the fundamental, ongoing, unwavering commitment to teaching excellence and student success is axiomatic. Having a strategy, infrastructure and plans grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) makes us confident as/if/when the TESOF approaches and matures and other metrics come to fruition.
- 1.6 We now plan to build on that solid foundation to achieve new levels of excellence. The following are our high-level aims for the next five-year period.

## 2. Aims

2.1 The University will continue to undertake its learning and teaching with an aim to produce graduates who are:

- well informed, appropriately skilled and highly employable for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with capabilities to navigate, communicate and work effectively within an increasingly complex digital world
- confident, resilient, adaptable, with a good understanding of sustainable development and their environment, and who are attuned to global perspectives and cultural diversity
- equipped to become role models and leaders in the workplace and their communities
- committed to lifelong learning.

2.2 The University will also attract staff committed to teaching and student support and retain, nurture and develop academic staff and those in professional services/student support roles, supporting, enhancing and rewarding their aspirations as excellent teachers, practitioners and academic researchers.

### 2.3 **Aims will be achieved by providing**

- a. excellent and inspirational learning and teaching and opportunities for students to realise their fullest potential, delivered by highly qualified staff
- b. a high-quality portfolio of programmes, underpinned by research informed teaching and a curriculum framework with a clear focus on excellent design and accessibility that integrates student support, management of transitions and skills to equip students for employment and to make a positive contribution to society
- c. inclusive communities between students and staff where there is genuine partnership to support everyone achieve their aims and potential
- d. investment in student peer to peer support to nurture a supportive and vibrant environment where learning is fun and fulfilling
- e. state of the art physical and virtual learning environments, supported by modern technology for hybrid/blended delivery modes, with focus on accessibility and digital capabilities for staff and students
- f. high quality student guidance and support for managing transitions into and through university and into the world of work
- g. a dynamic academic community that nurtures excellence in learning and teaching, research and the application of knowledge, enterprise and entrepreneurship
- h. a focus on internationalisation and diversity and regard for sustainability and civic responsibility
- i. staff who are supported through high quality professional development, and who are rewarded and recognised for their contributions to student success
- j. planning and quality management processes that constantly seek to enhance the student experience and monitor and disseminate good practice
- k. a Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) with the remit to act as a hub for promoting and coordinating excellence.

## 3. Achievement of the Aims

3.1 **(a) Excellent and inspirational learning and teaching and opportunities for students to realise their fullest potential, delivered by highly qualified staff. This will be underpinned by:**

*Students experiencing:*

- high-quality learning and teaching, tailored assessment, and guidance and support with due regard for accessibility
- Personal Development Planning to assist them in improving their skills as learners and identifying and developing a comprehensive suite of capabilities including enhancement of digital aspects that are essential to study, employability and lifelong learning
- where possible, opportunities for work-related learning and a clear focus on career aspirations.

*Staff:*

- keeping abreast of innovation in learning, teaching and assessment, digital skills and the systematic dissemination of good practice within the University
- providing learning support that recognises the diverse needs
- using data and tools to support staff in understanding and responding most effectively the needs of their students and a strong emphasis on pastoral and academic support
- engaging in regular developmental observation of teaching, including peer observation
- both new and existing staff, fully engaging in professional development to enhance their teaching repertoire including the deployment of online, digital, technologies
- having access to a Learning and Teaching Fellowship Network across and within faculties and Services, supporting the development of learning, teaching and assessment and the sharing of effective approaches.

- 3.2 **(b)** a high quality portfolio of programmes, underpinned by research informed teaching and a curriculum framework with a clear focus on excellent design and accessibility that integrates student support, management of transitions and skills to equip students for employment and to make a positive contribution to society. **This will be underpinned by:**

*Students experiencing:*

- High quality induction into and through their programmes
- programmes that offer contemporary work-related and work-based activities and skills, development of digital capability alongside subject knowledge and, where applicable, professional qualifications
- support in planning for career development and transitions into employment and/or further study.

