



University of Essex



Strategic Plan



2013-19

1964
2014

Foreword

“Our mission [is] to contribute to society through excellence in education and excellence in research.”

Following extensive consultation within the University and with our partners, our new Strategic Plan sets out the mission and goals of the University over the next six years.

The University has achieved a great deal over the last five years and in particular our research strength - capped by the award by Her Majesty The Queen of a Regius Professorship in Political Science in 2013 - is something we all take a great deal of pride in. However, the external environment has changed considerably, with the significant increase in student fees, the deregulation of undergraduate recruitment and greater competition for our fair share of talented students. Our new Strategic Plan therefore focuses on a very clear statement of our mission to contribute to society through excellence in education and excellence in research.

All that we do will be examined through the prism of our excellence agenda and parity of esteem in the twin purpose of our University. In our education we aim to offer our students a transformational international educational experience. This encompasses both the academic and the extra-curricular, which provides them with the opportunity to fulfil their

potential as individuals by developing themselves within our living and learning community as independent learners equipped to take responsibility for their personal and professional development throughout their lives.

In our research we aim to make major scholarly contributions in the disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields in which our staff are engaged in research, and to develop the implications of these contributions for improving people's lives in the UK and abroad.

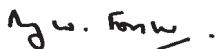
Our ambition is that by 2019 we will be acknowledged nationally and internationally as a leading research-intensive university. As a result of achieving this ambition by 2019 we will be firmly established in the top 25 of UK universities, and all of the subjects offered by the University will be ranked within the top 20 per cent of their discipline within the UK.

We are a university that has grown significantly over the last decade and now operating across three campuses at Colchester, Southend-on-Sea and Loughton - and with a growing online presence through University of Essex Online. If we are to fulfil our mission of excellence, this expansion will need to continue. Our aim is to

ensure that the University develops the critical mass needed to create a sustainable institution that is able to invest in the delivery and support of excellent education and research, and to strengthen its ability to respond effectively to potential future changes to the external environment in which it operates. By 2019 the University therefore aspires to increase its student numbers by 50 per cent, responding in a timely way to new opportunities whilst maintaining our commitment to excellence.

In his 1963 Reith Lectures, our founding Vice-Chancellor, Sir Albert Sloman posited that 50 years after the founding of the University, few might know of the hopes and ideals which those associated with the University's foundation cherished. As we approach our 50th Anniversary in 2014, not only do we cherish these ideals, they also provide us an inspirational road map for navigating our next half century.

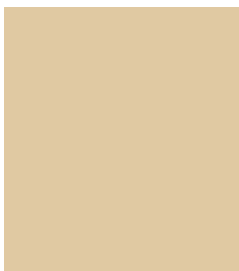
Professor Anthony Forster
Vice-Chancellor



Lord Currie of Marylebone
Chair of Council




Professor Anthony Forster



Lord Currie of Marylebone

Strategic Plan

Alongside our commitment to producing outstanding research, Essex **“** must continue to be a place of intellectual rigour, a teaching institution of the highest quality... [and] ...it must stand for excellence. And this means change. The traditional ends will have to be sought by new means. **”**

Sir Albert Sloman, founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Essex, *A University in the Making* (1963)

Purpose, values and vision

The purpose of the University of Essex is to contribute to society through excellence in research and excellence in education. In pursuing this mission the University's activities, behaviours and decision-making are underpinned by the following core values, to which all members of the academic community that is the University subscribe:

- *Excellence*: achieving excellence in both education and research, and ensuring that all of the University activities support these two, equal priorities.
- *Academic freedom*: freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and for all members of the University to put forward new ideas including controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privilege.
- *Integrity*: honesty and openness in all our activities, and behaving ethically in all situations.
- *Community*: maintaining and strengthening a community of students, staff and alumni where the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge is valued for its own sake; that provides all members of the University with the opportunity to fulfil their potential; and which develops and disseminates new knowledge and understanding that is of wider cultural, economic and social value nationally and internationally.
- *Inclusivity*: sustaining an inclusive and diverse community that is open to all who have the potential to benefit from membership of it, which ensures equality of opportunity for all its members and that treats all its members with equal respect and dignity at all times.
- *Innovation*: harnessing the creativity of all staff, students and alumni to deliver excellence in education and research in ways that address the new challenges and needs of a rapidly changing world.
- *Global outlook*: engaging, collaborating and co-operating internationally, both

institutionally and as individuals, to ensure that we draw on a rich diversity of perspectives to inform our pursuit of academic excellence and thereby enrich our own academic community and global society.

