

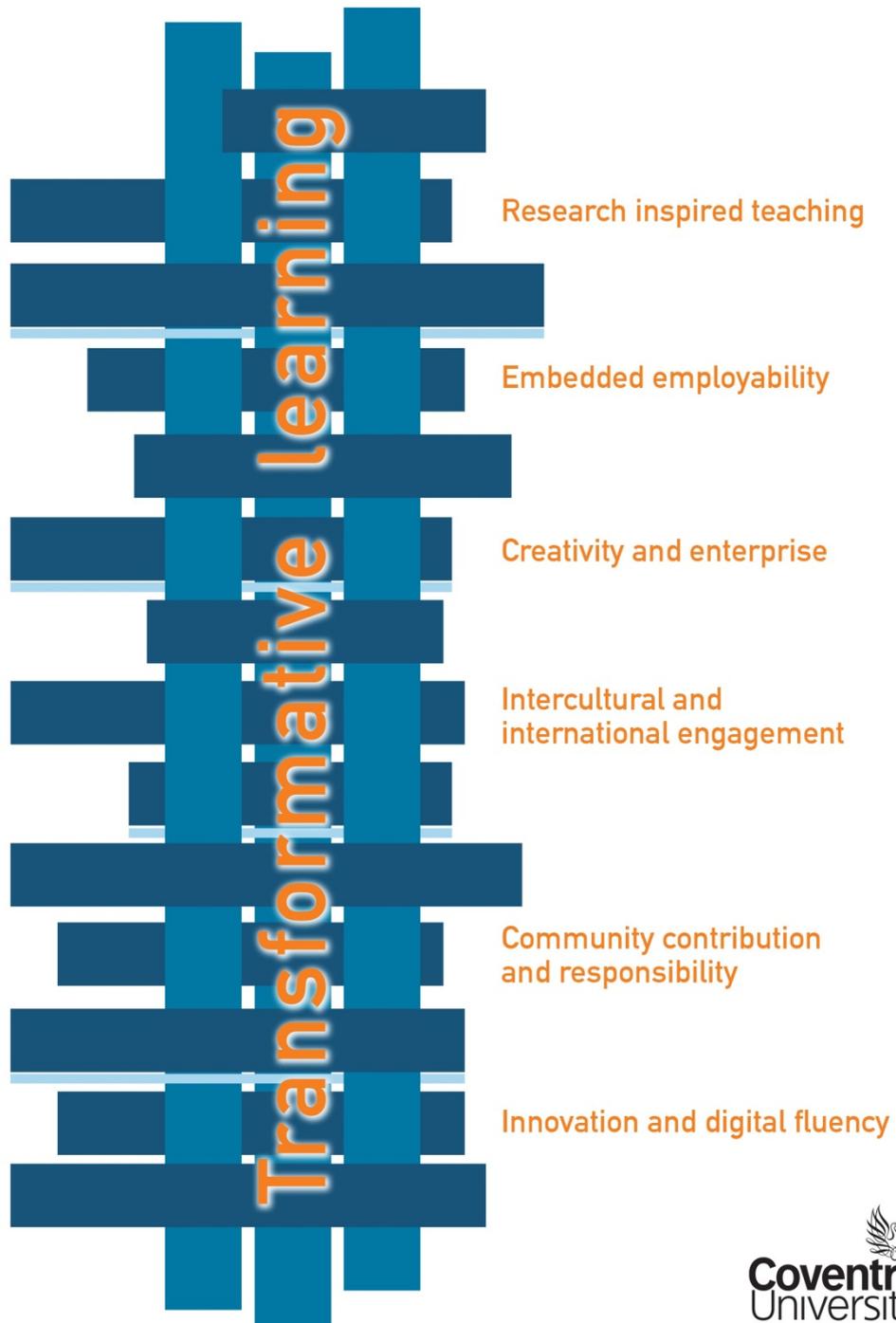
# Coventry University Group Education Strategy

2015 - 2021

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# Education Strategy 2015 - 2021



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## **Our Vision for Student Education**

The new strategic plan will build upon our success and prepare our students to make significant contributions to their professions and communities and be a creative force in a rapidly evolving world.

We have the passion, talent and confidence to provide a transformative learning experience for all of our students, providing them with space for their personal development and encouraging them to become engaged and involved in their academic areas of interest and the wider community.

Our principal pillars of transformative learning are interwoven and based upon:

- Research inspired teaching
- Embedded employability
- Creativity and Enterprise
- Intercultural and international engagement
- Community contribution and responsibility
- Innovation and digital fluency

These support the pedagogical approaches taken by experts to engage and inspire our students, providing relevance and excellence in their learning.

Transformational learning involves a process of becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others, and assessing their relevance before making an interpretation (QAA UK, 2013).

Our successful graduates will be confident citizens who can demonstrate a range of individual, collaborative, and professional skills and attributes. Our courses encourage our students to develop creativity, critical enquiry, reflective practice and to understand the tools to independently manage their own continuous learning. Graduates will be expected to exhibit an awareness of sustainability issues, the need to adopt responsible and ethical practices, flexibility and adeptness to succeed across a range of employment futures. They will have a strong sense of local, national and global community underpinned by an awareness and respect of intercultural values, languages and belief systems. At postgraduate level they should be capable of demonstrating originality in their application of that knowledge and the development of positive and critical attitudes towards leadership, recognising when to challenge the status quo.

The pillars identify a strategic direction and do not replace course content and subject knowledge that must be learnt to complete a course showing constructive alignment so that the content is relevant from every angle.

### **Research inspired teaching**

The reciprocal relationship between research and teaching is imperative to maintain the university's position in teaching excellence. Providing access to university research projects and close cooperation between research and course teams enables students and staff to benefit. Applied research strengthens the value of our offer and the transformative power of learning for our students. Inherent is an assurance of academic quality and a culture of integrity.

The university is committed to increasing our institutional research profile and is supporting this through dedicated research centres and faculty research groups. This translates to a praxis that will expose students to the latest developments within an academic discipline and opportunities to apply new knowledge.

Studies into undergraduate research (see Levey and Petrulis 2012, Gresty and Edward-Jones 2012, Craney 2011) document the benefits to students, although the students themselves may have misconceptions about the definition of research. Students will be provided with a range of opportunities to become involved in research, however practical applications will differ within levels of undergraduate or postgraduate study. Examples of this may include a group projects linked to a current research question; research-led seminars; applied case studies and others. Research skills and understanding is a developmental activity that will both support their course and transform their approach to problem-solving. Bowers and Parameswaran describe this as 'Undergraduate, postgraduate and academic research [that] are tiered stages in a unified research narrative' (2013: 461) and can then take into account technologies that make knowledge readily accessible and move students from consumers to potential producers of knowledge (see Ozay 2012).

### **Embedded employability**

The graduate employment market is increasingly competitive as more students begin their professional careers. Our students will have more to offer than a degree or postgraduate qualification if they can demonstrate critical employability skills. Employers can directly influence how the university prepares students for their professional futures and build upon the work carried out within faculty employment/enterprise/placement services.

We will demonstrate the inclusion of employer contribution in course content to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of the marketplace and increase the opportunity for professional experience across all courses.

Collaboration and partnership with employers implies a shared responsibility for our students. This can be achieved through continuous engagement throughout the student and course lifecycles.

A key component of experiential learning across many professions is the inclusion of practice education. Course teams can support students to extend their knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes through professional practice.

We will address mechanisms and simplify processes to fully utilise professional experts to support student education and provide different and exciting collaborations and opportunities beyond placement and internships.

### **Creativity and enterprise**

Every student is individual and creativity is an important skill that higher education can utilise to facilitate individual learning traits and styles. A study undertaken in 2011 suggests that creative learning activities foster student creativity (Ayobi, 2013).

Higher education deepens knowledge and understanding, but pushes the existing body of knowledge. Through teaching and assessment Coventry University provides a safe environment in which new ideas can be tested and students are able to develop enterprise or entrepreneur skills.

Many graduates, over the course of their professional careers, will work independently of an employer. Every course has space to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship within the classroom and beyond formal learning environments.

A baseline understanding of fundamental issues for example, Intellectual Property Rights, Data Protection and global tax systems will assist students to develop as entrepreneurs, intrepeneurs, design consultants, small business advisers, invited subject experts and many more.

### **Intercultural and international engagement**

As our students take their place in a global society they will need to not just understand different cultures, but to actively mobilise cultural differences. Courses teams are expected to instil intercultural values in our students to enable them to make a positive contribution to an increasingly intercultural connected and complex world.

There are distinct groups that need to be addressed within intercultural and international engagement. UK and EU students; On-campus; blended learning; distance learning; Coventry University Group subsidiary companies; Undergraduate and postgraduate taught; growing numbers of postgraduate research; full or part-time; international students studying in the UK and those who study at collaborative partners. The education strategy links with the International Strategy to provide overall engagement opportunities for each group of students.