*Staff:*

- ensuring employer engagement in the development of curricula which recognise employability and enterprise skills that match the needs of the economy
- capitalising on internal and external advice in the process of curriculum design and accessibility
- having a focus on induction into and through programmes including study and digital skills and Assessment Literacy
- including students' active engagement in the design of curricula and their own learning experience.

- 3.3 **(c)** Inclusive communities between students and staff where there is genuine partnership to

**support everyone to achieve their aims and potential. This will be underpinned by:**

*Students experiencing:*

- frequent opportunities to consult with staff about their experiences and needs
- engagement in quality management and enhancement processes as partners and advisors.

*Staff:*

- providing formal and informal opportunities for dialogue and to get feedback from students
- operating systems and processes that put the student voice at the heart of quality management and enhancement.

**3.4 (d) Investment in student peer to peer support to nurture a supportive and vibrant environment where learning is fun and fulfilling. This will be underpinned by:**

*Students experiencing:*

- a sense of community and belonging
- support (for new and existing students) in terms of student experience and employability
- appropriate peer support on arrival in their transition and induction into the University

*Staff:*

- implementing the Peer Mentoring policy, thus recognising and actively supporting Student Peer Mentoring as part of the University retention strategy
- supporting students' academic and social extracurricular group activities.

**3.5 (e) state of the art physical and virtual learning environments, supported by modern technology for hybrid/blended delivery modes, with focus on accessibility and digital capabilities for staff and students. This will be underpinned by:**

*Students experiencing:*

- development of their digital capabilities and awareness of the potential offered by accessible, existing and new technologies which allow them (and staff) to communicate and collaborate effectively, create and share knowledge and support learning effectively
- induction and training for use of common digital tools/University platforms
- online and mobile web-based technologies to support learning, teaching, assessment.

*Staff and students:*

- *engaging in* the development and maintenance of digital/ICT and other skills relevant to employment and lifelong learning
- accessing rich library and on-line learning resources in multiple, accessible, formats including aspects of hybrid and blended delivery
- supported by estates policies and practices which support the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, focused on a high-quality campus infrastructure of modern, flexible, and well equipped formal and informal learning spaces with support for mobile learning.

3.6 **(f) high quality student guidance and support for managing transitions into and through university and into the world of work. This will be underpinned by:**

*Students experiencing:*

- a wide range of central services for academic and learning support, student pastoral welfare, health and wellbeing
- access to a designated Personal Tutor
- careers support and guidance which complements the focus on employability in programmes.

*Staff:*

- providing curricula which include induction experiences to improve transitions into undergraduate and postgraduate study, from school or further education or work into higher education, between different levels of an undergraduate degree programme, and into employment or further study
- delivering Personal Tutoring that is reinforced by access to timely and relevant online data to assist with monitoring and supporting progress.

3.7 **(g) A dynamic academic community that nurtures excellence in learning, research and the application of knowledge, enterprise and entrepreneurship, regard for sustainability and civic responsibility. This will be underpinned by:**

*Students experiencing:*

- learning which is enhanced through curricula and teaching informed by the research of staff in the discipline and thus by application and integration of knowledge, including that from pedagogic research, from around the world
- opportunities to learn in ways that engage with research processes, involving carrying out their own research or evaluating the research of others
- curricular focus on social responsibilities including sustainable development, including the 'green agenda'.

*Staff:*

- designing programmes which extend students' awareness of the nature of research and knowledge creation through research informed teaching
- offering curricular experiences which promote enterprise and entrepreneurship, regard for the environment, communities, the economy and just practices of benefit to both the present and the future.

3.8 **(h) A focus on internationalisation and diversity. This will be underpinned by respect for diversity as a core value and:**

*Students experiencing:*

- learning and teaching resources and access to research from around the world
- opportunities to study abroad and to connect with students internationally wherever possible

*Staff:*

- providing teaching that is underpinned by research and scholarship from around the world
- designing curricular experiences which enable graduates to be attuned to local and global perspectives, cultural diversity and inclusivity
- creating opportunities to connect online with others across the globe
- delivering excellence in learning, teaching and academic support for international students and a sense of community and belonging.

