



Strategic Plan

2016-2021

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The University of Wolverhampton holds a distinctive and important place within the national and international higher education sector. We are a University committed to widening participation in education, offering students from all backgrounds the best learning experience possible and strengthening economies across the globe through knowledge creation and skills development.

The new Strategic Plan for the University of Wolverhampton sets out an ambitious set of goals, driving the University to make significant impact in our core areas of activity and to build on our considerable achievements so far. It is based on the underlying purpose of the University: to shape economic growth whilst maximising individual potential. It is designed to be cohesive and directional, whilst ensuring scope for the many different areas of the University to define how their work and activity over the next five years will contribute to the Plan's successful delivery.

Since 2010, the UK higher education system has seen unprecedented levels of change and volatility. Over the lifetime of the most recent Strategic Plan, implemented in March 2012, the University has grown and developed against the backdrop of an ever-changing environment. In 2015, the current Government released its Green Paper on Higher Education, which outlines the

agenda for higher education in England for the length of the next parliamentary term – up to May 2020.

The success of the University against our most recent Strategic Plan is exceptional given the volatile environment in which we have been operating. Coupled with both insight into the challenges to be faced within the sector over the next four years, and the strength of performance across the University to act as a springboard for growth and development, the Board of Governors approved the new Plan to be brought forward from March 2017 to become operational in 2016.

As we prepare to work towards achieving ambitious new goals beyond 2016, there are new challenges to face and further changes to the higher education landscape to consider; however, as we implement the new Strategic Plan outlined within, we will look at them as opportunities to continue working together to position our University as a sector-leading, global institution putting students first, revitalising the economy and demonstrating significant influence and impact.

**Professor Geoff Layer,
Vice-Chancellor**

OUR JOURNEY

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON HAS A STRONG AND ESTABLISHED HERITAGE, PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDENTS SINCE 1827.

Having started life as a predominantly regional provider of skills development for working men under the guise of the Wolverhampton Mechanics' Institute, we have grown and developed to stand in 2016 as a beacon for quality education not just in the Black Country, but in surrounding regions and around the world.

Over the last five years, we have grown student satisfaction and academic performance whilst maintaining a diverse student body with one of the highest percentages of students from lower incomes of any UK university. In 2011, our student satisfaction rate was 80% but the outcome of the 2016 National Student Survey showed that overall 84% of our students are satisfied at our University.

This increase will be linked to a number of factors, but key amongst them are the significant improvements we've made in the graduate prospects of our students, to the point where we have one of the highest employability rates in the country. Five years ago, 85.2% of students reported finding work or continuing their studies six months after graduation in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey; in 2016, the results of the same survey position us as second in the UK for graduate employability* at 96%, outperforming the UK average for all universities.

Following the Research Assessment Exercise 2008, preparations for the next assessment were well underway by 2011. Our research and business engagement portfolio has increased over this period, demonstrated by our best ever results in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014.

The work of our Research Centres was deemed world-leading, and we continue to make a mark globally as an institution in other ways. Five Regional Offices in 2011 has increased to six in 2016, while the number of transnational education student enrolments was 797 in the academic year 2011-2012, compared to 2,183 in 2015-2016.

Our previous Strategic Plan was implemented in March 2012, and we have performed exceptionally well. Over the life of this Plan, we have grown significantly and strengthened our financial position, investing over £100 million in the University and outlining our plans to generate £250 million of investment by 2020 to further enhance the student experience and boost the local economy. The Our Vision, Your Opportunity investment programme has already changed Wolverhampton's skyline with new additions to City Campus, including the state-of-the-art Rosalind Franklin Science Centre and the Lord Swraj Paul Building, home to the University of Wolverhampton Business School.

The new Strategic Plan builds on the significant achievements of the University. It sets an ambitious vision for the University to be an influential powerhouse within the UK higher education sector with regional, national and international significance. It will promote growth and quality over the next five years and, most importantly, will have measurable impact.

*For universities with 2,000-3,000 graduating students (full-time undergraduate).





THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

For almost 190 years, the University of Wolverhampton has provided a wealth of opportunities presented by a first class education. As we look forward to the University's future over the next five years and beyond, here is a reminder of some of our most recent achievements and successes.

96% GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Our best-ever employability rate was reported in 2016; according to the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education report, 96% of students were in work or further study six months after graduation.

WE'RE COMMENDED

We were awarded a commendation – the highest possible accolade – in the most recent Quality Assurance Agency assessment, highlighting our 'enhancement of student learning opportunities'.

WORLD-LEADING RESEARCH

All 14 of our Research Centres submitted to the most recent Research Excellence Framework had elements rated as world-leading – our best results yet!

£250 MILLION INVESTMENT

We're committed to generating the biggest investment in our history by 2020: at least £250 million over five years, to enhance the student experience and regenerate the region's economy.

A GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

We're a truly international university: not only do we welcome students from around the world, we also have five international Regional Offices and Educational Advisors in over 40 countries.

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

The University received this prestigious accolade at the 2016 Express & Star Business Achievement Awards, in recognition of our innovative partnerships and improved opportunities for communities.

100% STUDENT SATISFACTION

12 of our courses received a 100% satisfaction rating in the National Student Survey 2016.

A GROWING GRADUATE NETWORK

We have a network of over 95,000 alumni (87,076 domestic, 8,383 international) across 122 countries.

£2.5M TO HELP STUDENTS ACCESS EDUCATION

In 2015/16, we awarded over £2.5 million in scholarships and bursaries to help our students with the cost of education.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021

THE STRATEGIC PLAN WILL DRIVE THE WORK OF THE UNIVERSITY OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WITH THE ACHIEVEMENT OF KEY GOALS HELPING TO MOVE THE UNIVERSITY INTO AN EVEN STRONGER POSITION.