- *Partnership*: working regionally, nationally and internationally with individuals, groups and institutions within and outside the University to develop partnerships, based on trust and respect, which are of mutual benefit to both the University and its partners.
- *Accountability*: ensuring that responsibility for decision-making is located at the lowest appropriate organisational level within the University, and ensuring transparency in, and accountability for, all decision-making.

Our ambition is that by 2019 we will be acknowledged nationally and internationally as a leading research-intensive university. This standing will be based on a reputation for academic excellence that recognises the transformational educational experience the University provides for its students through its distinctive living and learning community, and the excellence, scope and impact of the research carried out by the University. Achievement of excellence in education and excellence in research will be the University's two equal priorities. We will achieve this

ambition by building on our existing strengths in the social sciences, humanities and sciences and by developing cross-disciplinary research between the sciences and the social sciences and humanities. We will ensure that all activities are focused on delivering this academic excellence, that we maintain the financial sustainability required to support this, and that staff and students of the University are supported to deliver this excellence. As a result of achieving this ambition by 2019 we will be firmly established in the top 25 of UK universities, and all of the subjects offered by the University will be ranked within the top 20 per cent of their discipline within the UK.



The University recognises innovation and supportive teaching through Excellence in Teaching Awards



The Gateway Building at our Southend Campus

Institutional size and shape

Over the last decade the University has grown in size through a range of innovative developments, and an increase in the University's academic partnerships within the UK. If we are to fulfil our mission of excellence this expansion will need to continue, to ensure that the University develops the critical mass needed to create a sustainable institution that is able to invest in the delivery and support of excellent education and research, and to strengthen its ability to respond effectively to potential future changes to the external environment in which it operates.

Consequently in the period to 2019 the University aspires to increase its student numbers by 50 per cent, responding in a timely way to new opportunities, in order to achieve significant growth in student numbers while recognising that the precise rate of growth it will be able to achieve will be dependent on the way in which the rapidly changing higher education market develops over the next six years. This growth in the size of the University will be based on the University's over-riding commitment to academic excellence: new initiatives must support the excellence agenda, and as student numbers rise there will be an associated increase in staff numbers to ensure that the quality of the educational experience the University offers is maintained. Additionally such growth must also support the on-going financial sustainability of the institution.



Almost 2,900 students collected awards at Graduation 2013



Essex was ranked ninth in the UK for the quality of our research in the most recent national assessment

“A university, we believe, is a community where the student is guided in the first stage of a life-long task of self-education, a community whose concern is not just with pursuit of learning but with the fulfilment of lives.”

Sir Albert Sloman, founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Essex, *A University in the Making* (1963)

Excellence in education

Our aim is to offer our students a transformational educational experience, encompassing both the academic and the extra-curricular, which provides them with the opportunity to fulfil their potential as individuals by developing themselves within our living and learning community as independent learners equipped to take responsibility for their personal and professional development throughout their lives.

The basis of this transformative educational experience is the partnership of students and staff that comes from their joint membership of the internationally diverse living and learning community that is the University, and a shared commitment to the University's aim of achieving excellence in education. From their entry into the University our students are

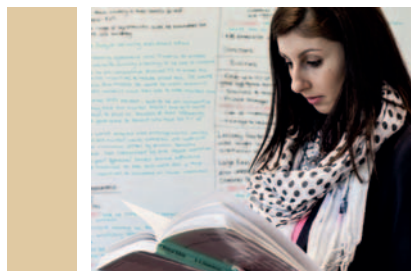
expected to take responsibility for their own holistic development as learners and globally-engaged citizens. At the same time, University staff are committed to achieving excellence in the educational opportunities and support they provide students. On the basis of this partnership the University provides intellectually-challenging and stimulating programmes of study that are research-led in nature, and which are based on creative approaches to learning and teaching that reflect our commitment to innovation in curriculum design and delivery. Alongside this we provide our students with extensive and diverse extra-curricular opportunities that allow them to gain experience and develop their knowledge, skills, confidence and abilities. As a result, all graduates of the University will be equipped to succeed in further study and/or future employment, whether in the private, enterprise, public or not-for-profit sectors.



