

1. Introduction

Background

As one of the UK's leading universities, Newcastle is the 'University of Choice' for approximately 21,000 students from more than 100 different countries. These students, from increasingly diverse backgrounds, are attracted by our extensive range of full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree programmes, as well as our portfolio of Master's and Doctoral level research degrees.

The University regards a high quality student experience as an essential feature of excellent higher education. Our commitment, however, extends well beyond the student learning experience to embrace all aspects of a student's time at Newcastle. This wider student experience includes a sense of involvement in the life of the University within its local communities and globally, an attractive social and residential experience, active participation in cultural, sporting and work experiences, and a sense of wellbeing and support.

Continuity

The University's previous Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy, was updated in 2009 to reflect the initial publication of Vision 2021: A World Class Civic University. Since then, Vision 2021 has itself been refreshed, a number of related supporting strategies (internationalisation, IT, and student recruitment) have been agreed.

The core themes of our previous Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy are still valid – a commitment to excellent teaching, high-quality programmes, support for student learning and achievement, a fully-rounded student experience beyond the programme, involving students as active members of the University community, and providing an environment in which learning is supported through a range of facilities, services, technologies and communities. There are also substantial elements of our work which are ongoing, such as the five year programme in response to changes to deliver the Newcastle Offer for undergraduate students <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/assets/internal-documents/newcastle-offer.pdf> , and continuing work to bring about improvement on key themes, such as assessment and feedback. This revised strategy reflects that continuity.

Key themes

Building on this existing core, additional emphasis has been given in this iteration of the strategy to a number of themes:

- The relationship between research and teaching.
- Employability, student engagement, and diversification of our portfolio of programmes
- Integration of cross-cutting themes, such as e-learning, internationalisation and the postgraduate student experience.

2. Strategic Vision

Our vision is of Newcastle as a civic university with a global reputation for academic excellence. Our mission is:

- a) To be a world class research-intensive university
- b) To deliver teaching and facilitate learning of the highest quality
- c) To play a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England.

3. Statement of principles and values

Our approach to learning, teaching and the student experience is underpinned by a number of principles and values set out in Vision 2021. We:

- a) Are committed to excellence
- b) Value diversity
- c) Respond to societal challenges
- d) Accord parity of esteem to research and teaching
- e) Educate for life
- f) Are globally ambitious and regionally rooted
- g) Invest in excellent staff.

4. Statement of strategic direction

- We offer a challenging and transformative learning experience informed by our world-leading research.
- We expect our students to work with staff to engage pro-actively with this experience and encourage them to be active partners in shaping their own learning and student experience. Key to the Newcastle experience is that we support students to develop as autonomous learners – as critical thinkers able to synthesise, communicate and evaluate opinions and ideas and apply them in a variety of contexts.
- The University is operating in an environment where continual and multi-faceted change is now the norm. Our aim is for the University to be resilient and responsive to change, while maintaining a strong sense of core identity.
- We recognise the imperative for growth in order to maintain and improve our position while also continuing to improve the quality of what we do. This requires investment in human and physical resource to ensure success
- All our students should be able to expect provision that meets or exceeds clearly defined thresholds, but by focussing on consistency of outcome rather than just standardisation of process, we will balance our commitment to quality with encouragement for innovation and creativity.

5. Strategic aims

- a) Top 20 in the UK for student satisfaction
- b) Focus on three societal challenge themes: ageing, social renewal, and sustainability
- c) A significant international, national and regional profile and reputation.

6. Strategic objectives

The University has developed a portfolio that encompasses taught, professional and research provision, delivered in Newcastle as well as on campuses overseas and in partnership, and by e-learning as well as face-to-face. The following ¹objectives should be understood in the context of that diversity.

¹ Objectives relate to those set out in Vision 2021; order does not signify any hierarchy of importance or emphasis.

A. To promote *research and teaching* such that each of our core activities enhances and is enhanced by the other

We look to embed direct experience of research and development of research skills, values and culture into the student learning experience, and in so doing encourage students to develop skills and attributes that facilitate academic success and are valued by employers.

We will do this by:

- i. Inspiring students through programmes of study and teaching which are informed by leading edge research and scholarship in the discipline area
- ii. Promoting a scholarly community of staff and students as partners in a shared research culture in which academically-rigorous learning, critical enquiry, and discovery are celebrated and publicised
- iii. Offering opportunities for the development of research skills, including enquiry skills, critical analysis and problem-solving, and promoting understanding of the research processes through which knowledge is produced
- iv. Offering students enhanced opportunities to undertake research, for example, through the introduction of supernumerary undergraduate research modules
- v. Supporting postgraduate research students to develop as academic researchers, for example, through the introduction of a PGR Innovation fund
- vi. Articulating clearly for students and wider audiences the meaning and benefits of being a member of a research-intensive University
- vii. Developing our understanding of the relationship between research and teaching in the context of new initiatives to inform the delivery of research-informed teaching on our transnational campuses and the direction and implementation of our growth agenda.