OUR MISSION

Maximising opportunity through generating knowledge, innovation and enterprise.

OUR AMBITION

To be a progressive and influential sector leader, championing diversity, growth, and creating life chances for all while enhancing economic impact and accelerating ambition across the entire University community.

OUR PILLARS

The Strategic Plan is built around three key pillars of activity:

- ◆ Students First
- ◆ Skills and Knowledge for Economic and Social Transformation
- ◆ Significant Influence and Impact

For each pillar, there are three goals outlining the impact that we, as a University, will have made by the end of the Strategic Plan period in 2021.

The goals determine the key performance indicators and metrics that we will use to measure our performance against the Strategic Plan.



STUDENTS FIRST

GOALS

- ◆ **Achieve a sector-leading University experience for all.**
- ◆ **Maximise individual potential for all students.**
- ◆ **Create outstanding learning opportunities informed by world-leading research and professional practice.**
- ◆ Over the last 10 years, the importance of the student experience has increased significantly within the sector. We were commended in the most recent Quality Assurance Agency assessment for our enhancement of student learning opportunities, and our aim to continue offering an improved student experience for all is central to everything we do. Every member of our diverse student community deserves to have the best experience we can provide, suited to their individual requirements. We must deliver a University experience that is more than average – we must be sector-leading.
- ◆ We are the University of Opportunity. We must ensure that all of our students, no matter what their backgrounds, are provided with the opportunities and support necessary for them to achieve within the higher education environment. We must foster partnerships with students to enhance performance and outcomes, including graduate employability, not just by opening the doors to higher education but also providing the means for students to succeed.
- ◆ Creating opportunities and improving people's life chances are at the core of our mission. Teaching and learning is fundamental to the success of our students, and to the University as a whole. Our teaching and learning must be innovative, informed by our world-leading research and using the most up-to date knowledge and practices. We must strive to be at the forefront of developments in learning and teaching practice and technology.



SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

GOALS

- ◆ **Provide learning, research and engagement opportunities which target the economic and social needs of the areas in which we operate.**
- ◆ **Maximise individual potential for all our staff.**
- ◆ **Seek to eliminate inequality by narrowing the skills gaps within the communities we serve.**
- ◆ In order for us to fulfil our ambition of driving economic growth, our core activities of teaching, research and business engagement must focus on the economic and social priorities of the areas that we serve. We must understand the priorities for each area we operate within, and use this information to shape and develop our work. We know there are industries including nursing, engineering and teaching where there are major shortages in the workforce. We will work together with our industry partners to increase the number of graduates entering and remaining in these, and other, areas.
- ◆ With a staff team of over 2,500, we are a major employer in the region. As part of our goal to build skills for the economy, we must recognise the responsibility we have as an employer to ensure that each individual member of staff has the opportunity to reach their maximum potential with us. We must also foster a culture of partnership and collaboration amongst staff, driving the University forward to achieve common goals. Our staff are our biggest asset and essential to the delivery of the strategic plan, so they must be engaged and feel ownership of this plan and the work of the University.
- ◆ We operate in a number of areas with identified skills gaps that are preventing the full delivery of economic plans. We must work with our partners in these regions to close these gaps using alternative degree and teaching methods, including degree apprenticeships, to ensure our provision is fit for purpose for the learner and industry. We will also continue working closely with schools, supporting them to raise the attainment and aspirations of young people in the areas we serve.



SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE AND IMPACT

GOALS

- ◆ **Transform lives through research.**
- ◆ **Be renowned as a university that makes impact regionally, nationally and internationally.**
- ◆ **Foster global knowledge exchange and collaboration.**
- ◆ As a University, we have a key role in the creation of knowledge which benefits society. We must not forget this role, strengthening and building on the strong foundations that we have to lift our significance in this area. The significance of our research was noted in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF), where all 14 of our Research Centres submitted had elements rated as world-leading, and we are set to build on this success as we prepare for our REF 2021 submission.
- ◆ We are a University with a significant presence in the Midlands and beyond. We need to capitalise on and build this presence to become a major influencer in the sector and a leading player in British higher education. Our research has been recognised as being world-leading and we continue to grow as an institution on an international level.
- ◆ Our significant international presence includes five international Regional Offices and Educational Advisors in over 40 countries. Our range of activities abroad includes teaching (through our transnational education partners and training activities), research, and consultancy. Working with our international partners, we will further develop our global presence and potential impact, replicating the role we have in the Black Country and UK around the world.



WHAT NEXT?

THE UNIVERSITY'S 2016-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN IS AMBITIOUS; BY THE END OF THE PLAN PERIOD, WE WILL HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT REGIONALLY, NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY TO DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND IN THE CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE, AS WELL AS HAVING STRENGTHENED THE UNIVERSITY'S PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE.

Recent Government publications have provided a strong insight into its plans for higher education until 2020, which have informed our Strategic Plan and will help to guide our activity from this point. For example, we know that apprenticeships are high on the Government's agenda, particularly those concentrating on high level skills. We know that the Government wants higher education to be less reliant on public funding and generate more of its income through student tuition fees. We also know that there will be increased focus on teaching quality going forward with the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).


As well as national sector developments, there are a number of developments within our region which will impact on the University over the next five years, such

as the new West Midlands Combined Authority's devolution deal with the Government and further cuts in public services likely. In addition, there has been a wide scale review of further education colleges, the outcomes of which are not yet fully known.

As a University, we must plan for this changing external environment, ensuring that we can adapt and respond to new opportunities. Our Strategic Plan defines a very clear vision for what we stand for as a University, our place in the sector, and our place in the regions we operate within. Through this vision, we will be able to continue to grow and strengthen as the influential institution we are today, by maximising opportunity and impact in new and exciting ways.





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