

University Strategy 2014-2020

Introduction

York is a University with strong values. In all our activities, we are unconditionally committed to excellence, as measured by the highest national and international standards. We see ourselves as operating in a global environment, with important local and national responsibilities and aim to be among the best universities in the world. We encourage creativity, independence, enterprise and initiative. We support academic freedom and autonomy and we promote open academic debate and discussion. We will be inclusive and provide equal opportunities for all. We apply the highest ethical standards to all our activities and want to make a positive contribution to the development of a fairer and sustainable world.

We aim to provide an environment that attracts the very best staff and students from all over the world, encourages and facilitates academic endeavour, and provides a supportive atmosphere for the development and sharing of knowledge. We want to be a University in which every member of staff and every student feels valued as an individual. Even as we grow, we want to retain a genuine sense of belonging and community in our departments, colleges, clubs and societies. We particularly value our colleges' support for the cultural, social, academic and personal development of our students. We will play an active role in the City of York, which is central to our identity, and are committed to a mutually supportive relationship with the City and the region.

Guided by these values, we aim to build a University that distinguishes itself in the world-leading quality of its research, in its outstanding teaching, and in the quality and value of the students' university experience. In this document, we describe these three key objectives in more detail, explaining what they mean for the University and how we want to achieve them. We then outline three further, enabling objectives: to grow the University, to organise the University more effectively, and to work with other organisations and stakeholders.

Key Objective 1: To be a world leader in research

Vision

The University of York has an excellent research reputation, established over 50 years by our community of creative scholars. Many of our Departments and Centres are known internationally for their research activity. Research excellence defines York; further strengthening and improving our research to be dynamic, inspirational and life-changing in its impact is an absolute priority. Our vision is that York should provide a home for some of the best research in the world, and be regarded as one of the best places in the world to do research.

How will we achieve this?

1. We will recruit and retain the best researchers at all career stages and support and mentor existing staff to offer them an attractive environment in which their research can flourish

- We will recruit academic staff who are, or have the potential to become, international leaders in their disciplines.

- We will ensure that working practices promote research time and are flexible enough to support exceptional outcomes with international impact, while respecting different approaches to research.
- We will provide research facilities and infrastructure of the highest quality, embedding this priority in the University's capital planning process.
- We will establish a prestigious support scheme for postdoctoral fellows that encourages outstanding early career researchers to develop their research at York, potentially leading to a permanent academic appointment in the University.
- We will provide guidance, training, mentoring and support as required to equip all researchers with the skills needed to undertake first-class research which adheres to the highest standards of integrity.
- We will ensure that all research support staff, including technical and experimental officers, are fully trained and integrated into the research culture of Departments.
- We will continue to ensure equal career opportunities for all, as demonstrated in our work with Athena Swan, Juno and other initiatives.

2. We will give our major interdisciplinary research strengths focus, identity and presence, to encourage interdepartmental and international research activity

- We will support excellent research within the core academic disciplines across the University.
- We will promote the following research themes, which have been identified as current areas of major research strength and excellence that cross departmental boundaries:
 - Creativity
 - Culture and Communication
 - Environmental Sustainability and Resilience
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Justice and Equality
 - Risk, Evidence and Decision Making
 - Technologies for the Future
- The research themes will offer new opportunities for synergy and collaboration across the University and will enhance our profile in areas of major significance to policy makers and research funders.
- We will review the themes regularly to ensure that they remain appropriate.
- We will continue to support and encourage excellent research that does not fit within the selected themes, although we will give priority to research aligned to the themes in relation to calls on central resourcing and support.

3. We will recognise the role of Departments in supporting their staff in the development of their research

- We will maintain a strong commitment to the link between research and teaching.
- We will strengthen research grant planning and peer review processes to encourage competitive funding proposals.
- We will recognise the use of staff time for these purposes and employ resources such as academic leave and workload adjustment to enable research grant preparation.
- We will agree clear research expectations for Departments and Centres in terms of levels of activity and performance.

4. We will deploy University resources to support research excellence

- We will make resources available to support the development of large applications for funding in areas of particular research strength.
- We will ensure that incentives offered to researchers who are particularly successful in attracting research income and producing world leading research outcomes are appropriate and effective.
- We will develop partnerships at national and international level that support the University's research ambitions and the development of long-term sustainable relationships.
- We will proactively engage with major funders of research and external partners in order to understand their priorities, highlight York's capabilities and expertise, and inform their policies.
- We will diversify the portfolio of research income, particularly from European and other overseas programmes, industry and other public and private sources where appropriate.