Online international learning projects have been introduced at all levels, that provide students with a range of assessed activities (formative and summative). Examples of these include a final year undergraduate poster development in real-world mathematics with California State University; a comparative law exercise (first year and postgraduate level) linking our students with students in Argentina for a live debate and a second year photography project to examine different cultural assumptions.

The International Strategy 2015 – 2020 charts a course that will significantly increase the number and proportion of international students, many of whom will study overseas at partner institutions. Our International collaborative partners are part of the developmental journal and bring an additional perspective and expertise to the transformative education of our students. The intercultural and international engagement pillar of our education strategy supports and complements these goals.

### **Community contribution and responsibility**

Our definition of community as it relates to the education strategy is wide-reaching. This encompasses the university community that they are a part of (whether studying on campus or elsewhere); the local and regional community that we impact during the student period of study and in the future; the professional community that graduates will be part of and the global community (borderless). 'Collaborating with a community organization provides the opportunity for graduate students and faculty to immerse in learning aspects of their professional field through active practice and connected knowing'. (Lucas, 2013: 238)

Communities benefit as we foster a sense of global citizenship and future-thinking, including: sustainability issues; environmental stewardship; disability awareness; social justice; corporate social responsibility; ethics and well-being. The explicit addition of community contribution and responsibility fits with the views and comments, made in particular by our students, about guided opportunities to make a difference to both the community and the environment during their period of study.

The Coventry University community is built between students and staff. We can include within our course teams colleagues who can build a lifelong relationship between the university and our students, introducing the role of alumni from the first year of study.

Service users are a key stakeholder within our communities and the involvement of service users in course design, delivery, recruitment and other activities is likely to increase. The involvement of service users in our activities is a real strength and good practice that can be widened across the university group.

The education strategy will encourage structure and space to enable academic and professional staff to provide participatory experiences.

### **Innovation and digital fluency**

The university is committed to providing timely opportunities to engage with new technologies, teaching aids and software innovations that will be delivered in a variety of modes.

Increasing innovative practices that set us apart from many other universities for example international cross-partner student to student interaction that supports students studying the same content across campuses and countries, enabling them to learn together. We recognise the cost (not only monetary) implications of exploring innovative methods and alternative teaching approaches such as the preparation necessary to deliver a 'flipped classroom' session.

Students enter higher education with a variety of digital fluency and technology experience. The education strategic pillar of innovation and digital fluency builds upon existing knowledge and exposes students to the latest learning technologies available to the university group. Further development of the IT infrastructure and an investment in the capabilities and innovative technologies, will support the increase in blended and distance learning, plus provide support to our collaborative partners.

### **Postgraduate Education**

The university is committed to maximising participation in increasing postgraduate activity. The pillars of transformative learning are equally applied to postgraduate education, however there are specific traits, learning approaches, student needs that are addressed differently at postgraduate level. Postgraduate students expect a different learning experience to that of their undergraduate studies, developing a new form of 'learning how to learn', enabling them to take greater control of their own learning. The tutor's relationship with postgraduate students will take different forms. Our teaching approaches will move towards a facilitator or mentoring role reflecting the increased expectation of independent learning by postgraduate students, an example of this may be to redefine study tutors as professional mentors who work in partnership with employers.

There is a need to increase progression opportunities to postgraduate courses and to recognise new demands for part time and flexible learning opportunities. A 'road map' of routes and requirements will be developed to increase the visibility of postgraduate courses.

### **Postgraduate Taught Courses.**

Coventry University offers a range of postgraduate education and professional development courses. Our research strategy supports an increase in postgraduate research and we are

reviewing the suite of postgraduate taught courses, closely aligned to executive education. The education strategy provides a framework for postgraduate taught courses. There is a variety of awards across the UK that are expected to meet the generic outcomes for a level 7 awards, however there is far less standardisation than among undergraduate courses.

The QAA published guidelines in 2010 entitled Master's Degree Characteristics. These are incorporated into the postgraduate taught section of the education strategy and are aligned to the Coventry pedagogy and approach to postgraduate education.

In order to be successful [in postgraduate study] you will need to hone the skills that you already possess and develop another, crucial skill: critical thinking. Critical thinking is a meta-skill – that is, a skill that subsumes and enhances many other skills that competent professionals possess. Metaphorically speaking, if postgraduate study and CPD is a house, critical thinking is its foundation. (Reissner, 2014)

Postgraduate facilities encourage students to strengthen professional interactions across subject boundaries and dedicated 'gradspace' provides a physical location where graduate students can study, build a community or just relax. The development of a postgraduate centre would offer a community of postgraduate students a unique facility and range of specialist support services and opportunities to assist in the successful completion of their studies.

A key component of postgraduate study is to prepare students to advance the next stage of their career or further study. Our postgraduate taught courses incorporate a range of discipline-independent skills and place students at the centre of their own learning. They will become confident in sourcing and filtering information, prioritising activities and demonstrating creative problem solving skills. Students will develop a questioning approach to ideas and develop independence of thought. They will be prepared for lifelong learning with a desire for knowledge, understanding and improvement.

### **Research inspired teaching**

All postgraduate taught courses will include a research methods component. This may be taught as a standalone module or within a subject-specific module as the course requires. Postgraduate students will be encouraged to access current research and move towards greater independent learning. Access may be through guest lectures by university researchers, case studies taken from current research or opportunities to critically evaluate existing research and scholarship to inform professional practice. Students on postgraduate and executive education courses will be offered different forms of involvement in current research that is being undertaken within Coventry University to enhance their own studies.

### **Embedded employability**

A growing number of students enrol on a taught master's course to enhance their employability skills and to apply conceptual knowledge to real organisations and contemporary issues. Coventry University postgraduate courses enable students to carry out independent study in and on local, national and international organisations and synthesise conceptual understanding within a range of complex situations. 'They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.' (QAA UK, 2013)

The postgraduate centre will provide a central forum to engage in networking and to have opportunities to collaborate with industry and commercial sectors. Additional graduate skills sessions will be available and contribute to a postgraduate passport of skills.

### **Creativity and Enterprise**

Closely linked to employability skills are opportunities to become involved in enterprise and entrepreneurship. Postgraduate students will be expected to demonstrate originality and self-direction in their application of relevant knowledge to new and complex situations. Professional experiences and employer projects can enable students to develop skills as entrepreneurs.

### **Intercultural and international engagement**

All students who are enrolled on a postgraduate master's course are able to engage in the Global Leader's Programme, the Global Researcher Programme or other, newly developed leadership opportunities. Further, there will be an emphasis on intercultural engagement and group working that will foster intercultural competency.

### **Community contribution and responsibility**

A number of postgraduate courses include elements of professional standards or practice education. In conjunction with these, students will be expected to understand their responsibility to actively contribute towards a more sustainable future.

### **Innovation and digital fluency**

There is a great variety of study modes across the postgraduate taught provision. This, in turn, relies on technologies to support innovation in learning. For example, speed of access has changed the role of the Internet as a source of knowledge. Postgraduate students will be taught how to critically evaluate sources of information and apply these in complex and unpredictable situations. There is an expectation that students who complete a postgraduate taught course will have attained a significant level of digital fluency that they can apply in their own discipline or professional practice.

## **Context and Development/ Creating the Next Chapter**

We have met and exceeded our current teaching and learning goals and have an excellent reputation in education. We face an exciting future in the Higher Education sector, both in the UK and globally, and our education strategy will place us at the forefront of excellence in education across the next six years.

In updating the strategy we have taken into account what we have achieved over the past five years; centred in the university corporate plan and recognising continuing changes in the Higher Education landscape. The development of the strategy has been the result of a comprehensive review of HE policies, internal and external data sets and a wide-ranging consultation with staff, students, employers and alumni.

The strategy aims to be significantly flexible to adapt to any changes in the external environment, both in the UK and internationally.

The identified pillars of transformative learning are aligned to the QAA Quality Code – Part B, with specific reference to B3 and B4. 'Higher education is instrumental in personal change

and development..... Successful achievement of an individual student's academic, personal and professional objectives builds confidence and develops potential.' (QAA UK, 2013)  
Appendix A

## Priorities

The UK higher education fee structure, employer expectations, league tables, student prior learning, educational sustainability and an increased global understanding are factors in identifying the key strategic priorities. 'At a time of significant change in higher education students have increased expectations of their university experience. I want a system where students have real choice and universities respond to what students need.' (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills , 2011)

The recognition that a high quality of education must be maintained is understood across the UK and Europe.

Quality higher education teaching is absolutely crucial in enabling our higher education institutions to produce the critically-thinking, creative, adaptable graduates who will shape our future. And yet, while it should be the centre of gravity of higher education, the quality of teaching in our universities and colleges is often overlooked and undervalued. (Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Europe's Higher Education Institutions, 2013).