Excellence in education at Essex encompasses individual study, large lectures and small tutorial groups, as well as extra-curricular opportunities

In order to achieve this aim, we will:

1. Recruit students with the merit and potential to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the University, irrespective of socio-economic background or ability to pay.
2. Provide intellectually stimulating and challenging programmes of study that give our students the opportunity to both develop detailed and advanced knowledge and understanding of their chosen subject(s), and to develop the skills and attributes that will allow them, as active citizens, to make significant positive contributions to the development of society.
3. Ensure that all our academic provision is underpinned by a commitment to research-led education in all its forms, allowing all our students to develop the critical thinking, intellectual independence and thirst for knowledge that characterise an Essex graduate.
4. Work with our students from their arrival at the University to develop their skills and abilities so that once they have graduated they will be able to enter into employment, entrepreneurial activity and/or future study with the knowledge, confidence, characteristics and capabilities to enable them to succeed.
5. Foster the development of globally-engaged and inter-culturally aware graduates, through the provision of internationalised educational opportunities that enhance the learning experience of all our students.
6. Enhance and promote the opportunities for our students to participate in arts, culture, sport and volunteering, and the opportunities for undertaking placements and study years abroad, working in close collaboration with the University of Essex Students' Union to maximise both the range and value to students of such opportunities.
7. Deliver to our taught and research students a postgraduate student experience that through the intellectual challenge presented by the academic programmes, and the opportunities provided for skills and personal development, allows our students to maximise their potential.
8. Ensure that the academic and extra-curricular aspects of the University's educational provision combine with the experience of being a member of our University community in order to provide our students with living and learning experiences that enrich their personal development.



9. Underpin the learning, teaching and assessment of all of the University's programmes of study with relevant pedagogical research and practice, and ensure that the development of the University's learning resources is driven by the needs and nature of the educational provision.
10. Explore the potential for new and innovative modes for the delivery of educational provision, in particular maximising the potential of our campuses at Southend and Loughton through the development of new, distinctive and different types of provision, and expanding its provision of online and blended learning in order to make the benefits of an Essex education more widely available and accessible.
11. Support our students in fulfilling their potential while studying at the University by providing appropriate induction, academic guidance, pastoral support and employability advice/support and opportunities that allow our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities provided by the University.
12. Develop our capacity to investigate, develop and deploy a range of technologies in the service of learning and teaching, both within the University and with partners nationally and internationally, ensuring a greater degree of consistency in provision, reaching out to communities of learners beyond our campuses, creating new modes of educational co-operation and engagement, and enriching the educational experience of our students.
13. Work with the University of Essex Students' Union and ensure that at all organisational levels the University's processes for the governance and management of education incorporate and respond to the student voice.
14. Put in place appropriate policies and processes to recruit, support and retain staff (academic and professional) committed to, and able to deliver, excellence in teaching and education, and ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to recognise and reward staff for achieving excellence in relation to education.
15. Establish a clear set of expectations (relative to disciplinary norms) for all our staff whose contract includes the requirement to undertake teaching ensuring that appropriate support is available to allow these staff to maximise their potential, and putting in place robust mechanisms to assess performance in relation to these expectations.
16. Develop a portfolio of partnerships that supports the University in meeting its commitment to academic excellence in its education.



“ A primary function of a university must be to engage in research ... It has always been the special quality of a university not only that its teaching is informed and vitalised by the discovery of new knowledge but that it counts among its members the most original and fertile minds in all branches of learning. ”

Sir Albert Sloman, founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Essex, *A University in the Making* (1963)

Excellence in research

Our aim is to make major scholarly contributions in the disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields in which our staff are engaged in research, and to develop the implications of these contributions for improving people's lives in the UK and abroad.

We have a long-standing record for research excellence that has repeatedly been confirmed in external peer assessments of research quality. The University includes among its members academic staff who are internationally recognised for undertaking and publishing research that transforms our understanding of the world around us.

Research at the University not only addresses national and international research agendas; it defines them, and it will continue to do so. We are committed to sustaining and building on our research excellence, and to increasing the University's research intensity and the benefits to the wider world outside the academy that result from our research. We will also ensure that the research undertaken within the University adds value to the experience of our students. Our research methodologies and insights will inform our educational provision, and our graduates will understand how to undertake research and have had the opportunity to do this as part of their studies.



