



Annual Review  
**2015/16**



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# Foreword

**My first year as Chair of Council has given me great pride in Ulster University. I have witnessed at first hand the talent and commitment of the staff and students who drive our academic and research excellence, ably led by our recently appointed Vice-Chancellor. Professor Nixon has already shown a determination to build on the achievements of his predecessor, Sir Richard Barnett, by launching an extensive consultation exercise to set out a new strategic vision for the continued development of Ulster University.**



Of course, my appointment as Chair of Council however, was a bittersweet moment as it followed the sad passing in August 2015, of my predecessor, colleague and friend, Dr Jeremy Harbison. Jeremy served on Council for 11 years where his energy and commitment to higher education and skills development made him a central figure in the University's forward direction and momentum. He will be greatly missed.

Jeremy did of course witness the start of some of this University's most ambitious and important development plans, plans which aim to make the institution stronger, more resilient and crucially, remain competitive in an increasingly globalised world of education, while still remaining a civic university responding to the needs of Northern Ireland society.

Such developments include the continued progress of our capital construction projects at the Belfast, Coleraine and Magee campuses, which will enhance the student experience and ensure we can remain flexible and responsive to the needs of the next generation of talent.

These include phase one of our Belfast campus development which opened its doors to students in September 2015, and was officially opened by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal in April

2016. The new building provides a first glimpse into the future impact this entire development will have, not just on our students but in regenerating a key part of the city. With an ambitious civic role to play, the new campus has also played host to the then Secretary of State Theresa Villiers and Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

Two major investments in teaching facilities at our Coleraine campus also welcomed students in September and I was particularly pleased to hear that work has commenced on a multi-million pound sports centre at the campus that will be accessible by the entire community. This new facility will build on the exceptional sporting credentials that saw Ulster host the Sigerson Cup at the Jordanstown campus in February 2016 and launch sports scholarship awards for high performing student athletes.

A much needed, positive step forward in realising the full potential of Ulster University in Derry-Londonderry came with the approval of the new £11m teaching and learning facility at the Magee campus. I look forward to engaging with our stakeholders as we work together to make our ambitions in the city a reality.

All of these projects, whether completed, progressing or planned, will strengthen our proposition and enable us to attract local and international students seeking a higher

education experience that focuses on quality and which has the student at its very heart.

And it is our students and graduates of whom I am most proud: undergraduates and postgraduate alike who have the talent and skills to succeed and make a difference in their chosen careers and professions.

Their contribution goes beyond the classroom or research laboratory. 2015 saw students recognised for their sports outreach volunteering work in local communities, our elite sportspeople securing numerous varsity titles, others competing at European and global level in their chosen sports – whilst at the same time maintaining their studies.

It is this very type of determination, hard work and focus that I believe sets Ulster University students apart, and which makes me both proud and excited for the future.

Mr John Hunter  
Chair of Council

**It gives me great pleasure to reflect on this first annual review in my time as Vice-Chancellor of Ulster University. I joined midway through the period under review, at the close of an academic year and during graduations. I was immediately struck by the community of Ulster University; the students, academic colleagues, parents, friends and the many partner organisations who so enrich the student experience.**

I am fortunate to be in a position to admire and be proud of the very many successes that predate my arrival in 2015. I am deeply encouraged by the commitment I have experienced since taking up office and energised by the potential that lies ahead.

I succeeded Professor Sir Richard Barnett, whose steady leadership had supported the development of Ulster University over almost a decade. He championed the development of the new Belfast campus, and was committed to widening access to higher education in Northern Ireland. Richard's astute focus on our social and economic contribution has established the foundations for partnership and participation upon which we will continue to build in the coming years.

The first six months of 2015, prior to my arrival, required difficult decisions to be taken by our leadership team as a consequence of the Northern Ireland Executive budget cuts to higher education.

I would like to record my thanks to Professor Alastair Adair, who assumed the role of acting Vice-Chancellor following Richard's retirement and prior to my taking up office. During this particularly challenging time Alastair led the University with skill, integrity and great care.

Despite those challenges, it is with confidence and ambition that I approach the future for Ulster University. The change within our sector requires us to be resilient, creative and emphatic about the value we add to individuals and to communities.

We are re-imagining and creating the spaces in which learning will thrive. From our financial innovation lab and trading room in Jordanstown to the launch of our Writing Pad space in Coleraine, we are developing opportunities for collaboration and real world experiences. Achieving our best rating to date in the eleventh annual National Student Survey, all aspects of student life and experience will remain central to our future plans. Our rise in all three domestic league tables for universities and inclusion in the prestigious THE Top 150 under 50, are significant strides forward.



Our research delivers real outcomes. It changes lives and shapes policy. Wearable technologies to reduce cardiovascular disease, a breakthrough in the global fight against pancreatic cancer, suicide prevention, social exclusion in sport, the rebuilding of societies affected by conflict, global telecommunications and manufacturing materials; the range is vast and the impact profound.

At the start of 2016, I embarked on the development of our new Strategic Plan. Our teaching excellence, research strengths, global potential and civic engagement all provide a truly rich vein of expertise around which to build an ambitious future vision. Our new Five & Fifty strategic plan will support our resilience to challenges and our readiness for the opportunities ahead. I have been encouraged both by the input and response of staff and students to the emerging direction, and by the keen interest of those many external stakeholders who value our contribution.

Certainly if Northern Ireland is to truly put innovation at the heart of its economic future, we must put universities at the heart of our communities. Without question, a sustainable and empowering funding model of higher education must be a priority for the Northern Ireland Executive, and for all those who care about the future of our young talent, our economy and our community.

I am grateful to colleagues, students, Council members and external partners who have welcomed me so warmly to the University and to Northern Ireland. As we implement our Five & Fifty strategic plan with confidence, I look forward to working closely with all who share our ambition for this University and its continued contribution locally and on the global stage.

Professor Paddy Nixon  
Vice-Chancellor and President

# 2015/16 Highlights



Polly Poppet aka Sarah Lyle with Meabh McComish (two) who took part in the Book Trust's Rumble in the Jungle song and rhyme session at Ulster University as part of Culture Night Belfast 2015



Sarah McGrath (Ulster University Sports Science student) and Sophie Burns meet Olympic gymnast Max Whitlock, as he lends his support to Ulster University's GymFUN initiative



Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal officially opened Phase One of Ulster University's Belfast campus development



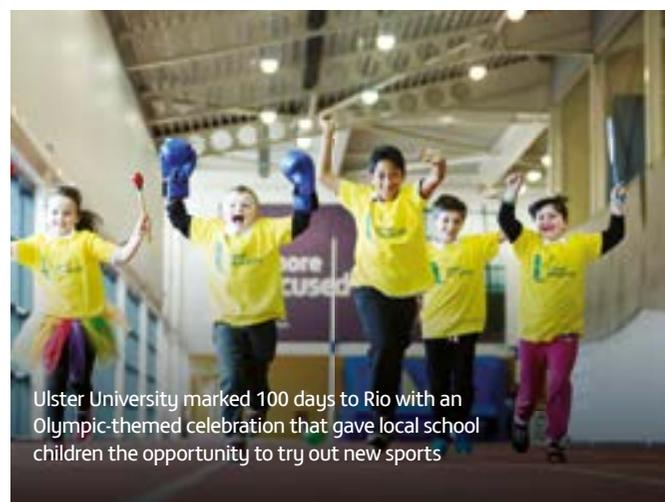
Joanne Mercer celebrates her degree in adult nursing with son Hudson (five) at the Ulster University winter graduations