## Student Experience and Support

The value that we place upon education is crucial to achieving student experience *à*rête. The introduction of professorships in teaching, support our recognition of colleagues who demonstrate a commitment to excellence. An important component is visible recognition of innovation, digital fluency, creativity and the achievement of measurable targets through annual awards and career progression. Recognition may take the form of the appointment of education champions or education secondments to provide a framework within which good practice can be shared across the university, similar to the role of the internationalisation champion. The educational champions will have a responsibility to adapt the university education strategy to meet faculty need and skills. Our DPR process will provide a framework for a development portfolio that will follow a three year cycle and promote reward, recognition and positive support. Examples within this may include targets for professional recognition such as fellowships and senior fellowships of the Higher Education Academy or recognition of new and innovative pedagogical approaches. The student voice as they provide feedback on individual staff will also be valued.

High quality education is key to our graduates in achieving the best student experience. Coventry University has been named 'University of the Year for Student Experience' in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2015 and our strategic aims for student academic support will ensure that we continue to drive forward and remain at the top. 'Academic and student support services exist to enable all students to meet and exceed their expectations. Every one of us needs support to help us achieve, to help us improve'. (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015)

We plan to rethink our student support practices to achieve a consistent experience for our undergraduate and postgraduate students that recognises the differential between the two. The proposed changes will also allow staff to focus their energies on teaching, research and employer engagement activities. To achieve this will be looking to appoint dedicated study

tutors to work alongside academic and student support staff and to ensure consistency, regardless of the enrolled course. The newly created positions will provide a subject-based academic support structure across a student's course and facilitate access and communication between staff and students. An increased use of student mentors, who may be current students or recent graduates will further enhance the student learning experience. A natural result of these activities will be to refresh our student charter in partnership with the Coventry University Students' Union.

### **Quality Assurance**

Internal module and course evaluation reports provide us with valuable information and support the annual CQEM process. Changes to the report structure will be aligned to the overarching goal of transformative learning and will incorporate evidence against each of the supporting strategic pillars. Specific actions to close the loop on issues and feed forward the results will enable the course report to become a key course document that is dynamic and utilised by the whole teaching team to improve the educational experience of our students. Active and timely interaction with this document will improve the visibility of our responses to the quantitative and qualitative data and provide a performance dashboard accessible to all. Clear actions in response to data will ensure that the services and support offered to students is equitable across courses and faculties and that they have a good experience everywhere.

From Galileo in the sixteen century 'Measure what can be measured, and make measurable what cannot be measured' to Holden Thorp in the twenty-first century who says there needs to be 'a way to measure performance against a plan and provide focus for an agreed-upon set of activities' (Thorp, 2010), we realise the value of measurement. Whilst this may oversimplify the complexities of target setting, it is through measurement processes that we can chart improvements. The strategy will be supported by an annual plan that identifies stretching education targets within the HESA UK performance indicators, which currently cover widening participation indicators; non-continuation rates (including projected outcomes); module completion rates; research output; employment of graduates.

### **International**

Our international strategy 2020 identifies a range of targets, supported by measures of success. Education targets, including retention and progression, specifically directed to our international students will be complementary to this.

Specific education targets for direct entry (or top-up) students, flexible pathways and the proportion of students enrolling on postgraduate course will be agreed each year.

Another clear differentiator in our education provision is the breadth and scope of the global experience offered to our students with the aim of helping them develop intercultural competencies, which are essential for working and living effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. . Through Online International Learning (OIL) projects, inter-cultural competency training courses or outward mobility we have stated that all courses will demonstrate substantial internationalisation by 2020. Our teaching and learning strategy will support a curriculum that emphasises global perspectives and prepares students to challenge their own cultural understanding and prepare them to work in a global environment. Leask says 'An internationalised curriculum will recognise that as graduates, all students will have social and cultural as well as economic roles and responsibilities. Wherever they are, their lives and their work will be influenced by the global environment. International and intercultural skills and knowledge, an awareness of and commitment to connecting positively with cultural

others, and the ability to think “locally nationally and globally” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010) will be important in this world’. (Leask, 2012)

We will also ensure that our teaching practices transcend communication barriers so that international students who study with us or with a partner institution have equivalent access and opportunity to achieve their qualification aim. Also that staff employed by collaborative partners are able to access the necessary systems and resources to provide an excellent educational experience for students.

### **Employability**

Employment and employability skills are the areas that generated the most discussion among our students. An explicit statement of employability direction will reassure students and provide greater opportunities for employers. A report published by the CBI in January 2015 includes the benefits to universities of closer collaboration. ‘university partners also benefit from these relationships in a variety of ways. Engagement with business-relevant research challenges provides new opportunities for the university, its staff and students. Research which has demonstrable impact can improve an institution’s reputation, level of market awareness and potential for wider engagement. It can also lead to new ideas for teaching and training, and help to create a more relevant curriculum, and contribute to increased employability of students and researchers.’ (CBI Report, 2015). With employers we are developing the talent pipeline to prepare graduates for the future.

Coventry University courses have number of unique features that can be maximised through our education strategy. The Add+vantage scheme provides one of the most innovative and comprehensive employability course in the UK. The education strategy includes these modules within its aims and measures to ensure the same quality of learning experience for our students and supports the work done by the Add+vantage team.

Closely linked to the importance of the Add+vantage course is the necessity to embed a range of workplace competencies and employment relevance to the student qualification aim. Employment and enterprise opportunities can be maximised through increased professional opportunities that will meet the increasing competition for the global marketplace. The form of these may differ according to the subject discipline and level of study, however they have a place in every course.

Postgraduate course will include an emphasis on the professional skills that will enable students to become the leaders of the future. Specialist careers development and support for postgraduate students will provide a space for their progression.

Greater inclusion and active participation of public and private organisations and professions in the development and monitoring of courses will provide a professional and career relevance to our students throughout their studies. Through the focus and assessment of work-related or practiced-based competencies, students will develop a better awareness and understanding of how these can be demonstrated in the workplace and be able to demonstrate their knowledge skills and attributes to succeed and excel in a professional environment.

### **Teaching approaches**

Within the university group faculties and subsidiaries, there are unique and varied approaches that deliver the most appropriate learning experience for our students. The university subscribes to enquiry-led approaches, and recognises the need to retain a flexible

teaching approach or method that is most appropriate to the subject discipline and level of study. It is clear that local expertise of the whole course team will provide **how** we achieve our strategic aims, whilst sharing best practice across faculties and retaining the specific skills and attributes developed by their graduates. Each faculty or subsidiary education strategy will articulate the detailed teaching approach that they will take within the university group structures and supporting technologies.

### **Assessment**

To complete the education experience and ensure that the proposed strategy is comprehensive it will be necessary to develop a new assessment and feedback strategy for each level of study that is fair and transparent with timely and useful feedback. There is often a perceived disconnect by students between learning and assessment. Consultation with Coventry students supported the view described by Fletcher et al., who undertook a study of over 600 undergraduate students and reported very different views on assessment between faculty staff and students, 'Faculty were likely to view assessment as a trustworthy process aiding teaching and learning, whereas students viewed assessment as focussed primarily on accountability and perceived assessment as irrelevant or even ignored in the teaching and learning process'. (Fletcher et al., 2012).

We have an opportunity to include innovative practices and utilise new and current technologies to create a wide range of assessment methods that recognise the process of learning as well as the retention and application of knowledge. A new strategy will explicitly address assessment across each level of study and improve the timeliness and quality of feedback and improvement processes.

### **Teaching spaces and resources**

Finally, we acknowledge the resource and infrastructure implications of the new strategy. Therefore we will carry out a thorough review of teaching resources to ensure they are fit for purpose. This will include our teaching spaces, IT and Network infrastructures so that we are future oriented and provide an environment that supports the best quality education. We will also address resource issues that are specific to the aim of an increase of our distance and blended learning.

## Implications for Practice

The focus on complete education, rather than teaching and learning, emphasises the responsibility that a higher education student must accept to engage in the full course provision. The university has a wide range of support mechanisms and specialist resources to aid student learning and students will be expected to access these when a need is identified. Beyond classroom studies, our students will be expected to participate in community activities, whether local, cultural or professional and always demonstrate respect and courtesy to staff and fellow students.

Both staff and students share the learning process and each has a responsibility to engage with each other to maximise the opportunities provided.