Essex researchers have developed a mobile app that turns an iPhone into a new type of hearing aid



Research facilities include our state-of-the-art Human Performance Unit

In order to achieve this, we will:

1. Maximise research quality and intensity in each of the University's research specialisms, maintaining a diversified and broad range of academic specialisms while additionally investing selectively in a limited number of peaks of excellence.
2. Foster and promote cutting-edge research at and across disciplinary boundaries.
3. Ensure that the full benefit of the University's research to the world outside the academy is realised, and that academic staff are expected to engage with knowledge exchange activity and are supported in this work.
4. Identify at an early stage those of our research projects that have potential for societal and/or commercial impact, and ensure that the researcher (or research team) engages, and is supported in engaging, with relevant companies/organisations at both an early stage and on an on-going basis.
5. Establish a clear vision for the Knowledge Gateway research campus, which ensures that this development increases the wider impact of the University's high quality research at the same time that it establishes relationships and partnerships that support and sustain such research.
6. Increase the volume of research funding gained by the University, the diversity of funding sources and the rate of cost recovery on research funding.
7. Create a Research Capital Infrastructure and Equipment Fund to cover new equipment needs, including those resulting from matched equipment grants from research councils.
8. Establish a Research Seedcorn Fund to support new research initiatives either within or across departments.
9. Enhance the University's research profile nationally and internationally, in order to maximise the impact of the University's research.
10. Increase our engagement with, and influence on, key national and international bodies responsible for setting research agendas and for awarding research funding.
11. Take a strategic approach to the establishment, maintenance and development of University research centres and Doctoral Training Centres (or equivalents), so that we are not solely reliant on external funding.
12. Put in place appropriate policies and processes to recruit, support and retain world-leading and rising star researchers, and ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to recognise and reward our staff for achieving excellence in relation to research.
13. Establish a clear set of expectations (relative to disciplinary norms) for all of our staff whose contract includes the requirement to undertake research, ensuring that appropriate support is available to allow these staff to maximise their potential, and putting in place robust mechanisms to assess performance in relation to these expectations.
14. Develop a portfolio of partnerships that supports the University in meeting its commitment to academic excellence in its research.

“All the different branches of university administration, whether estates and planning, or finance, or academic business, require nowadays specialised skills and techniques.”

Sir Albert Sloman, founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Essex, *A University in the Making* (1963)

Supporting excellence in education and research

Our aim is to ensure that those University activities that are not themselves education or research are focused on supporting the delivery of institutional excellence in education and research, and that these activities are demonstrably effective in supporting the University in achieving its two central strategic objectives.

Our priority is the delivery of excellence in education and research, and to achieve this aim the University has a range of assets, provides services and engages in a number of activities all of which are crucial to supporting the achievement of this excellence. Effective management, support and deployment of the University's human, physical and financial assets is a *sine qua non* if the University is to achieve its vision of demonstrable academic excellence, and supporting institutional excellence in education and research is the principle that governs all supporting activity.

In order to achieve this, the University will:

1. Manage our finances in order to maintain the financial sustainability of the University, generate levels of resource sufficient to meet the University's financial obligations and support investment in the continual development of the human, physical and intellectual resources of the University.

2. Recruit, develop, retain and motivate academic staff, professional staff and governors of the numbers and with the expertise, skills, aptitudes and commitment necessary to deliver excellence in education and research.
3. Match the capacity of the University's estate, plant and equipment to its strategic requirements and environmental obligations, and enhance the functional suitability of the University's spaces, places and facilities for the delivery of excellence in education and research.
4. Build the information and library resources, tools and facilities necessary for students and staff to achieve excellent educational and research outcomes.
5. Project the role, work and value of the University in a manner that builds its reputation and differentiates it positively in the eyes of stakeholders; employers; funders; past, present and future students; and the public.



A range of services and facilities provide students with the support and equipment they need to succeed

About this document

This document was produced in consultation with the University community and was approved by the University's Council in July 2013. It has been submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The Strategic Plan will be updated on a three-year cycle; the next revision taking place in 2016.

For further information about this document, please contact:

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