Cara Simpson (Ballycastle High School) and Oliwia Mankiewicz with Dr Bridgeen Callan at our week-long Chemistry Summer School



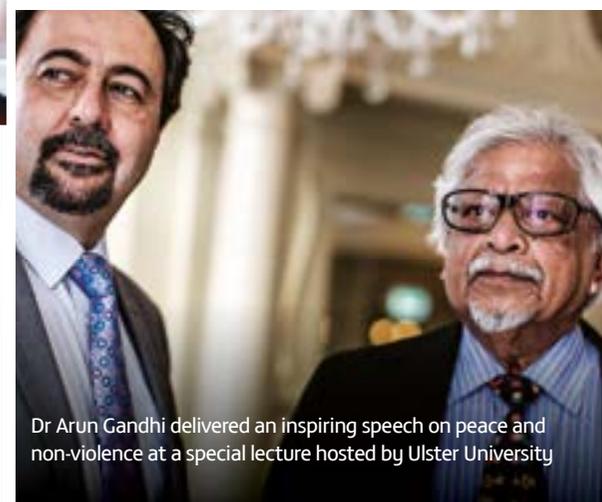
Alumni of Ulster University Business School celebrate its 40th anniversary



Ulster University marked 100 days to Rio with an Olympic-themed celebration that gave local school children the opportunity to try out new sports



Honorary Graduate, Paul Clark MBE



Dr Arun Gandhi delivered an inspiring speech on peace and non-violence at a special lecture hosted by Ulster University



Sports Minister, Carál Ní Chuilín, visits Ulster University's Jordanstown campus and meets participants on the 'Unblocking Potential' initiative

# Excelling in Education

At Ulster University, we want all our learners to benefit from both our high quality research and our commitment to teaching excellence. Working in partnership with our students is central to our ethos, ensuring that our focus is student centred and that learners are equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to excel in professional life.

We strive to create and encourage conditions in which all Ulster students experience transformative learning through participation and interaction with staff and fellow students, building relationships in which they learn collaboratively and progressively and practice their discipline.

We have opened an exciting variety of new learning spaces across our landscape to support students' intellectual and personal growth, providing opportunities for non-traditional learners to engage with the University community and harnessing new technologies to enhance the student experience.

## Student spaces

Ulster University has continued to enhance our learning and study environments.

The new teaching block in Coleraine accommodates 'The Writing Pad', a space where students from any discipline can go for help with any aspect of their writing – from brainstorming ideas to polishing a final draft of an essay. Modelled on writing centres found on American college campuses, The Writing Pad will create an inviting space where students can meet to discuss and improve their writing and communication skills and simultaneously learn from their peers.

An exciting development was the installation of a new financial innovation laboratory at Jordanstown in August 2015. The laboratory features a state of the art real-time trading room, which allows students to have an insight into the fortunes of stock markets around the world and to prepare them for the unpredictable world of finance. More than £100,000 of funding for the new lab was provided by the charitable arm of the CME Group. The Chicago-based financial services firm has an office in Belfast and this is the first time its foundation has awarded a grant outside of the US.

## High degree of satisfaction

Ulster University continues to enjoy consistently high levels of student satisfaction. The University's overall satisfaction score is an impressive 88 percent, exceeding the national average of 86 percent.

This result underlines the University's on-going commitment to working in partnership with students to provide a high-quality and transformative student experience.

More than 70 percent of our subjects achieved satisfaction outcomes of 85 percent or better. For the third consecutive year, Ophthalmics students recorded a 100 percent satisfaction rating.

Twenty-nine other subject areas achieved strong results with overall satisfaction above 90 percent, with some areas of research strength, notably law (96 percent) and subjects allied to medicine including biomedical science (93 percent) performing well. The University's outstanding learning resources were also recognised with a high satisfaction score of 90 percent (4 percent higher than the sector average).

## Learning new lessons

On a regular basis, we look at the courses we offer to ensure that they are responding to demand from potential students, and critically, to the needs of employers and industry in Northern Ireland and beyond.

A number of new undergraduate and postgraduate courses were introduced in 2015 including: MSci Pharmaceutical Biosciences; BEng/MEng Hons Safety Engineering and Disaster Management; BEng Hons Electrical and Electronic Engineering; MSc Occupational Therapy; MSc Physiotherapy; PgDip/MSc Pharmaceutical Sciences in Distance Learning; BSc Hons Business Technology; BSc Hons/PgCert/PgDip/MSc Applied Health Studies; Integrated Masters in Optometry and BSc Hons Biomedical and Health Care Sciences; BSc Hons Biomedical Sciences; and BSc Hons Biomedical and Bio-industrial Sciences.

In June 2016, Ulster University launched Northern Ireland's first ever Physician Associate Postgraduate Diploma course. The two-year full time programme will provide intensive evidence-based teaching coupled with hands-on workplace training. The new course will fully equip students with the skills and knowledge required to support doctors in the diagnosis and management of patients. It will be delivered in partnership with multiple Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland.



Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister Jonathan Bell and Employment and Learning Minister Dr Stephen Farry opened the new CME Group Financial Innovation Laboratory, accompanied by senior CME representatives and the Vice Chancellor



Representatives from Medtronic receive their Ulster University Placement Employer of the Year Award in the student nominated category

### New partnership

In June 2016, Ulster University announced a new partnership with Letterkenny Institute of Technology that will enhance the skills base in the wider North West region and beyond.

The partnership will enable Higher Certificate level pharmacy technician students at Letterkenny IT who meet the Ulster University entrance qualification to automatically progress to Ulster University's Masters level Pharmacy course. The partnership will enable even more people to access one of the best university-level pharmacy teaching experiences currently available.

### Ranking recognition

During 2015, the University continued to improve its ranking in all three domestic league tables for universities, climbing more than 10 places in The Complete University Guide, The Guardian and The Good University Guide assessments.

At an international level, the University broke new ground by being included, for the first time, in the prestigious THE Top 100 under 50. This ranking recognises those dynamic young universities making a global impact in areas of teaching, research and knowledge transfer, marking Ulster as one of the top young universities in the world.

It was rewarding to note that Ulster University was named in *The Guardian* league table as the top university in the UK for studying pharmacy and pharmacology for the second year in a row. Ulster University also featured as one of the top ten universities in the UK to study courses in civil engineering, biosciences and film production and photography.

In March 2016, Ulster University's School of Nursing was recognised as 6th best in the UK and 41st best in the world by the prestigious QS World University rankings.

### Leaders in legal education

Ulster University's Law Clinic, the only public facing University law clinic in Ireland, was nominated for the LawWorks Attorney General Student Awards in 2016. Ulster University's Law Clinic was one of just five UK law schools to be recognised and was nominated for its outstanding contribution to access to justice and the provision of free legal advice and representation of the public.