<p>Our students can expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent teaching and responsive support</li> <li>• Full access to appropriate learning resources</li> <li>• Equality of access, progression and transition opportunities</li> <li>• International experiences</li> <li>• Embedded employability skills and 'real world' opportunities</li> <li>• Research engagement opportunities</li> <li>• Appropriate and varied teaching approaches</li> </ul>	<p>Our students will be expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be active participants in own learning/achievements, developed throughout their studies</li> <li>• Work together to achieve mutual respect, courtesy and professionalism</li> <li>• Engage with the Students' Union to provide representation</li> <li>• Access established communication channels and support mechanisms</li> <li>• Attend scheduled activities</li> <li>• Engage with the community</li> <li>• Contribute to course development</li> </ul>
<p>Our staff can expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reward and recognition within education</li> <li>• Intelligent and timely data to maximise the student learning experience and address concerns</li> <li>• Flexible access to regular and structured CPD</li> <li>• Opportunities to provide an international dimension</li> <li>• The removal of process barriers and a review of academic schedules</li> <li>• Opportunities to engage in subject and pedagogic research</li> <li>• Examples of innovative practices with opportunities to push boundaries</li> <li>• Ongoing academic Support</li> </ul>	<p>Our staff will be expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide engaging, varied and stimulating teaching environments</li> <li>• Give clear direction and expectations to students to enable course completion</li> <li>• Engage with student representatives</li> <li>• Apply current research to teaching</li> <li>• Remain up to date with current professional practice</li> <li>• Have active engagement in student support and tutorials</li> <li>• Lead a shared commitment to learning</li> <li>• Engage with local, international and professional communities to enhance teaching</li> <li>• Extend resources to internationalise the curriculum content</li> <li>• Achieve transparent assessment turnaround goals</li> </ul>

## **Students**

Our students are at the centre of everything that we do and we offer them a distinctive student learning experience that is balanced and appropriate to their level and subject and reflects our global environment. A student-centred approach recognises the diversity of our student population. We have a responsibility to them to provide an excellent student learning experience and consistent support for their studies. We do not make distinctions between an equivalence of learning experience dependent upon a student's mode of study, location, disabilities, personal values or characteristics and support all students in their current courses, and opportunities for progression to further study and transition into the workplace and we provide value for money. Aligned to both the research and international strategies are an obligation to identify and offer a global experience and encourage opportunities to engage in research.

Both current students and alumni play a vital role in continuing course development and through the student representative system or through alumni engagement These interactions can influence future learning experiences.

## **Staff and Faculty**

The strategy will inform the development of Faculty and subsidiary education strategies in line with corporate target and annual priorities. Priorities and targets for faculties and subsidiaries will be agreed each year. These strategies will be reviewed every three years. The education strategy represents our principal driver for enabling and enhancing the student learning experience.

Our staff are fully aware of the responsibilities that they have to provide clear direction and expectations to students to enable them to complete and achieve their course of study. Within the directed learning environment, academic staff are expected to communicate a passion for teaching their subject through varied and stimulating learning experiences that will engage students. As educators in higher education there is an expectation that teaching is informed by research and academic staff are to engage in an agreed level of research, either subject specific or pedagogical. Our direction to our students is to enhance their learning through community engagement and staff will also be encouraged to have ongoing engagement with their local, international or professional communities. Professional services can also utilise academic expertise to inform their own practice and academic staff will be encouraged to share contemporary research across the university as well as within their discipline.

The commitment from academic staff will create and expand a culture of high quality education. More experienced staff will also be encouraged to support new colleagues to incorporate continuity into our long term plans. They can give support beyond initial induction through peer mentoring and a collegiate approach and a determination to share best practice to ensure that all students benefit

Course teams are much wider than the subject academic and may include, but not be limited to learning technologists, information and learning resource staff, disability advisors, enterprise specialists, study support tutors, CGE's intercultural engagement managers, students or IT business partners. The student voice, expressed through our broad student rep system, is very important within course teams. Our student learning experience will be enhanced as each member of a course teams extends and enhances his or her role. Active engagement within the course team and an understanding of one another's role will communicate to students the wealth of expertise available to them.

### **Central and Corporate**

The university has a responsibility to invest in staff opportunities to engage in subject specific or pedagogic research. Faculty education strategies will align to the university research strategy to outline how this can be accessible and established DPR processes will state individual expectations, including CPD requirements. This will notably include staff training programmes to foster intercultural perspectives in the curriculum.

Consultation discussions support a widespread commitment to continuing professional development and a keen awareness of learning expectations. In particular, the fast pace of technological changes, are viewed as both a stumbling block and a stepping stone to teaching innovation, and growing needs to embed intercultural dimensions in curriculum development. We will offer timely and flexible CPD in a variety of formats so that its impact can be maximised.

Reward and recognition of excellence in teaching will be evident in career progression and professorial roles and structures will be put into place to encourage the sharing of innovative practices across the university group and partner institutions.

Unwieldy processes and systems can be seen as barriers to innovation or new initiatives such as providing a global experience for our students and we will review the processes that support education so that innovation and good practice can flourish. The university can also provide a 'safe' place to develop new ideas, for example the Disruptive Media Learning Laboratory (DMLL)

### **Conclusion**

Together, students, staff and university share the responsibility for creating a vibrant culture of learning and both receive the rewards of a transformative learning experience. The education strategy 2015 – 2021 will engage and stretch students whilst supporting them to achieve their very best in an innovative, distinctive and inclusive learning environment.

We recognise the passion for excellence and commitment to student learning that our staff demonstrate. We will maintain flexibility in teaching methods, however, new approaches to assessment and support will ensure that the university strengthens the course-based approach and is a global leader in higher education.

A final student comment "I pay a lot of money for this course. I don't want spoon-feeding but I DO WANT TEACHING".

### **Implementation**

The Strategic Implementation Plan is a separate document that identifies the investment that will be required to adopt the education strategy. The implementation plan includes key dates and projects, in line with the Corporate Plan.

## Consultation Process

The first consultation period took place between July and November with the following contributions.

Activity	Number
Staff meetings	136
Student meetings	278
Student drop-in / open sessions	227
Online surveys	183
<b>Total</b>	<b>824</b>

The draft strategy and emergent themes from the first consultation were published and staff, students and employers were given an opportunity to comment as shown below.

Group	Number
Individual student online forms	123
Student rep activities	629
Staff feedback	60
Detailed employer consultation	9
University committee members	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>866</b>

There were in excess of 3,000 “click-throughs” by students on Moodle to the feedback form, although only completed responses are included in the totals provided. Further analysis of responses and comments is shown in Appendix B.

Comments were far-ranging and have informed the proposed strategy. Our passion for excellence in education can be summed up by the following statement: “I have a responsibility to provide students with the knowledge and tools to succeed in a graduate role. If they cannot, I would feel as though I had failed” (academic member of staff).

This level of commitment was supported by many alumni comments, including: “we were taught by people who had *real* experience of what they taught” and “continue to employ passionate people”.

## Strategy Coordination

This strategy has informed, and been informed by, the University Corporate Plan (2011-2015), the International Strategy (2014-2020) and the Research Strategy with particular emphasis on the following aspects.

1. We aim to improve students’ satisfaction by empowering them as participants in a community of learning where staff and students work together to learn, create, solve problems and research. That community also includes external practising professionals, employers, and alumni.
2. Teaching is designed to inspire and engage students in their chosen course through a range of techniques which encourage lively, interactive learning, and by drawing on relevant research and professional practice. Excellence in classroom teaching will be enriched by appropriate use of virtual environments, technology and specialist facilities.

(Coventry University Corporate Plan 2011-2015)

- Driving student mobility and internationalisation experiences as it attracts home and overseas students, is a major contributor to delivering excellent employability outcomes and evidences our key sales message - preparation for global careers. It is a key differentiator but others are copying us and we need to drive scale to address the competitive threat
- Fostering staff capacity, capability and competence for internationalisation through targeted training and experiences overseas. This drives professional development and the value staff bring to the classroom.

