

Education Strategy 2017-23

Research-rich, innovative and inclusive



University of
BRISTOL

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

EDUCATION STRATEGY 2017-2023

The Education Strategy is grounded in the University Strategic Plan *Our Vision Our Strategy*. We aim to deliver an education that is **research-rich, innovative and inclusive**. We will do so through the promotion of a focussed set of ambitious priorities, delivered via robust institution-wide educational enhancement actions.

Vision

The University's Vision and Strategy¹ provides the framework for the Education Strategy:

'Our vision is to sustain and improve upon our world-leading reputation for research, and embrace educational innovation that will nurture skilled, adaptable and resilient graduates.'

The following Education Priorities enable us to deliver the principal aspects of our vision. The priorities for **Education and the Student Experience** are to:

1. Recruit and retain academically gifted and highly motivated students from a range of backgrounds, and create inclusive learning communities, equally supportive of all students.
2. Provide an education that is research-rich, innovative and with course design and assessment practices that challenge our students and so empower them to achieve their full potential.
3. Design, develop and deliver a 'Bristol Futures' curriculum that will ensure all students acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to equip them for success within a rapidly changing world of work.
4. Provide personalised support for students' learning, enabling all students to proactively manage their health and wellbeing, and develop the attributes needed to make the most of their university experience.
5. To provide an outstanding physical and digital environment that supports student learning and teaching excellence.
6. Foster an institutional culture that values teaching and research equally and embeds institutional mechanisms that facilitate, recognise and reward excellent teaching, while providing effective and enabling structures that support educational enhancement.

These aims will also be operationalised and achieved through the following policy and process directives:

- The University Strategic Plan
- Compliance with external requirements, including the HEFCE Annual Provider Review, Teaching Excellence Framework, QAA Higher Education Review and relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements.
- Actions to address issues that arise via student survey results and Bristol SU Sabbatical Officer priorities.

Details of how these six priorities will be achieved are summarised through the following actions.

¹ <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/strategy/>

EDUCATION AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Priority 1 Recruit and retain academically gifted and highly motivated students from a range of backgrounds, and create inclusive learning communities, equally supportive of all students.

Actions

- 1.1 We will **recruit the best** and work with other UK higher education institutions and a range of strategic partners to promote fair access to research intensive universities such as⁷ Bristol and maintain a fair admissions procedure.
- 1.2 We will **widen participation** and significantly increase recruitment of high-potential students from local schools through the Bristol Scholars programme that will provide up to five guaranteed places per Bristol school for the most able students whose potential has not been reflected in formal examination results due to a range of issues related to social deprivation, illness or being a young carer, among others. We will also introduce a contextual offer system of up to two grades below our standard offer for high-potential students from all aspiring state schools.
- 1.3 We will enhance the **international character** of the University by increasing the numbers of international students and deepening their integration into the University community.
- 1.4 We will provide students from under-represented backgrounds with a package of **academic and pastoral support** to guide their development and enable them to thrive at Bristol. We will work to retain all of our students and ensure they progress to achieve their full potential. We will support our undergraduate students during their initial transition to University.
- 1.5 We will introduce a new Bristol Futures curriculum by 2020 that will create **inclusive learning communities** and deliver an education that is inclusive in scope and delivery.

⁷ <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academicregistry/raa/wpur-office/strategy-documents-publications/>

⁸ <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/>

Priority 2	Provide an education that is research-rich, innovative and with course design and assessment practices that challenge our students and so empower them to achieve their full potential.
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Actions

- 2.1 We will ensure that programmes are **research-rich, intellectually challenging and internationally relevant** and meet the highest academic standards, thereby ensuring that all students experience a culture of research and the excitement of discovery.
- 2.2 We will maintain a robust quality assurance framework that **drives innovative course design**, working in partnership with students at all stages. This will include engagement with external examiners, annual review of programmes, faculty quality assurance processes and periodic strategic reviews of departments/schools.
- 2.3 We will embed **assessment for learning**, as articulated in our Institutional Principles for Assessment and Feedback in Taught Programmes across the institution such that a common approach to assessment is formed articulating the cyclical relationship between learning, assessment and feedback and improving students' understanding of their learning experience.
- 2.4 We will work **in partnership with our student representatives** at all levels so that students can play an active role in School, Faculty and University decision-making processes. We will ensure that student feedback is gathered and that it is used to inform the quality of the student experience. We will support the Students' Union as it works to develop and sustain an effective "Student Course Reps" system through the provision of training to help representatives perform effectively at all levels.
- 2.5 We will work with organisations that employ our graduates, including industry, business, the professions and the wider community, to ensure that our programmes meet **professional and societal needs**, and ensure the continued accreditation of our professional programmes by the relevant statutory bodies and institutions
- 2.6 We will encourage students to become partners in their own learning, and create an environment in which they can take ownership of, and responsibility for, their own learning. All our students will become **self-sufficient, independent learners** in their discipline

Priority 3	Design, develop and deliver a ‘Bristol Futures’ curriculum that will ensure all students acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to equip them for success within a rapidly changing world of work.
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Actions