The highly unique service was established in 2013, after Ulster University and the Law Centre (NI) identified high levels of unmet legal need for employment and social security tribunal users. Last year alone, the students closed 25 social security and 18 employment cases, providing support on a pro bono basis to people who would otherwise not have had access to legal advice.

### Sports scholarships

In April 2016, Ulster University announced £100,000 of sports scholarships for high performing student athletes to help them excel in both their studies and sporting ambitions.

The Performance Sport Scholarship Awards will provide funding to support one year of Ulster University tuition fees for students who represent the University in a range of sports at senior intervarsity level.

Along with the financial assistance, students will be given access to an individually tailored programme of support services from University experts including performance planning, screening, physiotherapy, strength and conditioning, sports nutrition and sports psychology. The athletes will also benefit from flexible learning opportunities to enable them to pursue their sporting careers at the highest level while successfully completing their university degree.

### Placement partnerships

The University collaborates with businesses across all sectors to provide work-based learning for its students. Through work experience placements, the University is helping to bridge the gap between the classroom and workplace for our talented learners and simultaneously, the companies we partner with also benefit, by

getting the opportunity to actively shape the next generation of business leaders.

Our placement partnerships are celebrated annually at the Placement Employer of the Year Awards, which laud the dedication of local businesses, across all sectors, for providing students with the skills that will allow them to apply their academic knowledge to real-life practice.

The 2015 winners included Liberty Information Technology, 4Beauty Group, South West College, Heritage Administration Services Limited, Medtronic and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Estates Department.

The 2016 winners included PwC, Kainos, Warner Bros. Games, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, WDR & RT Taggart and ISArc.

School of Nursing ranked **6th** best in the UK and **41st** best in the world



Ulster University pharmacy student Kevin O'Neill celebrating the University's No. 1 rank in the UK for pharmacy and pharmacology

### Learning for life

In 2015, over 1,000 part-time adult learners accessed learning through flexible and continuing education routes. Adult learners engaged with the University across a range of collaborative partnerships, including 64 Polish students within the wider Ballymena and Derry~Londonderry areas, who achieved accreditation in English Language.

Learning partnerships with the PSNI, further education sector, schools and community groups have enabled our Continuing Education team to engage with a diverse range of adult learners and groups across sectors, to improve cyber safety, innovative practice in curriculum design and knowledge transfer in real world engagement.

### HEAR, HEAR

The University led the way in Northern Ireland last year, making it possible for eligible Ulster University undergraduates to access a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – a record of academic and extra-curricular achievements which supplements the traditional degree award. Developed from the point of entry to university and accessible to graduates throughout their working life, the HEAR can be used as a formal exit document to present to employers or in support of applications for further study.

The HEAR document is designed to showcase student skills and achievements by capturing not only their academic performance but also other accomplishments and contributions, outside of their degree programme, that are recognised by the University as representing real achievement.

The University successfully installed the 'Gradintel' software solution for the production, storage and third party access of HEARs, and has released over 15,000 HEARs so far, with provision to accommodate reports for future eligible full-time undergraduate students and graduates.

### Digital futures

The Executive Summary of Ulster University's emerging Digital Learning Strategy was launched in 2015.

Entitled 'Digital Futures – a strategy to shape the future of Blended, Open and Online Learning at Ulster University', it is a key component of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy and embraces the emerging principles of the student experience.

The strategy reflects the ever-changing higher education landscape. It provides an overview of the dynamic process of digital learning and the broad range of tools, resources and approaches that will play an

increasingly central role in our classrooms to enrich teaching and learning and research-led dissemination.

### Library

The Library has been ambitious in seeking to innovate and deliver new technology-based services to enhance the student experience and introduced a range of new services during 2015.

A new online document delivery service was established, enabling users to request a document not currently held in the Library at Ulster and have it delivered electronically to their desktop, using secure electronic delivery. The service has quickly been adopted by users and provides a faster, personalised electronic service.

Recognising the changing needs of students, the Library also introduced a pilot laptop loan service, making 12 laptops freely available to students from the Information Desk at the Jordanstown campus, on a first-come, first-served basis.

The pilot is based on the success of similar schemes in many other UK and Republic of Ireland university libraries and seeks to empower students by giving them easier access to the full range of e-resources available, ultimately enhancing their student experience and playing a key role in supporting learning, teaching and research.

### Science Shop

Ulster University's Science Shop is a community-engaged research and learning initiative which pairs skilled students with community groups in need of specific knowledge and expertise.

Completed as coursework, these real-world projects enable our students to actively engage in their learning and apply it in wider world settings, whilst enabling community and voluntary groups across Northern Ireland to access University expertise and information resources.

In 2015, 812 undergraduate and postgraduate students across campuses and faculties completed 265 projects for 145 Science Shop community partners.

### Schools engagement

Ulster University continued to celebrate success through active partnerships and projects involving schools, industry, staff and the University student community across the STEM areas.

During 2015, learning partnerships in science and engineering initiatives supported the achievements of 316 school pupils from inner city schools in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry, while 401 University students richly enhanced the experience of young people through 'Tutoring in Schools' projects.

These real-world projects not only increased student employability but also enhanced the confidence of more than 20,000 school pupils

**265**  
 projects  
 completed for  
**145**  
 Science Shop  
 community  
 partners





# Pioneering Research and Innovative Impact

**With over £30m invested in research during the academic year 2015/16, Ulster University has been leading the way with global breakthroughs and local discoveries that will shape society and the world around us.**

**Our dedication to innovation and providing access to knowledge, supported by a £2.9m investment in these areas, allows us to both inspire fresh-thinking and develop pioneering solutions that make a meaningful contribution to the economy and society.**

## Research in action

In 2015/16, Ulster University researchers secured grants equating to over £14m and recurrent research income of over £16m. The combined total of over £30m in research income supported teams across the University to conduct research that is making significant impacts across all sectors right around the world.

## Health and wellbeing

Ulster University made a number of significant breakthroughs in the health and wellbeing sector, across a range of conditions from hereditary blindness and cancer to stroke and cardiovascular disease.

Ulster University secured in July 2015 almost half a million pounds of research funding to explore the benefits of taking folic acid in later pregnancy.

With the benefits of taking folic acid supplements prior to and in early pregnancy already well documented, Ulster University researchers are now examining the potential long-term effect on brain function and psychological development among children whose mothers continued to take the supplement during their second and third trimester.

The new project is also looking at how these effects may be passed on, in addition to the information contained in the genes, and is incorporating research from the fields of psychology and computing as well as nutrition and genetics.

The funding is part of an exclusive £3m UK wide initiative established by the UK Research Councils for eight projects at just

six UK universities to look at the effects of early life experiences on long term health.

The research is building on a controlled trial carried out by the University on late pregnancy folic acid supplementation, and focuses on the children of the pregnant women who took part and how the possible benefits may be passed on to children.

In September 2015, Ulster University vision scientists announced an important first step towards the world's first cure for hereditary blindness, pioneering a personalised medicine that targets and repairs genetic damage in part of the eye.

The scientists discovered a treatment that can repair damage caused by cloudy deposits in the cornea. The cornea is the outer clear part of the eye that allows light to pass through to the back of the eye and the condition, called corneal dystrophy, worsens with age, eventually leading to blindness.