5. We will support our postgraduate research students and their supervisors

- We will establish the York Graduate Research School, led by a senior academic, to provide institution-wide oversight of all matters relating to postgraduate research students, particularly training, development and support.
- The School will work in conjunction with Departments and existing graduate training programmes and centres to ensure the highest level of broad and subject-specific support across the University.
- We will recognise the role of research students in promoting the research ambitions of the University and integrate them more effectively into the research culture of the institution.
- We will provide training for students and supervisors, as appropriate, to ensure a culture of research excellence and integrity.
- We will increase postgraduate research student numbers while maintaining the highest academic quality. To this end, we will make available central financial support for relevant external funding bids.

Key Objective 2: To offer outstanding teaching and learning

Vision

Our teaching will be led by research. We will be excellent in every aspect of students' education, including in the design and delivery of teaching, in support for students' intellectual growth, in assessing students' attainment, and in evaluating and improving our performance as a place of learning. We will invite students to explore their subject as independent learners and as active researchers. We will encourage and develop creativity, advanced problem-solving skills and critical, independent thinking. Our students will be challenged to reach the highest level of attainment and they will acquire skills that enhance their employability and professional effectiveness.

How will we achieve this?

1. We will articulate a University of York pedagogy and apply it to all our programmes

- We will apply the best evidence on effective teaching and learning to define our institution's learning culture and set expectations for our programmes.
- We will put programme design and student work at the heart of our pedagogy.
 - Every programme will have distinctive and clear objectives, and each stage of study will be designed to offer progress towards those programme objectives.
 - Carefully-designed student work will enable students to make progress. Students will understand the work they are expected to do and how that work will contribute to the achievement of the programme objectives.
 - Interactions between students and staff will be designed to encourage, inform and propel students' work. Students will receive the guidance, support and feedback they need to make progress, and they will understand what they can expect from the University in support of their learning.
- The design of programmes and student work will support the students' development as autonomous learners.
- All new programmes will be designed in accordance with our pedagogy. By 2017-18, the pedagogy will be operational for all programme design, revision and review, with current programmes confirmed as compliant except where an extension of up to a year has been allowed..

2. We will appoint and support the best teachers

- The normal expectation will be that all academic members of staff contribute to research, scholarship and teaching, to deliver the unique benefits of research-informed teaching.
- Everyone involved in teaching at York will have to show commitment and competence. We will have a robust process for evaluating the quality of all teaching and will intervene to help with individual staff development where necessary.
- We will continue to provide professional development support for teaching, including PGCAP and support for further development aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework.
- Teaching excellence and scholarship will be recognised and rewarded in the promotions system. There will be a promotion route to professor for academic colleagues on teaching and scholarship contracts who have made an exceptional contribution to teaching at the highest level of excellence.

3. We will recruit the best students

- We will offer programmes that are designed to be engaging and stimulating for the most able and dedicated students.
- We will maintain our commitment to recruiting such students, regardless of their economic and social background, age, nationality, personal characteristics or circumstances.
- We will continue to invest in activities that raise aspiration to higher education among potential students, promote access to the University, and support successful completion.

4. We will encourage and support innovation in teaching

- We will make available funding to support projects and initiatives aimed at development and innovation in teaching.
- We will use technology to support teaching and learning where appropriate.
- We will continue to deploy robust processes for quality assurance and use these processes as vehicles for innovation and enhancement. All programmes will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant and up-to-date. We will respond swiftly and decisively to student feedback about our programmes.

5. We will give our students opportunities to gain experience that will prepare them better for employment or further study

- We will encourage all our students to enhance their employability throughout their time at York, by engaging with development opportunities offered by departments, colleges and central services (particularly the Careers Service).
- We will build upon our existing internship and placement programmes to offer more mutually beneficial experiences for our students and for leading employers, nationally and internationally.
- We will support students' volunteering and other forms of work-based learning.
- We will encourage and support student enterprise.
- We will further develop the opportunities for students to spend time studying abroad through our Centre for Global Programmes.

Key Objective 3: To offer all our students an outstanding and valuable experience

Vision

We aim to ensure that the University of York offers an environment in which students can optimise their academic and personal potential. We seek to use our collegiate structure to enhance our students' experience and support their academic endeavour. We want our students to enjoy their time at York and to offer them the opportunity to engage in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

How will we achieve this?

1. We will support students' active participation in University life

- We will support the Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association and stimulate student participation in clubs, societies and representative bodies.
- We will encourage academic departments to involve students in public events.
- We will aim to design our timetable in such a way that there is room for collective participation in sport and other extra-curricular activities.