This will be underpinned by intercultural awareness of teaching, support staff and home students that supports these aims, underpinned by training and development activities.

**3.9 (i) Staff who are supported through high quality professional development, and who are rewarded and recognised for their contributions to student success. This will be underpinned by:**

- appointing academics able to demonstrate capability and a desire to teach who are qualified or on a trajectory to achieve a higher education teaching qualification
- provision of continuing professional development for staff to enhance learning and teaching activities, including those in relation to research and scholarship
- provision of development and support for enhancement of digital capabilities focussed on teaching (accessibility learning and assessment, research, administration and communications) implemented through a digital capabilities framework
- provision of a PG Cert Teaching in Higher Education for staff with less than three years' experience
- introductory in-house teaching, learning and assessment courses for Graduate Teaching Assistants prior to commencing teaching
- teaching observation to ensure all academic staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning are able, enthusiastic teachers and provided with support to match their needs
- promoting the engagement of staff in the discipline and generic activity provided by the Higher Education Academy and promoting application to its Fellowship/teaching qualification
- recognising and rewarding excellent teachers through internal awards and fellowships and nomination for the National Teaching Fellowship, Readerships/Senior Learning and Teaching Fellowships and Professorships
- systematic dissemination of good practice through the Centre for Learning and Teaching and SOLSTICE using the Teaching Fellowship Network and activities of Learning and Teaching Fellows within the faculties
- encouraging scholarship and research into professional practice, including the pedagogy of specific disciplines with a view to having a positive impact on the student experience at the University and/or making a contribution to pedagogical research of REF quality and of international significance.

**3.10 (j) Planning and quality management processes that provide clear guidance on institutional priorities that constantly seek to enhance the student experience and monitor and disseminate good practice. This will be underpinned by:**

*Staff:*

- implementing quality management and planning for monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching to ensure an excellent student experience and to identify, support and disseminate good practice within the institution and the sector. This enhancement focus will be on doing things better and doing better things
- engaging in annual planning cycles which include conversations with departments focused on learning and teaching needs of students, the support and development needs of staff and which establish priorities for learning and teaching development both locally and centrally.

*Students experiencing:*

- wide consultation to ensure a strong understanding of their experiences to inform appropriate responses related to the enhancement agenda.

3.11 (k) a Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) with the remit to act as a hub for promoting and coordinating excellence. **This will be underpinned by:**

- training and development for staff including seminars, international conferences and bespoke events
- an active Learning and Teaching Fellowship Scheme, SoTL and pedagogic enquiry of REF quality
- focus on the promotion and development of research informed teaching
- provision of staff training and development and access to teaching qualifications against the UKPSF
- advice and guidance on curriculum design based on the University's research informed frameworks
- establishing a Higher Education Learning and Teaching Research Interest Group which will build capacity transform into a Research Centre in its own right
- convening visiting professors and scholars, and providing highly visible international conferences and seminars
- coordinating application for national awards such as the National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) and its collaborative CATE team awards and international fellowships
- Provision of mentoring and consultation/guidance.

#### 4. Excellence in Learning and Teaching

4.1 Edge Hill will measure teaching excellence through:

- expert-peer evaluation through teaching observation and performance review
- monitoring data related to student performance and satisfaction in its monitoring and planning cycles including employment, the proportion of good degrees attained by students and learning gain measures (as they are further explicated)
- attainment of staff teaching qualifications in line with the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)
- achievement of internal national and international teaching awards and external invitations
- growth of REF worthy higher education pedagogic research and its impact
- recognising and rewarding teaching excellence, its leadership, SoTL and publication of research in its progression criteria to Readerships/Senior Learning and Teaching Fellowships and Professorships
- providing incentives annually to reward excellence in teams allied to the NTF CATE awards process



- student led staff teaching and learning support awards
- attendance to NSS and other regulatory metrics based upon student success
- student evaluation and qualitative and quantitative data arising from quality systems, including practices worthy of dissemination
- collation of commendations from external consultants and examiners.