Human trials will follow and the objective is for an ophthalmologist to be able to treat a patient with a single injection and prevent vision loss. This would be a permanent fix for one type of hereditary sight loss but the discovery also has the potential to be

applied to target other eye conditions and other genetic diseases affecting different parts of the body.

In October 2015, the University secured £450,000 for research into cutting-edge wearable technologies that will continuously monitor blood pressure and heart rate, dramatically reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease across the globe.

The research is part of a £2.8m connected health project funded by Horizon 2020 under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks scheme.

Connected health experts at Ulster University will develop two non-invasive devices that can be worn by patients over prolonged periods and do not require intervention from a medical professional such as a GP or nurse. The devices will allow patients to take control of their own health, enhance early detection of cardiovascular disease and decrease the risks of delayed treatment.

Researchers at Ulster University made a major breakthrough in November 2015 in the global fight against pancreatic cancer, the fourth most common cause of cancer related deaths globally.



The work revealed the potential of a new, minimally invasive treatment, activated by harmless sound waves, also known as ultrasound.

In developing this technology, Ulster University Professors John Callan and Tony McHale teamed up with the University of Oxford's Professor Eleanor Stride and one of Northern Ireland's top pancreatic cancer surgeons, Mr Mark Taylor, to produce the minimally invasive treatment that has the potential to significantly improve the outcome for pancreatic cancer patients.

In a world-first in December 2015, researchers at Ulster University found how to measure the speed and direction of visual signals between parts of the brain, a major discovery that could help medical professionals globally to better understand and treat brain disorders, such as stroke and neurodegenerative diseases.

Computer science experts at Ulster University, in partnership with Trinity College Dublin, used 3D computer modelling of the brain to explore the speed and pathway that visual signals travel from the optical lobe, the part of the brain that first interprets what we see, to the frontal, parietal and temporal lobes, which process more complex cognition such as decision-making.

This University research, published in *The Journal of Neuroscience*, one of the leading journals in brain sciences, has the potential to identify areas of the brain that are not

functioning correctly, or at all, and provide clinicians with crucial information regarding the most appropriate patient treatment.

There was also a global first in February 2016 when leading Ulster University scientists discovered one of the underlying causes of why many children with Down's syndrome have poor near vision. The research found that children with Down's syndrome align the eyes well but fail to focus correctly on a near object.

Ulster University researchers used sophisticated techniques to study how the children moved their eyes and viewed objects while looking at an animated movie. The findings promise great potential in leading to a breakthrough in better vision solutions for the hundreds of thousands of people in the world who have Down's syndrome.

Also in February 2016, Ulster University published the results of a major study that for the first time explored the types and causes of injuries in schoolboy rugby across Northern Ireland.

Conducted in collaboration with the Rugby Injury Surveillance Ulster Schools (RISUS) group, the research pointed to a trend of increased injuries in older, heavier players who regularly undertake weight training. The research group is now carrying out further investigation into the relationship between player profile and injury associated with game exposure and playing load.

In March 2016, researchers from Ulster University secured over €550,000 as part of a €3.3m European-wide project aiming to transform the decision-making process for doctors in diagnosing and treating breast cancer, the most common cancer in women worldwide.

Funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research programme, a multi-disciplinary team of Ulster University researchers in computer science, health sciences and psychology will develop a pioneering medical image analysis tool. The tool will extract important features from clinical images, such as mammograms, to assist breast tissue and tumour characterisation, providing vital information for breast cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Ulster University researchers are also contributing to the development of a decision support system that can help doctors to make personalised treatment recommendations based on previous comparable cases and the patient's genetic information.

Also in March 2016, Ulster University secured almost £100,000 from a prestigious research funding trust to develop a revolutionary treatment for an eye condition that has caused blindness in more than 250,000 people in the UK alone.

Age related macular degeneration (AMD) is the third leading cause of blindness worldwide and the commonest cause of severe visual impairment in older adults in the developed world. The funding, secured from the Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust, will support Ulster University in a two year study into new therapies for a specific type of age related macular degeneration known as wet AMD.

In April 2016, a major breakthrough by leading Ulster University scientists into prostate cancer revealed the reason why many men may suffer a relapse within two years of starting one of the most frequently used treatments for the disease.

Ulster University's research findings, published in the *British Journal of Cancer* revealed that some men who receive a hormone treatment known as androgen deprivation therapy can suffer a relapse; not because the treatment is ineffective but because a low level of oxygen in the tumour can trigger genetic changes that accelerate the growth of new cancer cells.

Ulster University's team is now currently studying the benefits combined drug therapy can bring in targeting the low oxygen cells and prevent tumour growth following the hormone therapy.

A two-year research collaboration between Ulster University, Almac Discovery and the McClay Foundation was announced in May 2016. The research will investigate if a specific type of protein could help to treat diseases of the eye.

Using state-of-the-art technologies, including gene editing, Ulster University will closely examine the effects of the protein, known as FKBP-L, after it is administered to the eye. The objective will be to observe the protein and develop an understanding of precisely how and why it works so that methods of treatment delivery can be created or refined.

**€550,000**  
secured as part of a €3.3m European-wide project aiming to transform the decision-making process for doctors in diagnosing and treating breast cancer



Arbarr Electronics launches revolutionary new product range into key global markets with support from Ulster University



Daniel Crawford, Founder of Axial 3D



Andrew Cairns, PhD student, Dr Raymond Bond, Ulster University and Hannah Torney, HeartSine launching the state-of-the-art user experience lab



Tim Brundle (left) from Ulster University with the founders of Get Invited, David Turner and Kyle Gawley

### Mental health

New research from Ulster University in December 2015 uncovered a pressing need for suicide prevention work to specifically target people in Northern Ireland who have difficult life experiences.

In the first study of its kind in the UK looking at events prior to death over a six year period, Ulster University researchers studied over 1,660 Coroner's files that record suicides and undetermined deaths in Northern Ireland.

The study provided an analysis of gender differences across a number of risk factors including: prior suicidal behaviour, communications, substance abuse, employment status and life events prior to death.

The findings of this research will help policy makers and service providers understand prior suicidal indicators and help with the identification and development of measures that could be taken to prevent such deaths.

In 2015 Ulster University secured two rounds of funding from the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT). The first phase of the funding, an award of £355,000, is for research into the support and services available to armed forces veterans and their families living in Northern Ireland. The second award of £397,000 is for a three year study into the mental health needs of ex-service personnel living in Northern Ireland.

In May 2016, Ulster University psychologists secured €1m to train a new generation of researchers to work with multiple trauma exposed populations in Europe.

The four-year CONTEXT (Collaborative Network for Training and Excellence in Psychotramatology) project will be led by Trinity College Dublin in collaboration with Ulster University, the University of Southern Denmark, the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, SPIRASI, the Probation Board of Northern Ireland (PBNI), the Danish Red Cross-Psychosocial Support Centre, and the Bornehus South Children's Centre.

Researchers will study the psychological effects of exposure to traumatic life events amongst groups including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who have entered Europe from conflict zones. Also included will be humanitarian workers tasked with providing aid to traumatised individuals, and victims of gender-based and childhood traumas.