B. To deliver and promote *teaching* of the highest standard

We aim to support all those involved in teaching to excel and to continue to develop their approaches to learning and teaching, through:

- i. Access to and encouragement to engage with professional development opportunities that are aligned with external benchmarks, such as the revised UK Professional Standards Framework, Vitae Researcher Development Framework and Research Concordat
- ii. Opportunities to engage with best practice, disciplinary and pedagogical research, and peer communities
- iii. Rewarding and recognising excellence in teaching through both internal and external mechanisms
- iv. Encouraging innovation in teaching and consideration of a range of approaches to delivery
- v. Investing in provision of sufficient academic and support staff to ensure that our ambitions for growth are accommodated alongside our commitment to high quality teaching
- vi. Equipping staff to embed digital technologies effectively within their teaching and to develop technology-enhanced learning
- vii. Facilitating the inclusion of international perspectives and experience into our teaching
- viii. Supporting postgraduate research students to mature and develop as the next generation of academic colleagues through effective supervision and opportunities for teaching and training.

C. To provide *programmes* that meet relevant *accreditation and quality standards*

We aim to sustain and develop University's strong national and international reputation by offering and promoting a range of high quality, professionally-accredited, undergraduate and

postgraduate degree programmes and a portfolio of courses of continuing professional development. These programmes will be up-to-date in content, coherent of structure, and designed and delivered by subject experts, to recognised external and professional standards. We will achieve this aim by:

- i. Supporting innovation in curricula, and seeking to minimise the barriers to development of high-quality, innovative partnerships and flexible provision
- ii. Working in partnership with our students as change agents for learning and teaching enhancement at programme and institutional levels
- iii. Designing programmes that, across our portfolio, strike a balance between student choice and the expectation of a coherent programme of study, and which are structured to encourage the development of students as active and autonomous learners
- iv. Developing the University's portfolio of programmes to ensure continued alignment with academic, professional, market and economic needs, including:
 - Developing our portfolio of continuing professional development, flexible and online postgraduate taught provision to meet the needs of employers and students, channelled in the first instance through the work of the Diversifying Our Portfolio steering group
 - Ensuring parity of experience in doctoral education in light of the advent of doctoral training partnerships
 - Diversifying the range of programmes offered via our transnational campuses
 - Exploring the emerging opportunities for online and flexible learning in support of our growth agenda. This will include, for example, working in partnership with FutureLearn to deliver Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
 - Encouraging the inclusion within programmes of acknowledgement of the Societal Challenges we face and the international context in which we operate
- v. Delivering all modules and programmes to agreed internal and external specifications:
 - Operating effective quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms that drive enhancement of the student learning experience, meet requirements of public accountability and reinforce our reputation for high quality
 - Working with high quality partners that share our strong commitment to academic standards.

D. To facilitate and support *student learning and achievement*

We aim to foster a culture of independent learning, critical thinking and enterprise, in which students are supported to become active and autonomous learners, who take responsibility for their own learning (see *also* Graduate Skills Framework). We aim to achieve this by:

- i. Encouraging the retention and development of students as members of the University community through:
 - Induction and orientation that develops students' understanding of the expectations of higher education study
 - Staff/student contact through which students are engaged with their learning
 - Opportunities for peer learning. For first year undergraduates, for example, this will include the opportunity to have a student mentor
- ii. Facilitating student learning and development through effective and consistent academic and personal support from a personal tutor for taught students, together with clear signposting to relevant professional services
- iii. Facilitating postgraduate research student learning, achievement and timely completion through effective support and feedback from a supervisory team
- iv. Developing our assessment and feedback frameworks and practice to ensure that:
 - The assessment mechanisms used allow students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have acquired, and these mechanisms are applied rigorously, fairly and consistently

- Students are assessed formatively and summatively in a range of ways that encourage learning and skills development across their programme
- Students receive timely and useful feedback that feeds forward into the improvement of performance
- v. Encouraging students to develop their digital literacy, to take advantage of opportunities for technology-enhanced learning and to make effective use of digital technologies, in order to support learning, achievement and employability
- vi. Providing clear information that enables students to make well-informed decisions about their learning, and to have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to succeed.

E. To deliver a *fully rounded, enjoyable and formative student experience* that supports development of *employability skills* for national and global markets

We aim to prepare our students for the challenges of study, citizenship, employment and leadership, equipping them to make meaningful contributions to the local, national and global intellectual environments, skills priorities and economies. We will do this by providing opportunities at each stage of the student lifecycle for students to develop skills that equip them for learning, life, work and professional practice (see *also* Graduate Skills Framework):

