



STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 – 2015

Introduction

Our new Strategic Plan builds on our vision for a Professional University which we launched in 2006. Over the past three years we have put in place the building blocks to enable us to realise our ambitions. We have reported surpluses in each of the last three years, creating room for investment; we have consolidated our UK operations onto a single campus in Bolton investing £12m in new and refurbished accommodation; we have strengthened our governance and management arrangements; implemented the new staff pay framework; improved our research profile; extended the range of partners that we work with and entered into a new strategic partnership with Bolton Metropolitan Council and the Primary Care Trust to develop on our campus a Health and Wellbeing Centre for Bolton (*Bolton One*) which includes teaching and research facilities; launched our new international strategy, establishing a campus in the UAE; and developed more flexible, vocationally relevant academic provision.

During the past year we have reviewed our strategy in light of the ongoing national debate about the future of Higher Education and how it is funded. We believe that our vision of a university as a community of professionals committed to developing other professionals continues to be valid and particularly relevant as the UK economy recovers from the worst recession for a generation. Our plan for 2009-2015 seeks to address the challenges facing the university in a period of change and uncertainty by playing to our strengths and confronting our weaknesses. We will exploit our capacity as a relatively small institution to be flexible, agile and responsive, working in partnership with a range of organisations for the benefit of our learners, our staff, and the businesses and communities we serve.

This plan, which covers the period up to 2015, sets out our mission, vision and values. It identifies a set of themes which provide a framework for the development of our aims and objectives. The strategic plan is underpinned by five supporting strategies which set out in detail our plans for

- the academic development of the University;
- research and knowledge exchange;
- learning, teaching and assessment;
- human resources and organisational development;
- finance and resources.

We welcome feedback from staff, students, partners and other stakeholders.

Mission

Our mission is to be a University of professionals committed to the academic development of other professionals in the UK and abroad.

Questions

1. We need a mission statement which captures who we are and what we do. What words do you think sum up the distinctiveness of the 'Bolton' experience for staff and students?
2. Our current strap line is "professionals in practice" - is this still appropriate? Or should we encapsulate our distinctiveness by e.g. "Every student matters"

We aim to fulfil our mission by:

- Continuously developing our staff to enable them to deliver high quality, internationally recognised teaching, research, scholarship, and student support
- Working in partnership with employers and professional bodies to meet the needs of a high skills knowledge economy
- Delivering accessible and flexible learning opportunities, which meet the diverse needs of learners, in partnership with other educational providers where appropriate
- Enhancing the employability of our students by enabling them to acquire the knowledge, skills, attributes and experience required to obtain initial employment, to become self-employed or to progress in their chosen careers
- Creating a high quality learning environment for the benefit of all staff and students
- Contributing to the social, economic, cultural and creative life of the local community

Vision

Our vision for 2015 is for a university which is financially sound; attractive to learners, employers and potential employees; increasingly recognised for the quality of its research, scholarship and learning; adaptable and innovative, embracing technological developments; and making a significant contribution to the prosperity of the region.

Our strategic aims are

- to increase the number of students enrolled with the University to 20,000 by 2015; we will do this primarily by expanding the range of our postgraduate, post-experience and professional development programmes both on-campus and off-campus, working with employers and partner organisations in the UK and overseas;
- to build on our reputation for providing access to and through higher education for all types of learners; this will be achieved by expanding and diversifying the routes and modes of higher education for both school/college leavers and adult work-based learners; by creating an open, flexible and responsive curriculum; and by strengthening our partnerships with employers and other educational providers;
- to build on our growing international reputation for the high quality of our teaching, research and engagement with business and the professions in a selected number of flagship subjects; these include Digital and Creative Media, Health and Wellbeing, Advanced Materials and Engineering, Construction and the Built Environment, and Professional and Financial Services;
- to improve the retention and achievement of our students by ensuring that they are admitted to a course which is appropriate to their abilities and suited to their career aspirations; we will also strengthen our academic and study support systems and enhance the career preparation and development content of our courses;
- to enrich the academic and professional experience of our students by incorporating the concept of global citizenship in our curricula; we will also achieve this by providing opportunities for our students to access work experience, internships, study abroad and volunteering opportunities; personal development through access to social, cultural and sporting activities will also contribute to this goal
- to exploit our use of information technology to support learners and learning, to improve the way in which we communicate with our students and manage

the delivery of our provision, whether delivered full time, part-time, on campus, or at a distance;

- to transform our knowledge exchange activities to become a leading regional supplier (partner) for applied research, product design and development, consultancy, and continuing professional development;
- to ensure a sustainable future for the University by achieving surpluses on our operations to enable investment in our staff and the facilities and provide the resources they need to deliver a high quality learning environment; and by embedding environmentally responsible principles and practices in all our activities;
- to play a leading role in the cultural, creative and social life of our community and to contribute to the prosperity, health, and well-being of the region.