### Social policy

In December 2015, Ulster University launched the first ever study into social exclusion and sport in Northern Ireland. Almost 90 per cent of people in Northern Ireland believe that sport is a good way to break down barriers between Protestants and Catholics, according to the report on public perceptions on the key issues relating to sport and social exclusion here.

Ulster University's research also found that 67 per cent of people in Northern Ireland believe that sports-based peace-building projects are effective, and this figure increases to 91 per cent for those who have actually taken part in such a project.

The research means that for the first time, Northern Ireland has a benchmark for both government and local sporting organisations to chart the evolution of local attitudes to the future of sport, and cohesion, sharing and integration across society.

### Politics

In March 2015, Ulster University secured a share of a £4.4m research grant that will see the institution collaborate on a major global project aimed at helping countries affected by conflict to successfully and peacefully rebuild their societies.

Ulster University's Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) is working with University of Edinburgh Global Justice Academy, Rift Valley Institute in Kenya, London-based organisation Conciliation Resources and the South African Institute for Security Studies, on the multi-million pound Political Settlements Research Programme, funded by the UK Department for International Development.

### Computing

In December 2015 researchers at Ulster University's Computer Science Research Institute secured \$3m in research funding to transform internet connectivity and computer storage capacity for the global telecommunications industry.

The research will develop innovative technologies that will meet the growing global demand for digital technologies. It will take place at the University's Coleraine campus, taking advantage of the unique access to the Kelvin Trans-Atlantic Fibre Interconnector, which can be used as a test-bed to facilitate research between Europe and the United States.

### Manufacturing

In August 2015, world-leading engineering experts from Ulster University and the University of Cambridge received £2.8m of funding for research into a carbon-based material that could transform the global manufacturing sector.

The research focuses on carbon nanotubes, electrically and thermally conductive materials that are extremely lightweight yet strong. The research addresses the production of carbon nanotubes on an industrial scale, which is currently expensive and requires long manufacturing lead times.

The properties of the material make it ideal for a range of manufacturing applications from aerospace and energy storage to solar cells and batteries.

The research is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and is being undertaken by researchers at Ulster University's Nanotechnology and Integrated Bioengineering Centre (NIBEC).

**\$3m**  
in research funding to transform internet connectivity and computer storage capacity

### Innovative impact

Ulster University is dedicated to driving innovation and entrepreneurship across industry, supporting businesses to access the knowledge and expertise that will help them develop their economic potential.

The University secured almost £3m income from innovation during 2015/16, delivering a range of services including more than 50,000 days of management training and providing over 1,000 innovative solutions to companies.

### Knowledge Transfer celebrations

In 2015, Ulster University marked 40 years of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) and 20 years of its operation at this institution. KTPs help businesses access knowledge and expertise from within academia, promoting collaborations to drive innovation and development.

The University is ranked in the top 10 KTP providers out of 108 Knowledge Bases across the UK, having managed around 220 successful KTPs since 1995. These KTPs have generated more than £22m in funding for business development, comprising £13m government funding and £9m committed by local companies.

### Partnerships in action

Ongoing KTPs flourished during the 2015 anniversary year. A partnership between the University and MJM Group saw the leading global specialist in refurbishment and fit-out services to the marine, commercial and private sectors announce an estimated turnover of £50m at the end of the year.

The University placed a KTP Associate into the business, working to develop advanced, lighter materials that can withstand extreme environmental conditions and reduce the weight of a ship's interior fit out by around 50 percent. This provided considerable fuel savings and reduced the carbon footprint of cruise ships.

The University also supported Arbarr Electronics, a Limavady-based company specialising in the design and manufacture of innovative energy storage solutions, to enhance business opportunities in both domestic and export markets by developing a customer focused business research and development model.

The partnership has helped the company prepare to launch its pioneering product range into key global markets including Western Europe, North America and the Middle East.

### Access to innovation

The support Ulster University provides to business and industry has been further strengthened with the launch of two innovative products.

In June 2015, Employment and Learning Minister, Dr Stephen Farry MLA, launched Access Ulster, the University's unique online portal that provides access to our world-leading research and expertise.

The portal brings together Ulster University's research, licensing technologies, state-of-the-art facilities and internationally recognised experts in an easily accessible platform. The platform aims to increase the levels of research and development, and inspire creativity within business and the wider community and is available at [accessulster.com](http://accessulster.com).

In July 2015, the University launched a state-of-the-art user experience lab to help businesses explore how consumers can better interact with technology to increase the success of their products and services.

Ulster University's UX lab uses cutting-edge technology to track user's biometrics, including eye movement, brain signals, heart rate and facial expression to better understand user behaviour. It is giving companies of all sizes and from across all sectors direct access to world-leading expertise and advanced sensor technology that will ultimately enhance competitiveness in global markets.

### Spin out success

By the end of 2015, there were 20 Ulster University spin out companies operating with an estimated turnover of almost £28m and employing 296 staff.

2015 was a landmark year for one of Ulster University's leading spin out companies, Get Invited. The company, which provides online event registration and ticketing, reached £1m in sales, only two years into trading.

The company also secured a deal with an international publishing group, Future Publishing, to support their GENERATE conferences in New York, San Francisco and London during 2016.

In December 2015, Ulster University graduate, Daniel Crawford, secured a £300,000 investment into his 3D medical printing company, Axial 3D which manufactures orthopaedic models for the medical industry and has made a significant impact on the UK market.

The funding, secured from Ulster University's technology and knowledge transfer company, Innovation Ulster, in association with TechStart NI and a number of private 'angel' investors from the Halo network run by the Northern Ireland Science Park, will be used to expand Axial 3D's customer base in the private and public healthcare sectors outside UK and Ireland, initially focusing on Scandinavia and Germany followed by the United States.

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Ranked in the  
**top 10**  
KTP providers  
out of 108 Knowledge  
Bases across the UK

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Secured almost  
**£3m**  
income from innovation  
and provided over  
**1,000**  
innovative solutions  
to companies

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# Building the Future

Ulster University is committed to providing innovative spaces for our students and staff, supporting their learning and research activities. We have reached a number of key milestones in our exciting campus development programmes, shaping both our teaching and learning environments and our local communities.

## Greater Belfast

The significant enhancement of our Belfast campus remains one of the largest construction projects in Northern Ireland, with 15,000 staff and students due to be located at the completed campus in 2019.

In April 2015, Ulster University awarded the £150m contract for phase two of the work to a joint venture between local company, Lagan Construction Group and Portuguese firm, Somague Group.

Work on this part of the campus redevelopment, which will see two new blocks developed on York Street, directly opposite the existing campus building, got underway in the spring of 2015.

In September 2015, the first phase of the campus renewal was completed and the first new campus building was handed over to the University. This phase has created new teaching and learning accommodation for the Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment, Ulster University Business School and the Faculty of Arts, as well as providing temporary accommodation for the Library and operational and administrative support accommodation.

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal officially opened phase one of Ulster University's Belfast campus development in April 2016. Princess Anne toured the modern building and met with students from Ulster University's Belfast School of Art who showcased their creative skills in silversmithing, fine art and ceramics.