## 5. Learning and Teaching priorities

5.1 Our over-riding priority for the next five years is to maintain and sustain a focus on excellent teaching and the infrastructure described above. The focus will be on continuous enhancement, adding value through the increased promotion of the research teaching nexus, increasing digital capabilities and thus enabling us to undertake exciting, innovative and leading-edge practices.

5.2 Specifically, we will:

- achieve the highest possible TESOF (or equivalent regulatory measure) grading within each review cycle
- ensure the Taught Degrees/Curriculum Framework continues to focus on teaching excellence, student success and employability and that it refers to a defined skills set as a frame of reference for curriculum designers, tutors and students. It will have focus on accessibility and inclusion, induction and transitions related to changes in the post-16 curriculum and study in an increasingly digitally rich environment. Support will be provided to colleagues in the use of the framework in validation and review processes
- achieve a steady state of 95% of staff having returnable teaching qualifications through the UKPSF CPD scheme, have at least 1 NTF award per year and a growing pool of leaders as defined by Senior D3 and Principal D4 Fellows of the HEA
- consider re-branding of SOLSTICE in relation to excellence as the CETL to underpin any further online/hybrid/blended learning portfolio developments, with added focus on developing existing and future commendations through the TESOF (or any future iteration thereof), underpinned by reputation for outstanding teaching and support. This will be in collaboration with Learning Services
- support pedagogic research excellence wherever it is found within the University. Refresh and expand the visiting professorial base and re-establish the practice-based higher education pedagogic research focus, anchored in a specific Higher Education Learning and Teaching (HELT) Research Interest Group
- establish L and T enhancement projects to mirror the expectations of NTF CATE to focus on emerging institutional and faculty priorities
- broaden our range of national and international partnerships to co-produce research and educational development activities and bring the outcomes onto the campus through seminars and conferences
- leverage funding where possible through external partnerships so as to provide additional capacity for projects focused on innovation, research and development
- raise the profile of our teaching excellence through effective dissemination and engagement with media, especially social media. The annual international CLT and SOLSTICE CETL conference and University Learning and Teaching Day will continue as high-profile events of great repute.

## 6. People

6.1 Universities have an obligation to sustainable development by investing in the next generation of teachers and those who support students' learning. We will:

- continue to invest in our staff, who are our most valuable resource, to enable them to deliver the highest quality teaching and curriculum design and to support the delivery and application of research so as to achieve transformational impact on student learning. We will attract increasingly strong fields of candidates for academic posts at all levels with teaching qualification (or a clear trajectory to obtaining it) an essential criterion for most academic appointments
- nurture and develop the careers of academic staff, monitor annual needs through the performance review process, and plan professional development activities. These will focus on both excellence and development of potential for leadership and dissemination of best practices. This will include individual's engagement with their own continuous professional development annually in a supportive and constructive manner
- support for the career development of staff will include opportunities for progression along the Fellowship, Readership/ Senior Learning and Teaching Fellowship, Professorship continuum
- expect all academic staff to engage in learning and teaching development activities and , as a minimum, current professional practice in their academic discipline teaching and in developing their digital capabilities for learning, teaching and assessment. This may be complemented by supporting higher education pedagogic research and publishing in open access journals, in monographs or in edited books, or, where appropriate teaching materials and curricula which are clearly grounded in original research
- support academic staff, where appropriate, to become and remain pedagogic research-active through mentoring, staff development and access to the University's research investment funds
- review our approach to constructing the academic timetable and ensure that fair and transparent workload models are in place and that they recognise and support both the University's research and teaching excellence aspirations
- as it is an important part of our founding ethos and distinct cultural heritage, embrace equality and diversity and we will build on the achievement of our Athena Swan award by putting forwards cases for departmental Athena Swan awards, Charter Marks, and other badges of recognition, through implementing the Athena Swan action plan and taking all reasonable steps to support and develop the careers of all our researchers and teachers equitably
- develop further our highly-successful Graduate Teaching Assistant programme, their training for teaching, and to include opportunities for research into higher education teaching and learning.