Questions

3. Does this section give a clear enough picture of where we would like to be in 2015? Is it sufficiently challenging?

4. Is it realistic to be aiming to increase our student numbers from approx 13,000 (headcount) now to 20,000 by 2015? How can we grow our student numbers as demographic changes begin to bite and the Government seeks to contain (or reduce) public spending on higher education? What new markets should we be aiming to develop? What changes should we be making to our course portfolio and methods of delivery?

5. Do the flagship subjects - Digital and Creative Media, Health and Wellbeing, Advanced Materials and Engineering, Construction and the Built Environment, and Professional and Financial Services - represent our current and emerging academic strengths?

6. Do the strategic aims give sufficient prominence to our corporate social responsibilities in relation to:

- environmental sustainability and carbon reduction
- engagement with our local community?

Our Values

Our actions and decisions are shaped by a set of core values:

- **Accessibility and flexibility**

The University aims to provide opportunities for all who have the potential to succeed and benefit from the experience. We will develop educational provision from pre-university to postgraduate/post experience level characterised by flexible entry and exit points, modes of attendance and study patterns. We will provide transnational education and offer our programmes internationally via direct and distance learning

- **Student-centred**

Successful and satisfied students are the lifeblood of the University. The University is committed to putting students first.

- **Diversity and equality**

The University values the diversity of its community and celebrates individual difference. We are committed to promoting equality and will strive to help our staff and students to realise their full potential.

- **Quality and excellence**

The University seeks to deliver the highest quality teaching, research, scholarship and student support, and will work with staff, students, partners and other stakeholders to improve performance.

- **Partnership**

The University is committed to working in partnership with other education and training providers, professional bodies, employers and local, regional and international organisations to undertake research, consultancy and knowledge transfer, and to provide learning to meet the need for higher level skills.

- **Professionalism**

The University aims to provide a professional service and to be effective in all its activities. We will support each other in our work. We seek to behave ethically, fairly and responsibly. We will develop professionalism in our students through the employability skills and knowledge they acquire on our programmes

- **Imagination, innovation, creativity and enterprise**

The University values creative flair, innovative and imaginative thinking and entrepreneurial attitudes, and will seek to encourage staff and students to develop these capabilities through learning and research

- **Sustainability**

We are conscious of the impact of the University's activities on the environment and are committed to moving towards a more sustainable use of resources.

- **Community**

The University is committed to the wellbeing and personal and professional development of our staff and students, and will seek to generate sufficient resources to provide high quality facilities, services and opportunities for the benefit of the University and the wider local community.

- **Internationalism**

We will promote the concept of global citizenship with our staff and students, including the opportunity for students to place their studies in an international context and to work alongside students from different countries and cultures.

- **Learning culture**

We will create a learning and development culture across the University, providing an environment in which all staff are motivated and committed to their own professional and personal development

Questions

7. Should we include statement about what we stand for and believe in? Are the items identified all 'values' or are they really core 'characteristics'?
8. Is it possible in this section to distinguish between what our values/characteristics are now and what we would like them to be?
9. Are there too many 'values'? Should we focus on a smaller number and if so which values define us as an organisation? Should some of the values be omitted because they can be taken as read, e.g. quality and excellence?
10. Is there a hierarchy of our 'values' or 'characteristics'? Which do you think are the most important? Or should they just be listed alphabetically?

Context

This Strategic Plan has been developed against a backdrop of considerable uncertainty about the future of UK higher education. The challenges facing the sector over the planning period include:

- The effect of demographic changes on demand for higher education
- Public concern about academic standards and quality in a mass higher education system
- Increasing competition in trans-national education and the introduction of tighter immigration rules for students coming to the UK
- Increasing diversity of providers of higher education, including the further education sector and private 'for profit' organisations
- The impact of the recession on public finances and the prospect of a reduction in the level of government funding for higher education
- The outcome of the review of variable tuition fees
- A possible change of Government in 2010 leading to a shift in priorities
- The development of new arrangements for the assessment and funding of research, with greater emphasis on impact and applied research
- Continued concern about fair access to higher education and the role of universities in raising aspiration
- Changes in the 14-19 qualifications framework
- The nature of the contribution that higher education can make to economic prosperity and social well-being
- The part which higher education can play in promoting sustainable development and reducing carbon emissions

In February 2008 the then Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills launched a debate on the framework for development and expansion of higher education over the next ten to fifteen years. The debate has been informed by commissioned contributions from the sector, reports from employers and feedback from students, covering themes relating to research, teaching and the student experience, part-time study and the international dimension. In June 2009 responsibility for higher education transferred to the new Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. The Government's higher education framework,

which will be published in the Autumn 2009, is expected to address the key questions about higher education – what is its role, who is it for, and how will it be paid for?