At Jordanstown, work has continued to promote the University's vision for the campus when the relocation to Belfast is completed. We are committed to working with partners and stakeholders to ensure the University leaves a meaningful and beneficial legacy to the local area.

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**15,000**  
staff and students are  
due to be located at  
the completed Belfast  
campus in 2019



### Magee

In April 2015, Employment and Learning Minister, Dr Stephen Farry MLA, approved the development of a new teaching and learning block at the Magee campus.

The £11m investment will see the construction of a new facility close to the existing campus library that will include a 340-seat lecture theatre, two smaller lecture theatres, a number of classrooms, three student hubs for informal learning, study and group work and a café.

The construction works started on site in September 2015 and the buildings will take two years to complete.

In January 2016, Ulster University, in partnership with Derry City and Strabane District Council, submitted its revised outline business plan for the expansion of Ulster University's Magee campus in Derry~Londonderry.

The plan outlines the preferred option for expansion of student numbers and other wider considerations, with the intention that by 2025, the overall provision at the Magee campus will rise to 9,400 full-time equivalent students.

In March 2016, University representatives met with Health Minister Simon Hamilton MLA to explore the potential of a medical school in North West. Ulster University believes this will help to strengthen

the health and social care workforce in Northern Ireland, and develop highly skilled graduates who can deliver high quality care to patients.

Plans are at an early stage and a business case is currently being developed to move this proposal to the next phase.

### Coleraine

The new, £5.1m teaching block at the Coleraine campus was completed in spring 2015, welcoming staff and students in time for the 2015-16 academic year.

The three-storey block is connected to the central campus buildings by a glazed walkway on the first level. It includes a 250-seat raked lecture theatre and 11 teaching rooms that can accommodate 20, 40 and 60 people.

The new facility provides an active learning environment that facilitates active and participative learning amongst and between students, allowing for more flexible and technology-led learning styles. It has three open access student hubs, used for informal learning, study and group work and social space.

The new Faculty of Arts building at the Coleraine campus also opened in the summer of 2015 following a £6.75m investment. The block is home to a vast digital media archive, state-of-the-art media facilities including radio and

television studios and a postgraduate research centre as well as office and administration accommodation.

In December 2015, the campus development plans took another significant step forward with the commencement of a new £5.1m sports centre at the campus.

Due to open in early 2017, the centre will include an eight-court sports hall, a fitness studio and upgraded changing facilities. It will help to accommodate the high demand for student sport and create a fitness and wellbeing hub that can be accessed by the local community.

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**£5.1m**  
teaching block at the  
Coleraine campus was  
completed in spring 2015



## Driving Development

**With a progressive approach to teaching, a dedication to pushing research boundaries and a strong commitment to economic development, Ulster University has a uniquely important role to play in building a prosperous, inclusive, self-reliant and confident Northern Ireland with much to offer the wider world.**

### Magee at 150

As a regional university, we are uniquely placed to engage with communities, with leaders and with imaginative partners who share our ambitions for Northern Ireland and its young people.

In 2015, Ulster University celebrated 150 years of teaching, learning and research at the Magee campus. Founded with a bequest of £20,000, it is now the home of multi-million pound investments in hi-tech teaching space and research equipment.

To mark this significant milestone, the University hosted a wide range of public events on campus including public readings, live music performances by staff and students, a public lecture, a historical guided tour and a dedicated library exhibition displaying special collections

telling the story of the foundation of the college from 1815 to 1865.

While we marked Magee's sesquicentennial and reminisced on the progress that has been made since the widow of a Presbyterian minister endowed the college that still bears her name, the University's focus remains firmly on the future.

As we prepare graduates to excel in a diverse and interconnected global society, we are committed to developing and sustaining a broad range of high-quality, relevant, career-focused undergraduate and postgraduate courses, across a wide range of disciplines at all our campuses.

### Supporting Ulster

Our University has a long and proud history of philanthropy, firmly rooted in its foundations. We work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, developing lifelong affiliations with business and industry in support of our strategic goals. Through gifts and pledges to the University from alumni and friends, we have added immense value to the Ulster student experience, enhancing our students' academic experience and inspiring them to succeed academically, professionally and socially.

The Development and Alumni Relations Office celebrated the successes of some of our most driven and dedicated students at the third annual Ulster University Scholarships and Awards ceremony in December. A total of 66 awards were presented to students from a wide range of courses and backgrounds.

A total of 31 prizes were supported by local businesses and an additional 35 were awarded from the Ulster University Student Fund, which is wholly financed by graduates, staff and friends of Ulster University. This represents the most awards ever distributed by the Student Fund, thanks to the increased generosity of our donors.

The Ulster University Student Fund supports students in a range of activities, by encouraging and rewarding excellence (either sporting or academic), providing much-needed financial assistance as well as subsidising students with entrepreneurial ideas. The Fund also supports the University's Student Support departments as well as campus libraries.

Alongside two direct mail campaigns, the Development and Alumni Relations team also managed successful telephone campaigns to raise funds for the Student

Fund. These campaigns, over a three week period, each recruited on average 30 students from all four campuses and contacted 1,000 alumni. The initiative provided opportunities for students to let alumni know about developments at their University and allowed alumni to share their post-graduation experiences.

The results to date have been impressive, with the income exceeding projections, enabling the Student Fund to provide more scholarships.

The University has consolidated links with exciting partners such as SSE Airtricity, Santander Universities, Actavis and Norbook Laboratories Limited, while simultaneously developing new partnerships. International law firm Allen & Overy created a new scholarship scheme to support Ulster University clinical legal education students while also improving access to social justice. We have also developed a scholarship programme with KPMG linked to the Graduate Diploma in Accounting.

Our partnerships make our students more mobile, broaden horizons, foster entrepreneurship, help secure the most interesting and valuable placement opportunities and allow learners to



Ulster University student, Siofra Caherty, winner of a Santander Universities Travel Award

maximise their potential. The University will continue to work with local, national and international partners to secure support which provides exceptional opportunities for learning and discovery, both within and outside Northern Ireland, supports disadvantaged students and helps meet emerging needs and challenges.

Having secured the £3m required to establish the University's first-ever fully endowed Chair, the John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace, the Development and Alumni Relations Office and Incore, Ulster University's International Conflict Research Institute, formally launched this position in June 2016, welcoming Dr Arun Gandhi to the Magee campus as part of the proceedings.

#### Ulster's American links

As the University continually strives to secure new opportunities for our students, whistle-stop tours of the US in spring and autumn of 2015 galvanised existing relationships and fostered many new connections with graduates living and working stateside.

The University participated in networking events in New York and Washington, which provided great opportunities for staff and graduates to initiate collaborations, pursue new opportunities and share information, introductions and services with other individuals, companies and academics.

With the support of the Development and Alumni Relations Office, the Ulster University Choir performed at the world-renowned Carnegie Hall in New York in February 2016. A special evening was also arranged at the American-Irish Historical Society for graduates and friends of the University, who were deeply moved by the choir's performance. Such experiences can be truly life-changing for our students, helping to raise their aspirations and enhance their academic experience.