- 3.1 We will provide a Bristol Skills Framework against which students can assess their skills development, evidencing and recording their **personal development** in order to foster and demonstrate a rounded set of graduate attributes. We will provide academic study skill resources to support students to successfully transition to study at University and progress through their academic programmes.
- 3.2 We will provide a curriculum that supports the development of enduring, transferable skills and attributes in disciplinary appropriate ways within all programmes. We will provide students with opportunities to engage in learning communities outside their discipline through a choice of optional units that provide **multi-disciplinary breadth** and joint working with other students on problem-based challenges that align with three personal and professional development pathways: Innovation and Enterprise, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Futures.
- 3.3 We will increase students’ awareness of the benefits of studying at a university with a **global focus** and an international constituency, so that they gain an understanding of the international cultural, professional and academic context of their chosen discipline and develop the skills and knowledge they need to participate, innovate and lead in an international context. We will offer our students the opportunity to develop their language skills and to travel through the expansion of ‘study abroad’ and ‘exchange’ opportunities or through dedicated arrangements with partners in specific disciplines.
- 3.4 We will provide students with the opportunities for **professional and community engagement** in a variety of contexts, including, internships, placements or volunteering activities. We will recognise the value of these achievements through the Bristol PLUS Award².
- 3.5 We will enhance the **employability** of our students by offering, in collaboration with the Students’ Union, a wide variety of opportunities (including specifically tailored courses delivered by the Careers Service and others) for students to acquire and develop skills to enhance their competitiveness in the world of work. In particular the Careers Service will work with Schools to develop tailored Employability Partnership Agreements to align with the profile and priorities of each School.

² <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/careers/employable/plus-award/>

Priority 4 Provide personalised support for students' learning, enabling all students to proactively manage their health and wellbeing, and develop the attributes needed to make the most of their university experience.

Actions

- 4.1 We will work closely in partnership with our Students' Union to **support student wellbeing** and the wider University experience for all of our students. We will develop the quality and consistency of support available across schools, professional services and residences for student wellbeing, and personal and professional development.
- 4.2 We will give students' **academic support** to facilitate their success at the University, supporting transition to study at University and progress through their academic programmes. We will review the academic support offered within schools via the personal tutor /senior tutor system and develop enhanced [support] provision across all schools. We will improve the coordination and promote the development of our professional support services that support student learning with particular reference to the needs of specific groups (e.g. WP and international students).
- 4.3 We will encourage students to undertake **personal development** by engaging/engagement in our widening participation schemes as peer mentors, student ambassadors or school student tutors and other related activities.
- 4.4 We will facilitate the development of an inclusive sense of community, in university **residences** and with peer to peer support so that social activities reflect the diverse cultural make-up of our student population. We will enhance the role of the university residential facilities to better support student learning and offer students excellent opportunities to develop their life skills so as to enhance their chances of success.
- 4.5 We will make a significant contribution to the creation and development of the culture of a 'Healthy University' by providing, sport, exercise and health programmes of the highest quality that are accessible to all students. We will increase student participation levels, driven by a focus on **student health and well-being**, student satisfaction levels and the development of employability opportunities that come through leading and participating in sport.

Priority 5 To provide an outstanding physical and digital environment that supports student learning and teaching excellence.

Actions

- 5.1 We will work to provide the best available **learning environment** in terms of teaching and learning spaces, laboratory and clinical spaces, as well as resources such as books and IT systems.
- 5.2 We will ensure that programme delivery utilises the most appropriate technology. We will enhance our **blended learning** environment and e-learning tools, integrating them with on-line administrative tools to give students efficient and effective support and to help staff optimise their delivery of high quality teaching, assessment and feedback.
- 5.3 We will refresh our **digital infrastructure** to make it more resilient, scalable and flexible investing in new productivity, collaboration and communications tools to allow staff and students to work and study more efficiently and seamlessly.
- 5.4 We will provide enhanced support for students via improved **institutional systems** capacity to holistically view the student journey and identify those requiring targeted interventions.
- 5.5 We will develop effective **communication systems** (e.g. websites, handbooks, fora) at all levels to ensure that policies and guidance are readily available to their intended audience.

Priority 6	Foster an institutional culture that values teaching and research equally and embeds institutional mechanisms that facilitate, recognise and reward excellent teaching, while providing effective and enabling structures that support educational enhancement.
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- 6.1 We will establish a Bristol Institute of Learning and Teaching to advance **pedagogic innovation and enhancement**. We will aim to develop academic staff on Pathway 1 and 3, so that they engage students in innovative, relevant and challenging curricula that draw on the research environment and we will ensure that students continue to be taught by leading research staff in all subjects
- 6.2 We will ensure that academic **appointment, progression and promotions** procedures for Pathway 1 and 3 incorporate excellence, or the potential to achieve excellence, in teaching and the support of student learning, as key criteria for success.
- 6.3 We will support the professional and career **development of all staff** engaged in teaching, through the provision both of an accredited programme of study³ and of specialist strategic, practical or project management support throughout academics teaching and educational leadership careers.
- 6.4 We will enable and reward **educational leadership** and innovation, and ensure that there is effective leadership of education and management structures which emphasise and further develop the role of Faculty Education Directors as leaders for education and learning.
- 6.5 We will **encourage and recognise** all staff (academic, professional, technical, support) for their excellence in teaching and in the support of student learning, through University Teaching Awards and University Teaching Fellowships. We will disseminate good practice and promote excellence in educational practice.

³ <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/academic/create/>