(Coventry University Group International Strategy 2020)

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## Appendix A

### QAA Quality Code

Mapping of Education Strategy (International elements and aspects are implicit within all sections)

Pillar of Transformative Learning	QAA Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality	
Research inspired teaching	B3 page 5	Effective learning and teaching activities and practices are enabled through, and depend on, staff who are appropriately qualified for their role and who engage throughout their career in continuing professional development, in the evaluation of their practice, and in developing their understanding of their subject and the learning process as it relates to their subject
	B3 page 12	Staff communicate enthusiasm, and draw on scholarship, research and professional activity to facilitate student learning
	B3 page 13	Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education
Embedded employability	B4 page 8	Higher education providers work with others to enable student development and achievement. The organisations involved may include other education providers and employers offering work-based learning or placement opportunities
	B4 page 15	Higher education providers have strategies to promote students' employability and their ability to articulate their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.
Creativity and Enterprise	B4 page 15	Higher education providers also consider how they enable students to develop enterprise and entrepreneurship skills in ways relevant to a variety of future paths.
	B3 page 4	effective learning in higher education occurs.....that results in ..... the co-production and enhancement of creative and transformational learning

Community contribution and responsibility	B4 page 15	Extra-curricular activities and volunteering provide opportunities for students to develop skills and experiences that are both valued by employers and relevant more broadly after they have completed their programme of study. The involvement of student representative bodies and societies and the local community helps to maximise the opportunities available to students.
Innovation and digital fluency	B4 page 19	Higher education providers consider the challenges involved in communicating with students through increasingly electronic forms. The development of students' digital literacy enables them to develop and thrive in the virtual environments made available by the higher education provider or that they seek to create for themselves
	B3 page 11	Where a programme includes learning that takes place in a virtual learning environment, providers ensure that it can be accessed fully by every student, or that reasonable adjustments can be made so that every student has an equal learning opportunity.
	B3 page 15	Higher education providers also recognise the importance of digital literacy for staff and make available suitable development opportunities
<b>Priorities</b>		
Student Experience and Support	B4 page 3	Students who are fully informed about the opportunities available to them, but who are also aware of their responsibility to engage with those opportunities, are more likely to make effective use of services and resources.
	B3 page 19	Higher education providers make clear to students the learning opportunities and learning and teaching support available to them and how they can access these
Quality Assurance	B4 page 5	Through strategic and operational planning, and quality assurance and enhancement, higher education providers determine and evaluate how they enable student development and achievement.

	B3 page 16	Higher education providers collect and analyse appropriate information to ensure the continued effectiveness of their strategic approach to, and the enhancement of, learning opportunities and teaching practices
Employability	B4 page 8	Higher education providers work with others to enable student development and achievement. The organisations involved may include other education providers and employers offering work-based learning or placement opportunities
	B4 page 15	Higher education providers have strategies to promote students' employability and their ability to articulate their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.
Teaching approaches	B4 page 7	Higher education providers are clear about where responsibilities lie and how different roles are defined. These arrangements are communicated both to students, so that they are aware of the opportunities available and how to access them
	B3 page 3	There are many different ways to teach, all aimed at helping a student to learn
	B3 page 11	All methods of learning and teaching including group work, seminars, lectures, placements and practical classes create a variety of challenges for students
Assessment	B3 page 4	effective learning in higher education occurs when.....that results in..... a schedule of assessment that is effective both in supporting learning and safeguarding academic standards
	B3 page 5	To derive maximum learning benefit from assessment, students need to receive timely feedback in a manner that is supportive, yet includes some personal challenge
	B3 page 22	The assessment schedule of a programme, module or session considers the dual needs of assessment for learning and assessment of learning
Teaching spaces and resources	B4 page 18	Higher education providers make available learning resources

		which take account of different modes of study and the range of academic programmes and pedagogic practices, including considering requirements in the context of programme design, approval, monitoring and review processes
	B3 page 18	Higher education providers make available physical environments that are applicable and appropriate to each mode and location of learning, and which are safe and accessible to students
<b>Outcomes and Responsibilities</b>		
<p>Our students can expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent teaching and responsive support</li> <li>• Full access to appropriate learning resources</li> <li>• Equality of access, progression and transition opportunities</li> <li>• International experiences</li> <li>• Embedded employability skills and 'real world' opportunities</li> <li>• Research engagement opportunities</li> <li>• Appropriate and varied teaching approaches</li> </ul>	B4 page 5	Higher education providers clearly define responsibilities for enabling students to develop and achieve
	B4 page 8	An inclusive environment anticipates the varied requirements of students, for example because of a declared disability, specific cultural background, mode of study or age
	B4 page 11	Indicator 4 Higher education providers inform students before and during their period of study of opportunities designed to enable their development and achievement
<p>Our students will be expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand at an early stage to take responsibility and be active participants in own learning/achievements</li> <li>• Work together to achieve mutual respect, courtesy and professionalism</li> </ul>	B4 page 4	Students are clear about the opportunities available and how and where they can access them.
	B4 page 11	Timely provision of clear and comprehensive information about the commitment required of students, including any timetabled activity or scheduled requirements, enables students to prepare for their study
	B4 page 15	Extra-curricular activities and volunteering provide opportunities for students to develop skills and experiences that are both valued by employers and relevant more broadly after they have

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access established communication channels and support mechanisms</li> <li>• Attend scheduled activities</li> <li>• Engage with the community</li> <li>• Contribute to course development</li> </ul>		completed their programme of study. The involvement of student representative bodies and societies and the local community helps to maximise the opportunities available to students.
	B4 page 21	A key characteristic of UK higher education is the emphasis placed on students to engage in independent learning, working in partnership with staff and displaying academic behaviour and integrity appropriate to the level of study
<p>Our staff can expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reward and recognition within education</li> <li>• Intelligent and timely data to maximise the student learning experience and address concerns</li> <li>• Flexible access to regular and structured CPD</li> <li>• Opportunities to provide an international dimension</li> <li>• The removal of process barriers and a review of academic schedules</li> <li>• Opportunities to engage in subject and pedagogic research</li> <li>• Examples of innovative practices with opportunities to push boundaries</li> <li>• Ongoing academic Support</li> </ul>	B4 page 6	In order to foster a culture of quality enhancement, higher education providers reflect on the ways that they identify and disseminate good practice in enabling student development and achievement.
	B4 page 6	In order to foster a culture of quality enhancement, higher education providers reflect on the ways that they identify and disseminate good practice in enabling student development and achievement.
	B4 page 17	Higher education providers benefit from enabling appropriate staff to obtain and enhance their expertise through appropriate professional qualifications and continuing professional development.
	B3 page 14	Continuing professional development activities made available by the higher education provider are planned strategically, including the allocation of sufficient resources to cover the needs of both research and learning and teaching development.
<p>Our staff will be expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide engaging, varied and stimulating teaching environments</li> <li>• Give clear direction and expectations to students to enable</li> </ul>	B3 page 4	effective learning in higher education occurs.... That results in .....teaching that aims to be inspirational
	B3 page 12	In order that teaching and support for learning remains effective, staff reflect on their practice and consider how it might be changed and improved.

<p>course completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply current research to teaching</li> <li>• Remain up to date with current professional practice</li> <li>• Have active engagement in student support and tutorials</li> <li>• Lead a shared commitment to learning</li> <li>• Engage with local, international and professional communities to enhance teaching</li> <li>• Extend resources to internationalise the curriculum content</li> <li>• Achieve transparent assessment turnaround goals</li> </ul>	<p>B3 page 12</p>	<p>Scholarship may include conventional research (discovery of new knowledge), innovative application or integration of existing knowledge, for example in professional practice, or the study of learning and teaching processes and practices.</p>
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*“Like to see increase use of our own alumni who are now in the industry or early graduates as guest speakers.”*

In addition, the importance of a placement or internship opportunity was raised in 8 out of the 11 student drop in events and discussed in 76 responses. Students who were offered or undertook a professional experience were very positive about the experience and saw the value for their own future employment. The majority of students who commented on the responsibility for finding placements, placed this within the remit of the course teams or employability units. One student took the opposite view *“staff should not be so ready to find placements for students. It should be up to the students to sort their own placements”*. Whilst this was a single comment from students, it did echo an employer who indicated that a student who had found his or her own placement, would have an advantage as they would have demonstrated more skills to achieve their goal.

Sample comments supporting the importance of a professional experience included:

*“year out is extremely important”*

*“I would like more placements within the course I am doing so it will help me with the future and my job”*

*“We need more placements “*

*“Open up more placements. Eg personal tutor said 15 but 300 students are on the course. Guarantee placements.”*

*“Sandwich critical in the programme”*

This can be summed up by the following student comment. *“Placement prepares you for employment”*.

Within this area, a number of students wanted more flexibility with options for short placements, work-shadowing, summer internships and at different stages in the course (including postgraduate). They were also interested in hearing from recent graduates who did not take up the opportunity of a professional experience, so that they would have a better understanding of the consequences.

*“We could offer work experience during every year, perhaps across holidays and then have a placement at the end of their studies.”*

*“Short summer internships. Idea for graduate internships before masters. Would help with choice of masters.”*

*“No chance for short placement. Found own summer internship all students could have benefitted”*

*“Suggested one or two days a week for an internship across all years of study.”*

*“Would do internship for a year after the degree has finished”*

*“Even just a week of shadowing somebody in the desired industry could look good on a CV”*

Students also raised the question of Coventry University as a placement or internship provider. This was supported by staff comments.