These events also enabled the University to showcase its pioneering peace-building and conflict resolution activities, our inspired application of new technologies and our impact on public health and well-being, business, industry and the professions.

Over the coming years we aim to enhance the links with our US-based supporters to enable us to further develop the experience and opportunities for our students.

#### Alumni engagement

Ulster University's graduate community is a diverse, talented and ever-increasing family of 170,000 alumni worldwide. Distinguished in every sector, from business and civic leadership, sport and healthcare to community relations and public service, we are very proud of our alumni – so many of whom continue to contribute to the life of the University.

As part of our commitment to providing

excellence, the University constantly explores ways to enhance the experience of our current students, as well as specific programmes for our alumni. During 2015 the alumni team introduced a new online peer-to-peer mentoring scheme to connect students and recent graduates with alumni, for the development of mutually rewarding relationships across different class years, study disciplines and industries.

We have recruited over 200 mentors who are sharing their knowledge, experience, and insight with students, preparing them to be better employees and leaders, inspired to stay connected with Ulster University and motivated to support the following generation to shape their future. We are grateful for their advocacy as they support our students across the globe take those tentative early steps to carving out successful careers.

#### Ulster University Festival of Art and Design

An annual feature of the Ulster University calendar is the Festival of Art and Design, which brings global stories to Northern Ireland and builds local, regional, national and international connections.

In 2015, highlights included a visit by Axel Scheffler, the illustrator of the well-known children's book *The Gruffalo*; Mike Bell's fascinating insight into the conception and development of the YouTube hit, Simon's Cat; and the joint commission of work by

neon artist Kevin Killen, in partnership with dancer and choreographer, David Ogle.

In 2016, students from the University designed, built and installed a pop up music booth on the Shankill Road to give local residents, and people interested in music from much farther afield, the chance to get creative and record music. The installation was developed in partnership with Aberrant Architecture and The Spectrum Centre with the aim of transforming unused places into social spaces for the community.

Further highlights included one of the world's largest interactive sound art installations at The Giant's Ring; live performances and talks including BAFTA nominated documentary filmmaker Sean McAllister; and Transmission Ballycastle, a walking art trail through the town.

**170,000**  
alumni worldwide



Margaret Quinn, Philipp Schulz, Mu'ath Tanash, Seamus Campbell, Priya Broadening Horizons Travel Bursary at Ulster University's Scholarships a

### Student showcases

The annual student music, design and drama showcases form part of the successful Creative Platforms programme developed by the University and supported by Diamond Corrugated Ltd.

In May 2015 and May 2016, our next generation of artists, musicians and designers showcased the importance and relevance of the creative arts to the economy and society at the University's annual student exhibitions. Providing a platform for emerging talent, the shows gave final year students the chance to share their creative skills with industry leaders and the wider public as well as demonstrate the impact and value of the creative arts sector.

In 2015, St Anne's Cathedral was the venue for the Ulster University Graduate Fashion Show, with the Show returning to the Europa Hotel in 2016. These extremely well attended events provided wonderful opportunities for the emerging fashion designers to show off their final year works.

Ulster University is world renowned for its artistic talent, both from a research perspective and from notable graduates including Turner Prize winning artists Duncan Campbell and Susan Philipsz OBE. The annual End of Year Shows for Architecture and the Belfast School of Art have become an important date in

collectors' diaries due to the consistently high standard of work produced by the graduating students, ranging from fine and applied arts, textiles and fashion design to visual communication. In addition, the shows in both years highlighted the excellence of work in architecture, as well as furniture, product and interior design.

At the Magee campus, the 2015 inaugural Drama End of Year Showcase demonstrated both the high level of achievement of students in drama and the ways in which their degrees prepare students for future careers. As well as student research seminars on topics as diverse as contemporary Irish theatre and performance and health, there was an exhibition of theatre designs for a production of *La Tempête*, together with an interactive exhibition and installation on performing working class identity.

The 2016 programme included an exhibition entitled 'Costuming the Mechanized Body' and three performance pieces, covering theatre for young audiences; a directing showcase, as well as an independent project piece.

The Music Showcase, also at the Magee campus, provides not only a sample of the work from the past year but a unique sneak preview of potential stars as they prepare to embark on their musical careers.

In 2015, performances spanned classical, musical theatre, Irish traditional, jazz, rock and singer-songwriter with student musicians joined by songwriter and performer, Duke Special.

In 2016, the showcase was held in conjunction with the Walled City Music Festival, across two separate events. There was an 'art music' event comprising short performances by five musicians and vocalists from the classical and traditional music genres, before performances by five ensembles led by our students, which embraced the rock, pop and jazz musical traditions. Special guests included Moya Brennan ('The Voice of Clannad') and Micky Bradley, senior producer at BBC Radio Foyle and bass player for The Undertones.



Student creations on the runway at the iconic Saint Anne's Cathedral as part of Ulster University's student fashion show

## Sporting Ambitions

Ulster University is educating, supporting and inspiring the future leaders of the sport and exercise industry. Alongside this, we work to support the development of sport in the local community, and those who are vital to it, through innovative courses, world-leading research, consultancy expertise and impactful community outreach.

### Sporting success

Sport plays a significant role in university life and athletes across the 70 sports available to our students enjoyed both team and individual success in 2015 and 2016.

Our teams achieved eight British and Irish varsity titles, with Ulster University home to champions in hockey, cricket, golf, athletics, swimming, cue sports and karate.

The University also celebrated the success of three athletes who qualified for and competed in the 2015 Summer Universiade. Adam McMullen (long jump), Jordan Sloan (swimming) and Jordan Mitchell (archery) travelled to Gwangju, South Korea for the bi-annual global event, also known as the World University Games.

In May 2016, Ulster University Elks travelled to Prague to take part in the EuroHockey Club Champions Challenge, the leading woman's field hockey competition in Europe.

Competing for the first time in Europe, the Elks not only took gold but secured promotion to the second tier in Europe for Ireland's qualifier next season.

### Sport & the community

Ulster University has a strong track record of supporting sport in local communities, both through widening access to sport and using sport to drive social change.

The crucial role of sport in addressing division and supporting diversity in communities both in Northern Ireland and across the world was recognised at a conference organised by the University in March 2015.

The conference, convened by the Sport Changes Life Foundation, of which Ulster University is a founding partner, explored the power of sport to enhance the ambitions of children from socially and economically deprived areas.





World Super Bantamweight champion  
Carl Frampton with Professor Deirdre Brennan

Delegates heard from World Super Bantamweight champion and Sport For Life Foundation Ambassador Carl Frampton about his experience and the capacity of sport to change lives for the better.

As founding partner of Sport Changes Life, Ulster University welcomed support from Rory McIlroy's charitable organisation, The Rory Foundation.

In February 2016, the Rory Foundation donated £120,000 to support the Victory Scholars programme. This programme provides scholarships to accomplished student athletes who will act as role models to help build self-confidence, improve life skills and empower young people to use sport as the catalyst to drive change in their lives.

### Recognition of Sports Outreach excellence

In April of 2015 and 2016, we held our annual Sports Outreach Volunteer Awards, recognising the contribution of over 200 Ulster University students who gave of their time to enhance the physical activity and wellbeing among some of the most disadvantaged young people in Northern Ireland.