We believe that we are well placed to meet the challenges ahead.

Questions

11. Are there any other significant contextual issues which we need to take into account?

Draft

Strategic Themes

Curriculum and Programme Change

Aim

To provide programmes which meet the local, regional, national and international needs of students and their employers.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- review our programmes to ensure that they are attractive, relevant and well-matched to the needs of students and their employers; and are offered flexibly in terms of mode of attendance, methods of delivery and location of study;
- continue to refresh our course portfolio, anticipating demand and building on our strengths in delivering vocational and professionally accredited provision, particularly in our flagship subjects (Health, Wellbeing and Sports Rehabilitation, Creative Industries and Technologies, Built Environment, Engineering and Smart Materials, and Business Development and Logistics);
- work closely with selected partners in the UK and overseas to develop new access and progression routes into higher education, recognising diverse certificated and experiential learning as qualifications for entry;
- increase the number and range of postgraduate and post experience programmes, including professional doctorates and masters degrees, and full cost courses;
- ensure that concepts of sustainability and global citizenship are incorporated into the curriculum;
- incorporate employability skills and career preparation, and for students in employment, career management and development content, in all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes;
- enhance the opportunities for students to undertake work experience or internships, to study or work overseas, or work on live briefs as an integral part of their course;
- continue to seek professional accreditation for our courses, and strengthen our relationship with professional bodies.

KEY SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

- Academic Development
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Research and Knowledge Transfer

KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

- Applications and enrolments
- Student Entry Qualifications
- League table performance
- Employment indicators
- Professional body accreditations

Learning and Teaching Professionalism

Aim

To improve the academic and professional knowledge, skills and qualifications of staff.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- increase the percentage of academic staff with doctoral level qualifications;
- increase the capacity of university staff to undertake research supervision by ensuring access to appropriate training and experience;
- ensure that all new academic staff without a teaching qualification complete our HEA accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education;
- launch an Academic Practice and Professional Development CPD scheme for all staff supporting learning and teaching;
- increase the percentage of staff using distributed learning methods to support student learning;
- develop systems to record and manage the research, scholarship, knowledge transfer and professional engagement of staff;
- implement a revised peer review process to enhance academic practice;
- raise the profile and status of teaching, learner support and employer engagement by continuing our *Learning and Teaching Fellowship* scheme and by establishing a *Senior Teaching Fellow* grade;
- increase the number of staff supporting learning achieving professional recognition by the Higher Education Academy;
- ensure the active engagement of students in the University's quality enhancement processes, and developing a culture of responsiveness to student feedback;
- ensure that all staff are equipped to respond effectively to learners from a wide range of social, cultural, ethnic and international backgrounds and that academic staff have the required experience and knowledge to include an international dimension to their teaching.

KEY SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- HR and Organisational Development
- Research and Knowledge Transfer

KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

- Student satisfaction surveys
- Academic staff qualifications, including doctoral and teaching qualifications
- REF outcomes
- Use of e-learning/VLE

The Professional and Successful Student

Aim

To ensure that students are supported to complete their programmes and achieve their career aspirations.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- review our admissions arrangements to ensure that students are only admitted to programmes which are appropriate to their qualifications and experience and are well-matched to their career aspirations;
- improve the preparation of new students for the challenges of higher education by offering pre-enrolment sessions and implementing a transition to HE programme;
- revitalise our arrangements for personal tutoring to ensure that all students have access to high quality proactive academic and pastoral advice and guidance;
- embed information literacy in all programmes;
- review the learning, teaching and assessment strategies of all programmes to ensure that students are enabled to become independent, lifelong learners; that the skills required for graduate level employment are developed; and that assessment enhances learning and supports student retention;
- provide improved access to careers information, advice and guidance and incorporate career preparation and professional development in all degree programmes;
- increase the flexibility of delivery methods making best use of appropriate technologies to support learning independent of time/place and to meet the needs of learners;
- provide a range of opportunities both within and outside the curriculum for students to enhance their knowledge, skills and experience in preparation for employment in the UK or overseas;
- implement the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) to record in greater detail the achievements and experiences of students.