*“Have chance to work in the university. At least get the chance to work shadow here. Could be offered to best students. Work experience gives confidence. If we did this everyone would come to Coventry.”*

*“University should employ more students themselves and do placements as a big employer.”*

### Teaching and Student Support

A broad range of topics were discussed within teaching and learning with nearly 500 separate comments. One key area was student support and there was a variety in student understanding of student support and practice across different courses. For example, students interchanged the use of personal tutor, study tutor or mentor and support ranged between highly structured one-to-one meetings on a very regular basis through to a tutor being available if needed. Sample comments that support this variation include the following:

*"1-2-1 helpful. Flexible and book on Moodle."*

*"Would like a personal tutor don't know who they are esp in year 1 when more confused"*

*"don't have a personal tutor but all teaching staff approachable"*

*"Good support from personal tutor"*

*"Once a month. Don't need 121 every week as they are boring"*

*"Would want a tutor from course and subject. A recent graduate was very good. Not keen on more senior academics"*

*"Good 1-2-1 support via personal tutor and lecturers"*

*"For new starters tutorials would help. Not inclined to attend unless scheduled would be good as otherwise don't feel able to ask."*

*"Never met personal tutor although year three. Feel very connected with graduates teaching assistant Need to flexible and accessible eg pt tutor in on days when no classes"*

*"Personal tutor working well"*

*"Haven't met personal tutor. Year two It should be the tutor responsibility to make contact"*

It is clear from the student response that more consistency is needed and a clear definition of the different roles within the teaching support team. A few students are aware of the range of support structures in place as stated *"The support that is provided by the university itself it incredible. They have in various different ways. We can go to see our seminar lectures, other members of the module, personal tutors, subject librarians and the CAW"*

The first contact for many students when they need support remains the module tutor. Their comments show the excellent commitment demonstrated by staff. One student commented *"I know if I have a problem I just have to e-mail my tutor and they will reply the same day either with an answer or a time and date of when I can have a meeting. I can also talk to anyone in my classes as we have only been at Coventry for a few months but already feel as though we are on this journey together."*

Student expectations of academic-led sessions are high. One consistent theme was for more variety in teaching activities, although a number of students demonstrated a good understanding of their own responsibilities in independent learning. A small sample of comments is shown below.

Interaction:

*"Too much information is given in a lecture – spread out or have more"*

*"Coventry University has a high standard of teaching and support; encourages and gives the opportunity for placement/live projects during second year; and has a great library!"*

*"Apply real life situations to all aspects of learning"*

*"Theory on its own not enough"*

*"Using different teaching strategies other than group work"*

*"LESS presentations and group work in front of the class."*

*“There should be more practical subjects in each department”*

*“Like interactive workshops don’t think lectures are as helpful just being told boring!”*

*“A bit of everything. Seminar work really well- could have two lecturers per seminar group- one leading, one facilitating- more opportunities to talk to every student*

*Most influential positive are the lecturers. Especially if they have recent industrial experience.”*

*“Person makes the difference and a lot of interaction. Approachable lecturers.”*

*“Most important aspect of their study is the quality of learning. This comes from the person who is teaching them, not just the slides and resources.”*

*“Lecturers who have industrial experience and are up to date with the industry make the sessions much more interesting and therefore they will get more excited about learning.”*

*“Who we are with whilst learning, the right teaching staff can make or break your uni experience”*

*“More interaction”*

*“Have group work”*

*“Use visual activities for visual learners”*

*“It is important to have interactive learning all the time and a chance for trial and error.”*

Independent learning:

*“I believe the main point is to take responsibility for your own learning. Personally that is how I achieve my best results, through putting the hard work in myself.”*

*“I believe it is important to take responsibility of your own learning because at the end of the day it's about you whether or not you want to do well and succeed in life”*

*“I think it's silly that all lectures and lessons are made mandatory for all students regardless of how they learn. I thought we were meant to be taking responsibility for our learning? How are we going to do that when we are kept on leashes”*

*“The extent of attendance monitoring is something I highly disagree with. I find this very patronising. I'm paying the fees so shouldn't it be up to me how much I attend. Also, If I am achieving respectable marks in all my coursework without particularly high attendance why is it such an issue.”*

Additionally, frustrations were discussed about timetabling and the fluency in English of lecturing staff. Comments include those shown below:

*More organised timetables*

*Please layout the timetable in a much better way.*

*Please arrange the timetable more student friendly*

*The timetable needs to be more structured- get emails the day before or on the day to say it has changed*

*I think the inability of a tutor to communicate to a reasonable extent in English language is affecting both excellency of lecture and pace of learning. It is to the detriment of students and should be looked into to ensure excellent teaching.*

*some of the lecturers command of English has not been up to scratch which made it difficult to engage with the learning*

*Would like to have teachers who can speak English.*

A particular group of students were direct entry into year two (or top up). All of the students who identified themselves as direct entry highlighted a lack of orientation. *“Direct entry into year two and therefore don't know about Moodle and Turnitin”*. *“Refresher and*

*Moodle induction if joined as direct entry in the second year. For example had not used Turnitin previously". They felt that there were assumption in year 2 that students had completed the year one modules. As one student commented "[we] may have the subject knowledge but they may not have been taught in the same way and need guidance and examples to help them catch up".*

### **Learning spaces and resources**

With the exception of one student, there were no negative comments about classrooms or resources in taught sessions. The comments were split between more open access and computer rooms, particularly within faculty building, and access to specialist software. Increased access to faculty building would naturally results in increased access to specialist software.

*"I am a post-grad part-time student with full-time day job - majority of the uni buildings were closed making it pretty tough for me to meet up with my study groups in appropriate environment which I was required to do to complete my group coursework. For example a 40% grade worth of coursework for one of my modules, which was released just before xmas and hand in date was 7th Jan, the university buildings including HUB were not accessible at all during the time."*

*"Have more computer rooms"*

*"Also need more access to spaces to study"*

*"Would like to have more open spaces for self-study. It is really frustrating when students are looking for a PC and the empty classrooms are locked or only have a few people in them. There isn't a consistent rule about using spare PCs during taught classes."*

There will always be a tension between space utilisation and open access computers, however there is scope to investigate policies on the use of computers in empty or part-filled teaching rooms.

Requests for additional library books were mainly commented on by students enrolled in the subsidiaries. There were number of general comments on the library opening hours, eg *"Extend library opening hours."* And *"I suggest that Lanchester Library is open 24h/24h even before Christmas, that is when some students are already preparing for their exams which are held before holidays, and not only after Christmas."*

### **Assessment and Feedback**

In line with UK results from NSS, this was the area with the highest percentage of negative comments, particularly in relation to timely feedback.

Assessment structure and content:

*"Can pick interactive or essays options are helpful depending on learning preferences"*

*"Every lecturer feels their subject is most important. So it can be difficult to spread work load on assessments"*

*"A good balance between written and practical assignments"*

*"Quizzes after the lecture"*

*"Too much bunching of assessment. Why not spread them out"*

*"Past exam papers need to be available from the very beginning of the year."*

*"Good range of assessments"*

Feedback

*"A mixture of a assessments- really good. Get written feedback but feel that student can approach lecturer to more feedback if needed"*

*“Coursework marks to be returned when stated on brief. I have only had one coursework returned on time in the 2 years I have been here and it feels as if we are not being taken seriously. If I am to hand in my coursework a minute late I receive no marks, but if it is handed back more than 6 weeks late (which has happened once) there is no compensatory mark.”*

*“Consistent feedback of the work students have done, so we can understand what we need to improve and work upon.”*

*“As students have to submit work to deadlines, staff should also send feedback on the exact date they promise”*

*“Feedback on work! Feedback that actually aids learning and is specific. Not just a sentence saying you could improve.”*

*“More feedback”*

*“Not enough - too vague. No verbal feedback. Some are just marks - no suggested improvements”*

*“More frequent written feedback. Good quality feedback but only end of module”*

*“Feedback that is detailed really helps”*

*“Good feedback”*

*“More rich feedback needed. Inconsistent at the moment”*

### **Internationalisation**

Student feedback about internationalisation was very limited and does not provide a representative sample of the total student feedback. The areas of interest were opportunities to undertake overseas professional experiences and support of some OIL projects. The impact of the global strategy is expected to increase student feedback in this area. Two students suggested that visiting lecturers (perhaps virtual) could be from international universities or those working outside of the UK. *“Would like to have employees who work in other countries come and speak with them”.*

### **General Comments**

Approximately three thousand students ‘clicked through’ to view the draft documents. Those that commented were overwhelmingly positive of both the approach taken and the content. Sample comments include:

*“I think it's a good strategy and includes everything important.”*

*“I believe this summarises the key elements that the university has to offer in an appealing way”*

*“This list seems pretty complete to me”*

*“You should expect students to try to live sustainably as part of their studies! We need this to ensure the survival of the planet for future generations to come :)”*

*“I would be interested in seeing more student contribution to programme development”*

Individual and group interviews supported the value of engaging them in consultation activities. Their comments can be summed up by the following student who said, *“thank you for your interest in the students and giving them the voice to talk and express”.*

### **Alumni Survey**

We received a total of 76 responses to an online survey that was emailed to all recent alumni. Comments covered themes similar to those of current students although their perspective was sometimes quite different.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

Thirty eight percent of respondents commented on Assessment. Similar to current students, feedback was the area of discontent whilst they were positive about the variety of assessments. Their comments reemphasise the need to address the consistency of feedback.