- i. Extending the range of curricular and co-curricular opportunities for development of the skills required for success in academia and beyond:
 - Enhancing the range of Ncl+ opportunities, for example, through the development of University-wide supernumerary language modules
 - Offering PGR students opportunities for professional development: to develop teaching skills in line with the UK Professional Standards Framework, to develop as early career researchers in line with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and Research Concordat, and to develop a wider range of employability skills through opportunities such as training, internships and placements
 - Encouraging engagement with the Societal Challenge themes: Ageing, Sustainability and Social Renewal
 - Incorporating opportunities to develop relevant professional skills, such as ethical awareness and entrepreneurship, into programmes
 - Working in partnership with the Students' Union to offer students a wider range of opportunities through which to learn and develop, such as social, cultural, community, entrepreneurial, enterprise and volunteering activities, student societies and an active presence in recreational and competitive sport
- ii. Offering a broadly equivalent student experience in our transnational operations and for our postgraduate taught students as that offered in Newcastle for undergraduates, by developing and implementing the transnational and postgraduate equivalents of the Newcastle 'offer'
- iii. Enriching the student experience by promoting the international context in which we operate:
 - Working with the Students' Union to enhance the opportunities for international students to interact with local students
 - Offering international opportunities for students within the curriculum through development of language skills and through opportunities to study abroad
 - Capitalising upon the opportunities afforded as a transnational University to encourage development of cross-campus collaboration and mobility between students in Newcastle and our transnational operations
- iv. Enabling students to articulate and apply the skills they are developing as part of their University experience, to identify routes for skills development, and to present their portfolio of skills and experience in the most effective manner to employers.

F. To ensure that *students are at the centre of the learning experience* and their feedback lies at the heart of our future strategy

We aim to work in partnership with our students in order to develop their learning experience to be as stimulating, relevant, challenging and satisfying as possible. In order to do this, we will:

- i. Encourage students to be active and engaged members of the University community, sharing ownership of their learning experience, through
 - o Robust mechanisms for module and programme evaluations
 - o Internal and external surveys and focus group research
 - o The roll-out of a staff-student shadowing scheme
- ii. Work with the Students' Union to offer effective mechanisms for partnership, student engagement and representation in line with the student representation framework, and other involvement in decision-making structures consistent with the principles of the National Union of Students Manifesto for Partnership
- iii. Offer relevant opportunities for involvement, and encourage active uptake across the full range of the student body, regardless of background, level of study, location or mode of study.

G. To provide access to an *environment and community*, physical and virtual, within which effective learning can take place

We aim to offer an accessible and inclusive environment for learning, both as a University community, and in terms of the facilities, technologies and services that provide the backdrop to learning. We will seek to achieve this by:

- i. Developing an inclusive University community at home and internationally, which recruits and retains high quality staff and students, and where diversity of contributions and approaches to learning is valued
- ii. Celebrating, both internally and publicly, the achievements of our staff and students and the contributions they make to the University and wider community
- iii. Providing high quality campus environments and learning spaces, physical and virtual, that can be adapted to varied learning needs and methods. We will achieve this through:
 - Engaging staff and students as partners in the ongoing development of our physical and digital campuses
 - Development of our estate to accommodate growth, innovative and varied teaching approaches
 - Ongoing development of social learning spaces that encourage a sense of belonging
 - Rolling out ReCap lecture capture functionality in a minimum of 200 venues across campuses
- iv. Delivering a coherent and distributed network of effective facilities, technologies and professional services that support staff and students throughout the student lifecycle. This will include scoping and implementing the findings of the Task and Finish Group on the Future Development of Systems to Support Learning, Teaching and the Staff and Student Experience
- v. Developing innovative facilities and services to meet the needs of a diverse staff and student population, and investing in appropriate staffing to support successful growth. We will look at how we deliver services across campuses and for students at a distance, and at how we tailor aspects of provision to reach postgraduate students more effectively.

7. Key performance indicators

Top 20 in the UK for student satisfaction	<i>Overall performance in National Student Survey</i> [Target: ≥ 90% overall satisfaction, and ≤ 5% dissatisfaction, per Subject at Level 3]
	<i>Satisfaction indicators in: Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES); Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES); International Student Barometer</i> [Target: ≥ 90% satisfaction in each]
to deliver and promote teaching of the highest standard	<i>Substantial AAB+ intake</i> [Target: ≥ 60% by 2016 entry]
	<i>Percentage of staff with teaching qualifications</i> [Target 25% by 2017-18]
	<i>Low drop-out rates</i> [Target: UK Top 20, HESA full-time/first degree entrants]
to facilitate and support student learning and achievement	<i>Percentage of students achieving 1st/2:1 degrees</i> [Target: UK top 20]
	<i>Postgraduate research student submission rate</i> [Target: ≥ 75% for FT students within 4 years, and ≥ 50% for PT within 6 years]
to support development of employability skills for national and global markets	<i>% students employed after 6 months and % employed in graduate level jobs</i> [Target: UK top 20 for graduates in graduate level employment or postgraduate study, as ranked in the Times Good University Guide (GUG)]
	<i>Institutions most targeted by graduate employers in annual High Fliers 'The Graduate Market' report</i> [Target: UK top 20]
to provide programmes and services that meet relevant accreditation and quality standards	<i>Results of QAA review</i> [Target: to remain in good standing with the QAA]
to deliver a fully rounded, enjoyable and formative student experience	<i>Number of Ncl+ opportunities provided to students each year</i> [Target: one opportunity for every undergraduate student]

Suzanne Cholerton
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)

This Strategy was considered and approved by Senate at their meeting on 26 November 2013, and by Council at their meeting on 9 December 2013.