## **7. Resources**

### 7.1 Specifically, we will:

- make available the best possible infrastructure which we can afford for promoting and sustaining teaching excellence including, specifically, online environments and tools
- continue to use internal funding strategically to support Fellowship activities, pedagogic research and both encourage, incentivise and support strong bids for external funding and develop collaborations with highly experienced colleagues at other HEIs to bid for funding to support larger research and or development projects
- continue to invest in new facilities to support excellent teaching, including state of the art learning and teaching spaces and focal points for teaching and learning development

activities and investment in online/digital tools and platforms, student data monitoring and tracking system/s, cutting edge Library and online information systems including the VLE and classroom ICTs, to facilitate the provision of a leading edge, accessible, learning environment.

## **8. Teaching Excellence Culture**

Learning & teaching and associated research are amongst the pillars on which successful universities are supported. Our culture includes taking pride in the quality of teaching and learning and valuing enthusiastic, highly-skilled and valued teaching staff.

8.1 We will ensure that:

- teaching excellence remains where it belongs at the heart of the University's values, vision and mission
- departmental, faculty and institute learning and teaching strategy and planning aligns with the University strategy
- faculties have Learning and Teaching Committees, making annual reports to University Learning and Teaching Committee. Student success and monitoring for identification of disseminable practices will be an explicit part of the rubric in annual monitoring of University activities
- teaching excellence will be recognized rewarded through rewards and progression opportunities
- we promote the University's achievements and excellence in teaching through responsible use of social media and other public engagement activities
- we continue to benchmark competitors in the sector and incorporate aspects of good practice which come from elsewhere.

## **9. Particular Challenges/Foci for 2021 and the Immediate future**

- Review of the Taught Degrees Framework with particular focus on employability and graduate level employment status
- Review of assessment practices and support, to ensure maximum student progression and attainment of degrees
- Introducing students to the University's approaches to NSS expectations of 'Teaching on my course' as part of induction and transition activities
- Exploration of a Digital Capabilities Framework for Staff and approaches to students gaining micro-credentials related to digital skills and employability
- Evaluation and review of online TEL enhancements from the Covid pandemic period with a focus on enhancement of the blended/hybrid components of curricula and further developments of the online portfolio
- Extension/development of high quality Postgraduate Provision (including online programmes)
- Evaluating and, as necessary, re-positioning approaches the QME in relation to emerging OfS expectations and orientation towards outcomes data.

## **10. Key Performance Measures and monitoring**

10.1 Outcomes and KPIs- These align with the Strategic plan 2021-2025, with particular focus on:

- NSS, its most current iteration, and internal survey ratings

- Graduate employability
- Proportion of good degrees
- Student retention rates
- National teaching awards

<b>Outcomes:</b>	<b>KPIs:</b>
External Regulatory Metrics; gradings and commendation/s	Achievement at or above all benchmarked metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention/continuation(HESA); Employment and Further Study</li> <li>• Highest possible TESOF grading (or equivalent regulatory measures)</li> </ul>
NSS scores	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 and top decile in the U.K. re Questions re: <p>Teaching on my course and Learning Opportunities;</p> <p>Assessment &amp; feedback;</p> <p>Academic support</p>
Proportion of good degrees	Exceed benchmark annually with a positive score on any emerging measures of learning gain, clearly referenced to the Degree Outcomes Statement
Improved retention	Data to be in excess of any emerging regulatory benchmarks
Proportion of academic staff with teaching qualifications	Exceed or maintain steady state 95% for FT staff
Numbers of NTFs and national CATE fellowships and others that emerge internationally	To achieve at least a further 4 NTFs and 2 CATEs by 2025
Staff Leadership of Learning and Teaching Excellence as measured by D3 and D4 Senior and Principal Fellowships of the HEA	At least 12 Principal fellows and 40 Senior Fellows by 2025
REF outputs 2027	At least 10 staff contributing to REF UoA/s related to HE L and T Research

10.2 KPIs will be monitored regularly by University Learning and Teaching Committee, on behalf of Academic Board.