2. We will provide outstanding pastoral, career development and support services

- We will work with the Students' Union, the Graduate Students' Association, academic departments, colleges and support departments to ensure that student-facing services at all levels are well organised and well delivered.

3. We will listen to our students

- We will continue to ensure that our students are represented and heard at all levels of governance, including at Senate and Council.
- We will ensure that students contribute to our quality assurance arrangements, to provide an essential insight into the aspirations and experiences of our student body.
- We will listen to the views of students through a range of means and give a guarantee that their advice and feedback will inform our policies and decisions. We will ensure that students are aware of actions that have been taken in response to their feedback.

4. We will support and develop our colleges

- We will support the colleges in stimulating academic achievement, creating cohesive student communities, and promoting students' personal well-being and personal development.
- We will support colleges to enhance their residential and non-residential provision for students beyond first-year undergraduates so that all undergraduate and postgraduates have the opportunity to be part of a college community.
- We will use our colleges to support integration among students from different nationalities and from different academic disciplines.

5. We will provide facilities that enhance the students' experience

- We will develop and improve systems that support student administration and learning to ensure that they are as efficient and 'user-friendly' as possible.
- We will continue to improve our teaching spaces so that we can offer a consistently excellent and up-to-date learning experience.
- We will continue to provide outstanding library and IT facilities.
- We will continue to invest in our sports facilities and aim to be a leader in the development of sport.

Enabling Objective 1: To be sufficiently large to be excellent, resilient and financially sustainable

Vision

In an environment in which research-intensive universities face increasing global competition for students, staff and resources, York cannot remain a small institution. To remain competitive as a broad-based University, with the ability to invest in new initiatives and the capacity to innovate, York must continue to grow. However, this must not be at the cost of quality – on the contrary, growth should serve to enhance academic excellence, to raise standards overall and to make the University more resilient. It follows that the scale and pace of growth will be informed by the academic enhancement it can deliver.

How will we achieve this?

1. We will grow by recruiting more academics and admitting more students

- We will increase student numbers in programmes that are strong and have the potential to recruit additional excellent students. We will consider carefully how we can achieve an optimal balance between undergraduate and postgraduate students, and between home/EU and international students.
- We will encourage departments to develop new provision in subject areas that are attractive to the best students.
- Any significant increase in student numbers will be matched by academic appointments, to protect and enhance departments' research capacity and to ensure that all students are adequately supported. Where appropriate, we will also appoint additional support staff.

2. We will establish a new International Foundation Programme on our campus

- The International Foundation Programme will provide a pathway into higher education for able international students who do not yet meet the requirements for direct entry.
- Possibly in collaboration with partner organisations, we will develop the programme as a vehicle for recruiting additional international students to the University.
- In conjunction with the International Foundation Programme, we will explore how we can use the expertise in our Centre for English Language Teaching to support the recruitment of international students.

3. We will grow our distance-learning provision

- Where possible and appropriate, we will grow student numbers on our existing distance-learning programmes.
- We will encourage departments to establish new distance-learning programmes.
- We will establish a York Distance Learning School, which will oversee all our distance-learning provision, give it a strong identity, and provide a forum for sharing of good practice. The Distance Learning School will support departments and centres in the development of new programmes.

4. We will increase our income from sources other than regular student fees to give us additional capacity for investment

- We will grow research income (see Key Objective 1).
- We will grow income from our commercial activities.
- We will maximise our income from economic development funds and related sources.
- We will encourage departments to grow income from academic-related activities, such as CPD courses, summer schools, consultancy and spin-out activity.

5. We will ensure that we have the physical infrastructure to support growth

- We will continue to develop the Heslington East campus to support expansion of the University through a mix of academic, residential, economic and amenity buildings.
- We will build a dedicated teaching building on the Heslington West campus.

- We will replace the remaining poor-quality buildings on the Heslington West campus.
- We will aim to achieve an optimal balance between investment in academic capacity in departments and investment in infrastructure. We will ensure that capital planning proceeds in close conjunction with academic planning. We will develop and secure sufficient financial resource to fund the capital programme requirements.
- We will continue to invest in the six programmes of our Information Strategy and in its implementation plans, including the IT Strategy.

Enabling Objective 2: To be organised in the most efficient and effective way

Vision

The University should aim to be as effective as possible in how it is governed and managed and as efficient as possible in how it operates. Bureaucracy should be minimal, communication should be fast and effective, and decision making should be swift and robust. We want to function as an academic community with a strong commitment to openness and consultation. We want to create the conditions in which all staff feel valued and are enabled to make the best possible contribution to the University.