*“Assessments were good and given plenty of time to prepare for”*

*“Set the bar a bit higher. Assessments should be challenging (in my opinion) because when you face the problem you really learn”*

*“the more practical assignments given to us, which i see now are useful in my current career”*

*“Less coursework marks based on group projects as it can never actually reflect the individuals in a group. It’s like judging the performance of a high-end Mercedes while it possesses a flat tyre...”*

*“I’d have appreciated a better understanding of the grading scheme”*

*“Feel the assignments were marked in a strange manner”*

*“Needs more of a structure to marking”*

*“On many occasions I would go to get feedback on work and the tutor would say things that contradicted the advice I was given during the project”*

### **Teaching and Support**

Sixty seven percent of students commented about staff with the majority of their comments very positive, in particular about the amount and type of student support that they received from lecturers and other staff. Forty six percent of students commented on group work with some concerns about the high amount in their courses. Again, their comments echoed current student with relation to teaching approaches and the benefits of practical learning opportunities.

Staff:

*“Very good - felt as though I could approach any member of staff and have either a friendly chat or in-depth discussion about many of the topics.”*

*“Very participatory Very experiential”*

*“Very hands on - always very responsive and helpful when help was needed.*

*Enthusiastic”*

*“Continue to employ passionate people”*

*“Being taught by people who had real experience of what they taught”*

*“Personal- lecturers knew us by name and our learning styles and catered to these. Approachable and understanding meaning could discuss any problems and solve them”*

*“the enthusiasm of the staff the staff knowledge of their subjects and assistance to the students”*

*“The teachers were always welcoming for extra help”*

*“Have all lecturers fix a placeholder in their timetables for a particular module or modules where you can always find them for support.”*

Group work:

*“Use sparingly and carefully. Any work done by others is not learning for the rest of the group, or whole class Good for practicing skills after they have been taught Good for extreme frustration when some members do not pull their weight or have the skills”*

*“Was a nightmare. Group work is a pointless exercise. It's been proven in many studies that working alone can be more affective. If group work needs to continue, then I suggest the groups are monitored for lack of effort. And marked accordingly.”*  
*“create the group with people from different nationality”*  
*“Group work in my experience makes workers work twice as hard and slackers take it easy”*

#### Classes

*“The lecturers were happy to help, but left enough of a challenge and demand for personal learning”*  
*“Need more practical exposures”*  
*“Fieldtrips - much more interactive way of learning”*  
*“For all modules have a mix of theory and lecture based work combined with practical, hands-on and interactive learning”*

Both alumni and current students requested earlier access to lecture materials and sessions to be videoed and uploaded to Moodle. This is support by those with a responsibility for students with additional needs such as English language or disability.

## Staff Consultation

A wide range of staff representing faculty and professional support services were consulted, plus *all* staff were regularly invited to complete a short survey. The number of staff who responded to the online survey was lower than expected, with a total of 107 responses across 5 surveys. However, staff will be encouraged to engage with the next stage of consultation and make a contribution.

The 200 staff who set aside time to consider and discuss the developing strategy and to provide feedback on the draft document have made a real impact on the document content.

Specific areas of discussion were often aligned to a colleague's own job role, although the collective responses present a balanced picture. Emergent topics very varied as shown below, indicating a student focus.



## Teaching

Individual and team meetings, plus online feedback provided a strong commitment to excellent teaching and student support. Academic staff, technical and professional services

provide expertise to improve the student learning experience. This has been reflected in both the National Student Survey and internal measures.

Teaching approaches were largely faculty driven, such as Activity Led Learning, which provides a consistency for students studying on an undergraduate or postgraduate course. A high proportion of the comments identified current good practice such as *“Approach is professional, partnership in learning”, “Approach is no lectures, but starts with a two hour lab and then one hour large group. “The two hour session is split into thirty minutes blocks. Intro, activity, discussion, next topic to complete within a two hour loop”, “Simulation and work practice plays a large part”, Industry real projects. Students enhanced through learning”*. There are many examples of good practice and innovative approaches to student education. Increased sharing of good practice across different faculties and subsidiaries, plus partner institutions will make this more accessible to all staff.

A goal of higher education is to develop independent learners and this was discussed at length by some staff. A phrase that was used repeatedly was ‘spoon feeding’ with comments such as *“No spoon feeding and We should not spoon feed students and “there must be a two way engagement”*, however there were some variations on what this constitutes and is at variance with some of the student comments who may see the activities along the continuum of ‘spoon feeding’, ‘help’, ‘support’, ‘encouragement’ and ‘independent learning’ quite differently. Further, the implications of higher fees may have an effect on this as noted *“. In light of the higher fees, some of my own students have indicated that they place a higher emphasis on me as a tutor to guide them through learning, as opposed to taking personal responsibility”*.

A sample of comments testify of the importance of developing students as independent learners.

*“Critical thinking skills should be challenged and are important”*

*“Students must put themselves at the centre of their learning and take all opportunities offered”*

*“PGT is not an extension of UG. The learners should not be as passive as they take responsibility for own learning”*

*“Underpinning principle is to develop the critical thinking skills of students.”*

*“Goal and mission is to enable students to become mature in their own writing, and achieve independence.”*

The influence of an individual must not be underestimated. Both student and alumni comments included references to individual staff who had inspired them during their studies at university. Staff also commented on the value of individuals, for example, *“Having the right staff is really important. Passionate staff to help integrated learning”* and *“Need inspirational figure/lecturer. We all had one (or more).”*

### **Student Support**

The comments and feedback in relation to student support were varied and encompassed mentoring, personal tutors and professional support services (including Sigma and CAW). Both current practice and suggestions for future developments were provided and the comments received indicate different practices for tutorials across faculties and within departments. This results in a varying experience for students and as suggested by their feedback is dependent upon the course you are enrolled on or the tutor allocated.

*“Students can be part of a mentoring society where year 3 students mentors new undergraduates”*

*“There are resource implications.”*  
*“Not using mentors as yet”*  
*“Student mentors. These have been lost across years. Have input from student ambassadors”*  
*“Looking to strengthen personal tutorials in the second year in particular, encouraging them to do own job research and sharing information back to the group”*  
*“Have regular tutorials which are compulsory and used for assessment. Typically groups of six for tutorials”*  
*“Academic writing development for students”*  
*“hour lecture then two hour tutorial tends to be the standard”*  
*“employability and study skills and personal tutorials are taught as ten credit modules each year”*  
*“Have regular tutorials which are compulsory and used for assessment”*  
*“Students are coming in with raised expectations and want different not more.”*

### **Draft Strategy**

The comments were far ranging and included many positive comments and suggestions, for example a number of comments to increase the emphasis on sustainability. In addition any comments that were outside of the education strategy were anonymised and forwarded to the relevant service. A very small sample of comments is shown below.

*[the team]” supports the ambitions of the new Education Strategy for the next period, particularly in its focus on providing transformative learning experiences based around critical enquiry, reflective practice and multicultural and international experiences for every student..... Whilst, therefore, the Education Strategy’s inclusion of ‘research and professional-inspired teaching’ as an area of focus is very much welcomed, our team’s experience leads us to believe that this should be a more prominent theme than currently described in the draft strategy”*

*“[Our successful graduates will be contributing citizens who can demonstrate a range of personal and collaborative skills and attributes]. In order to bring the strategies together more explicitly, it would be important to include here the notion of global graduate, as defined in the teaching, learning, assessment strategy:”*

*“In the section ‘what students can expect from us’ it seems to me that the global citizenship dimension (which has both employability and social justice dimensions) is missing”*

*“That these are perfectly acceptable standards and we could add that this has a cross-cultural understanding. Clearly respect, professionalism is interpreted differently by different cultures. Some work on this might payoff and help demonstrate more effective cultural integration”*

*“Please ensure that sustainability is not just paid lip service and that this University lives up to the triple bottom line i.e. people, planet and profit”*

*“I w Foster a sense of global citizenship and future-thinking; including environmental stewardship; social justice; ethics and wellbeing. ould like to strengthen commitments to sustainability”*

The revised strategy reflects these and other comments. A number of comments asked questions around common themes of resource implications of any proposed changes and the staff/student responsibilities.