KEY SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

- Academic Development
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment

KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

- Continuation and success rates
- Employment indicators
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Number of programmes available in alternative modes of delivery

Research, Professional Practice and Public Engagement

Aim

To build the University's reputation for research, innovation, enterprise and public engagement.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- develop a new research and knowledge transfer strategy which articulates our priorities for investment and indicators of success;
- invest selectively in our research infrastructure, including professorial appointments, supervisory capacity and research studentships;
- increase the proportion of the University's income earned from research and knowledge transfer activities;
- develop the international research reputation of our flagship subjects;
- seek to establish a Graduate School to provide a focus for the long-term development of postgraduate and research programmes and projects;
- increase the proportion of staff actively engaged in research, advanced scholarship and other knowledge transfer activities by removing barriers and providing focused support;
- host a public programme of lectures and other events, both in the UK and overseas, incorporating external and university academic and professional speakers to engage staff, students, alumni, employers, the professions and the local community in the academic life of the University;
- develop the capacity of the Business Development and Support Unit to provide a one-stop shop for employers seeking applied research, product design and development, consultancy and business support services;
- play a leading role in the cultural, creative and social life of our local community, by providing our facilities and expertise, sponsoring events, and involving staff and students in community activities;
- build on the success of the Health and Wellbeing Centre (Bolton One) to develop other strategic partnerships with education, business, public sector and cultural organisations.

KEY SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

- Academic Development
- Research and Knowledge Transfer
- HR and Organisational Development

KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

- Staff profile
- REF outcomes
- Postgraduate and research student applications and enrolments
- % of income from third stream activity
- External profile

Professional Business Processes and Internal Culture

Aim

To develop professional, robust and effective services and systems to support staff and students.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- develop our on-line services to meet the needs and expectations of our students, staff and partners;
- ensure that our staff have access to professional development opportunities to enable them to enhance the services provided to staff, students and other stakeholders;
- renew and extend the external accreditation and recognition of the quality of our services, e.g. IIP, Matrix, Customer Service Excellence;
- review our approach to the management of projects and third stream activity, to ensure that they deliver the intended benefits, on time and to budget;
- implement a system of regular professional service review, incorporating external expertise, to ensure that our professional service units are operating effectively and efficiently, providing value for money, and working towards sector best practice, and are meeting the needs of academic departments;
- ensure access to reliable and timely management information to enable managers to make evidence-based decisions;
- develop a customer service approach which puts our students, partners and clients first;
- develop a single equality scheme (?) and reinvigorate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and providing an environment of mutual respect and tolerance in which staff and students can achieve their full potential;
- create a self-critical community which seeks to learn from others and is committed to continuous improvement.

KEY SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

- HR and Organisational Development

KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

- Staff satisfaction surveys
- Employer surveys
- Single equality scheme
- Staff and student profile
- BME student success rates
- External accreditation/recognition

Institutional Sustainability

Aim

To ensure the long term security and sustainability of the University as an independent higher education institution.

Objectives

During the period of the strategic plan we will:

- seek to achieve planned annual operating surpluses of 3%;
- strengthen our balance sheet and increase our discretionary reserves to ensure a more secure financial position;
- increase our fundraising activity to enable us to raise £Xm/k? a year by 2015
- reduce our reliance on funding council recurrent grants by increasing the return on research, enterprise and consultancy and full cost provision;
- launch the new Bolton One in partnership with Bolton Metropolitan Council and Bolton PCT to provide a teaching and research facility for health, sport and leisure;
- develop a new estates strategy to ensure that our campus continues to provide an appropriate environment for research, teaching, learning and employer engagement activities;
- invest in our information and communication technology infrastructure and expertise to enable the University to deliver flexible learning and student support through distributed means;
- Implement an environmental and sustainable development strategy which will promote the concept of sustainable development in all University activities, including research, teaching and administration; and will contribute to a managed reduction in our carbon emissions.

KEY SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

- Finance and resources
- HR and Organisational Development

KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

- Financial indicators, including operating surplus (deficit), % staff costs
- Student registrations
- Carbon Reduction Performance
- % of income generated by third stream activity
- Capital investment grants secured
- Amounts raised through fundraising

Question

12. What is a realistic target for fundraising activity?

13. We need to increase our return on 'third stream' activity. What should our priorities be for investment – applied research, consultancy, enterprise activity, full cost courses? What changes do we need to make to enable us to commercialise our services and expertise?

Data**Question**

14. Should we include any data in the Strategic Plan? If yes, what should we include? Should we use this as an opportunity to demonstrate our impact e.g. locally or regionally?

General Questions/Comments

15. Does the Strategic Plan adequately address the key issues facing the University?

16. Does it adequately address the interests of staff, students and other stakeholders? Is there an appropriate balance between the interests of different stakeholder groups? Does it strike the right balance between research, teaching, workforce development and knowledge transfer?

17. Have any major concerns or challenges been overlooked?