To be effective, we must have a well-defined organisational structure and transparent processes for governance and management. As a key governing principle, we will place any decision making at the level where it is most effectively carried out. To be efficient in our operation, we must optimise and co-ordinate our use of resources and remove unnecessary duplication of services, structures and processes.

How will we achieve this?

1. We will organise academic departments into faculties

- We will establish three faculties (of Arts & Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences) to replace the current clusters. The faculties will play a role in decision making, in supporting the implementation of University and Departmental strategy, in co-ordinating activities across departments and in acting as intermediaries between departments and the central university administration.
- Each faculty will be led by a Dean. The role of Dean of Faculty will replace the role of Academic Co-ordinator. Each faculty will have a board with broad membership (including student representation and representation from other faculty boards). Faculty boards will have well-defined powers and terms of reference. They will report to the Senate.
- Departments will remain the primary academic units and budget centres. Where appropriate, the faculties will hold budgets to support specific inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary activities.

2. We will invest in our staff and be an employer of choice

- We will support individuals in developing their skills and expertise in order to maximise their contribution to the University. We will have clear processes for promotion and progression.
- We will provide a range of leadership and management training opportunities.

- We will embed the principles of equality and diversity in everything we do.
- We will further develop the structures and processes for performance review and management to ensure that all staff engage annually and that support needs can be identified.

3. We will improve our operational effectiveness

- We will review the balance between central and departmental support for our core activities and change it where appropriate.
- We will review our support services, to ensure that they are aligned with our strategic objectives and provide optimal value to the University.
- We will accept and support diversity of practice between departments and faculties where such diversity has an academic rationale, benefits effectiveness and minimises bureaucracy without leading to unnecessary risk.

4. We will improve planning and resource allocation

- The planning process and the underlying resource allocation model will reward enterprise and initiative from departments.
- The planning process will allow us to make strategic decisions about the balance of resource allocation to departmental, faculty-based and institutional activities.
- We will provide matching funds to support significant funding bids and to facilitate inter-disciplinary and cross-departmental research.
- We will put in place a new unitary strategic and financial planning process, which closely integrates long-term and short-term planning.
- The new planning process will allocate full central costs to departments in a transparent manner.

Enabling Objective 3: To work effectively with other organisations and stakeholders

Vision

Universities cannot succeed in isolation. Many of our activities are best carried out in partnership with others. Our vision for engagement is one in which we work with other organisations and external stakeholders in the most effective and productive way.

Collaboration with business and industry and with public, cultural and charitable organisations is important, to give our research more impact and relevance, to create more opportunities for our students, to increase our income, and to contribute to regional and national economic development.

We want to have a meaningful lifelong relationship with all our alumni and friends, so that we can benefit from their goodwill and support.

The University's relations with the City of York and the wider region are very important. We aim to be responsible neighbours and partners, and are committed to contributing to the educational, social, cultural and economic development of York and Yorkshire.

How will we achieve this?

1. We will establish effective institutional partnerships

- We will ensure that all partnerships add value by being purposeful, proportionate, productive and durable. They must contribute to the institutional mission.
- We will increase our investment of effort and resources in the most effective and productive partnerships, and disinvest or withdraw from partnerships that are not productive.
- We will explore opportunities for the creation of productive new partnerships or for joining existing organisations or groups.

2. We will enhance our engagement with business and industry and with public, cultural and charitable bodies

- We will put in place new arrangements to facilitate effective engagement and increased partnership working with business, public, cultural and charitable bodies and relevant economic agencies.
- We will focus our energies on key opportunities and sectors where there is the prospect of significantly increasing the University's capability for knowledge exchange and translational research.
- We will explore how we can make better use of the facilities on the campus and at York Science Park to support engagement with industry, and we will continue to develop and improve these facilities.
- We will focus resources to support our engagement in areas where we have exceptional strength and capacity. Our industrial and public engagement strategy will be aligned with our research strategy.
- We will work closely with the City of York Council and the relevant Local Enterprise Partnerships to ensure that we understand how we can offer mutual support and to explore new opportunities for engagement and industrial collaboration.
- We will make better use of expertise in departments to grow executive education programmes.

3. We will continue to improve engagement with our alumni and friends

- We will communicate regularly with our alumni and friends to keep them informed about our strategic objectives, the development of the University, and opportunities for engagement.
- We will invest in lifelong services for our alumni and friends that have the potential to enhance their sense of belonging to the University and that support and encourage their ongoing engagement with current students and staff.
- We will enhance our capacity for development and fundraising, to increase philanthropic giving to the University.