*“Employability in all modules is a good idea, in practice, many careers in our area get called away at last minute leaving us in the lurch for a timetabled session.. There are cost implications too.”*

*“I know this strategy focuses on learning and teaching; however, without adequate other support structures in place learning will not take place”*

*“There should be permanent, regular, all year round training for relevant software packages (repeating the same subjects frequently) for staff and students to learn new or refresh and top-up their skills”*

*“Innovative teaching (e.g. the so-called flipped classroom) have budgetary implications that are rarely accommodated or even addressed.”*

*“Academics currently have enough workloads, so if this strategy is going to go through far more teaching (and admin) support (as we have lost most of our administrative support and seem to be doing ridiculous amounts of admin) is needed”*

*“There is a need for the institution as a whole to take decisions on most appropriate ways forward for example in the choice of learning technology systems; how we develop flexible approaches (with implications for spaces, timetabling etc)”*

*“There must be adequate support for lecturers to achieve their goals”*

*“it is possible to be creative and innovative (and I have been), but what shapes teaching on a day to day basis is not sound educational principles but ‘the system’”*

*“International partners are always interested in sharing teaching resources. Effective mechanisms need to be developed for this.”*

*“Ensure the level of resource is up to the task of the on of the strategy”*

## **Research**

Staff do know the value of embedding research in teaching to provide students with learning based on current projects, however there were comments that highlighted tensions that can arise between teaching and research. In particular the current drive towards research concerned some teaching staff. There were a small number of specific comments about research inspired teaching although there was a consensus that a good balance should be the goal of research inspired teaching without lessening the results and achievements that have been made.

*“Research informed teaching is key to providing students with a good learning experience”*

*“A suggestion of a PhD list of expertise so that teaching teams could call upon appropriate colleagues”*

*“Research at the moment is not an open agenda. There are small groups who have a closed shop to the rest of the teaching staff”*

*“Use our research to provide state of the art lectures”*

*“Historically applied research focus and as a result results went down. Changed approach and reemphasised the focus on T&L and the results increased significantly”*

## **Assessment and Feedback**

There were very few staff comments on assessment and feedback (9). The only general comments outside of a specific course were that *“One week turnaround of assignments is too short for quality and depth of feedback”* and *“Still a way to go on assessment across a programme rather than within modules”*. This area will be addressed in more depth as part of a review of assessment and feedback.

## **Innovation and Technology**

There is a clear understanding of the role of technology to support and enhance our education provision and the need for appropriate development in this area. Staff were keen to make comments on digital fluency and technology with 67 separate comments. Some IT issues were highlighted; however the majority of comments were focussed on student learning.

*“Like to see more engagement with deep learning”*

*“Transformative learning is important to get help the students prepare for and get jobs.”*

*“We need to provide a deadly mix of attractive glamorous teaching mixed with underpinning academic principles”*

*“Passion and staff diversity is the reasons for our success”*

*“Still a huge need for some basic TEL training – we are undertaking flipped classroom, Moodle basics, e-marking and module boxes; tablet teaching and learning, creating blogs”*

*“The use of technology can assist in this and increase the student engagement, resulting in more value from staff expertise. Ensure that everyone understands that increased technology is not to replace staff expertise.”*

*“Colleagues are starting to understand professional aspects and role of learning technologist”*

*“Need body of research to lead the way in digital fluency. There are current digital champions in the faculty and given time they can push the agenda forward and support staff.”*

*“we must not make assumptions on student IT knowledge as many international students may not have had the same experience”*

*“Challenges experienced with current technology and systems eg. Moodle messages to students are very slow.”*

*“Very different spread across digital fluency. e.g. Moodle use. Some of this may be because of historic problems with Moodle or type of materials. If one member of a teaching team uses Moodle and the others don’t then students don’t fully engage as it is not the norm for them.”*

### **Resources and General Staff Issues**

Outside of direct teaching there were a number of staff comments on the availability of resources and teaching spaces, CPD, reward and central communication channels. Samples comments of areas that impact upon the education strategy are shown below. The university has already announced plans to acknowledge and reward high quality teaching and pedagogical research.

#### **Communication & CPD/Reward**

*“Corporate strategy can be a barrier. There are some challenges with staff communication. With the new strategy there should be a level of accountability and trust.”*

*“We have to be careful with policies that come out as directives as these can impede digital innovation rather than enable it.”*

*“These cannot be imposed, but need to be adopted by departmental heads and then using one innovator to permeate good practice across”*

*“CPD of staff must align to T&L strategy and vision and support it. “*

*“Discussion about T&L development opportunities for professional services staff seems to differ across the university”*

*“Suggest that staff with high returns from student feedback are flagged and then use them to share good practice.”*

*“Learning time for staff is important. Currently, they are expected to pick up new systems along the way.”*

*“Teaching champions would be a good idea”*

#### Teaching Spaces

*“PGT want to study in a dedicated space and access specialist help, eg literature searches”*

*“Space is a problem because of growing numbers and there are still large lectures theatres that are not the most appropriate.”*

*“Teaching is not in isolation and can sit alongside accommodation resources. Although a different classroom won’t turn someone into a good teacher, spaces make a difference.”*

*“Some challenges are that the rooms are not designed by teachers, resulting in some challenging placement of fixtures and fittings and not being able to move around freely or change layout easily. Must have teachers involved when planning a teaching space. “*

*“With any move forward be aware of where staff come from as their shift to new ways of teaching in different defined spaces may be difficult.”*

The inclusion of enterprise, sustainability and community add to our current strategy to ensure relevance as we move forward and comments from experts in these areas were greatly appreciated. One respondent commented *“I have found the opportunity to consider what is planned and feed into the process very valuable. I just hope it is not a tick box exercise and what is feedback will be considered in a meaningful way.”* The revised strategy absolutely reflects the consultation process.

## Employer Consultation

This was carried out by in-depth one to one discussions. Employers consulted represented small and large organisations that employ graduates locally, nationally and globally. Each employer was given an opportunity to comment on the draft strategy and in particular, evidence of independent learning and employability skills and issues. A graduate needs to have more than academic achievement to secure good job roles and they must be able to give examples of skills that they have gained during their studies at university, both in and out of the classroom. Some employers suggest that universities have a role that is much more than teaching the academic content to enable a student to become a graduate.

*“Following academic ability is extra-curricular (working as part of a team and embracing university life). This shows that they are bright as they are still getting the grades but also shows that you can achieve and still be part of the wider university experience. “*

*“Graduates must have a certain level of knowledge but they also need to know how to think and work things out for themselves. Students should have the ability to find out now about things that they need more knowledge about”*

*“Want students who are motivated and self-driven as they need something that will set them apart when applying. “*

*“Transferable skills are very important but at interviews applicants are often weak as they may not recognise the skills they have. This can be very frustrating. There is*

*also a sense coming through that students have had everything done for them and do not seem to be able to do things for themselves”*

*“Felt that universities can do more to prepare students and be given opportunities to get involved in employability or enterprise schemes. Students need to be more employable and we can be bridge to help.”*

*“A certain amount of drive is needed and the ability to think outside of the box so that when they are given a new scenario in interview they find approaches to a solution and asking supplementary questions to help them.”*

They were supportive of the proposed strategy and commented on university alignment to how organisations are becoming more global, demonstrating greater sustainability and emphasising a corporate social responsibility.

*“There are a number of worthy objectives within your strategy, for me the most important is employability. With the financial burden now being placed on students I think this will be one of the most important factors, to ensure they get a return on their c.£9k p.a. investment in fees”*

*“how much is this a 'teaching' rather than learning strategy? From a business perspective I want to be able to find graduate who know how to manage their own learning not just be well taught”*

*“Employability and enterprise should be at the top of the list of our transformative pillars”*

The feasibility of employer visit and guest lectures was discussed as this is something that students see as beneficial to preparing them for employment. The results varied between small and large organisations as larger organisations have dedicated employees who work with universities and are very willing to visit students on campus and take part in different activities. In smaller companies, there may be a conflict between wanting to be supportive, whilst having to prioritise their own job requirements.

*“They would come in to support something or to give a presentation; however it takes time and preparation and would not be their top priority. They are more able to commit to an ad hoc request”*

*“They would make use of recent graduates if a request came in from the university rather than senior managers but would encourage a balance between the two “*

*“For a medium size company there may be a struggle to see the benefits of coming in and speaking to students as a guest lecturer. They would be happy to be invited but have to yield to the organisation and market pressures and therefore the commitment has to be realistic. “*

*[large organisation]” goes with ready made presentations. These are focussed on a suite of skills courses to take out to university in soft skills. Students want to benefit from a visit and not just wheel out another ‘suit’ to stand in front of them”*

Employer comments demonstrate the interest and input that they have in the student learning experience and the complementary skills that are essential to this process.

## **Consultation Summary**

The consultation process has provided the content for a rich strategy that has tried to capture the passionate determination by staff to provide our students with a transformative

learning experience. All stakeholders made valuable contributions and allowed the strategic direction to be viewed through different lenses.

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