2015 ended on a high when, in December, Ulster University fought off stiff competition – including from the Rugby Football Union (RFU) – at the prestigious UK Coaching Awards, hosted by sports coach UK in Manchester.

Awarded the prize for 'Coaching Intervention of the Year', Ulster University's sports outreach programme was recognised for its outstanding work to widen access to sport and physical activity to disadvantaged young people across Northern Ireland.

This success was followed in June 2016 when the University's sports outreach programme received the College and Universities Business Officers Innovation Award for Excellence in Student Experience.

In 2015, student volunteers delivered over 8,000 sport and physical activity sessions, creating almost 210,000 opportunities for children and young people to take part, working in partnership with 75 schools in Northern Ireland and 56 schools in the Republic of Ireland.

### Facilities in demand

Ulster University hosted the finals of the independent.ie Sigerson Cup 2016 in February. Over the course of the tournament, the University welcomed 14 teams, over 500 players and coaches, and thousands of spectators for the pinnacle of university Gaelic football.

In advance of the Olympics in Rio, Ulster University became a pre-Games training base in June 2016 for the Irish, Spanish and Canadian hockey teams who took advantage of the world-class sporting facilities at our Jordanstown campus.

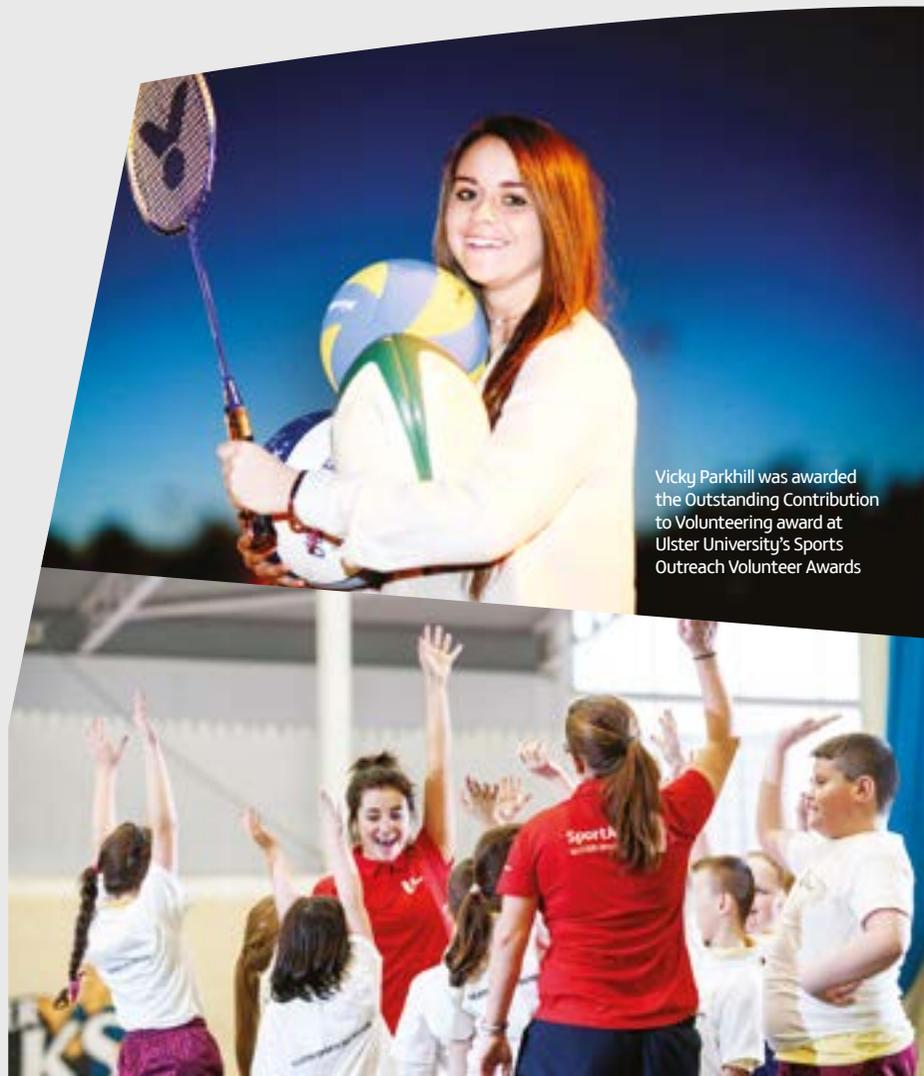
### Supporting health & wellbeing

Ulster University is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of its staff and students, providing on-campus gyms and a wide variety of fitness classes that are easily accessible and available in the morning, evening and during lunch hours.

During Freshers' week in September, students were offered a trial period to experience the sports clubs that were being promoted at the Freshers' Fayre. This allowed students to try out the sports they were interested in before paying membership fees, leading to an increase in the number of students engaged with our clubs.

In November 2015, we launched a Sport and Recreation Referral Scheme. Open to all students who are experiencing difficulties, the scheme provides support such as free access to the gym and fitness classes and an introduction to the various clubs and societies in operation here.

The scheme is designed to support students through sport and exercise, to proactively manage stress and enhance their overall university experience.



Vicky Parkhill was awarded the Outstanding Contribution to Volunteering award at Ulster University's Sports Outreach Volunteer Awards

# Ulster Connects

**Partnership working and international development are integral to Ulster University's aim of providing excellence in higher education. Collaborations also help us promote the economic, social and cultural development of Northern Ireland, promote the region internationally and welcome overseas students.**

## Student experience

Ulster University is committed to providing students with the necessary experience, knowledge and skills that will shape both their own future careers and support the local economy, to which skilled graduates are integral.

We believe that the best way to achieve this is to work with employers to understand the skills and attributes they require in graduates.

In March 2015, the Employment and Learning Minister Dr Stephen Farry MLA congratulated Ulster University graduate interns on their achievements as part of one such programme designed to do this – the Professional Experience Programme.

The programme offers students a six month internship with employers across a range of key industry sectors. This enables the graduates to enhance key skills and apply their knowledge in the workplace, while employing organisations have an

opportunity to access new talent and shape their future workforce, benefiting immediately from the new ideas that graduates bring.

In November 2015, Ulster University hosted a four day Autumn Recruitment Fair with 2,500 graduate job and work placement opportunities on offer from leading global and local employers.

With jobs across the IT, finance, law, built environment and engineering sectors, highly-skilled Ulster University students also had the opportunity to explore the varied careers available from companies ranging from Citi and Allen & Overy to McLaughlin & Harvey and NACCO.

Engaging directly with employers, students were able to develop a clear idea of the skills and attributes they require and have an early opportunity to demonstrate their ideas and vision for their sector.

In April 2016, local businesses showed their support for developing the next generation of engineers by funding an Ulster University project designed to give first year students an insight into the world of engineering.

Ulster University engineering students used their mechanical, electronic, design and biomedical skills to develop components of a racing car as part of the Formula Student

initiative, Europe's most established educational motorsport competition.

The project aims to help students develop relevant skills that will enhance employment prospects after graduation. In addition to applying design and engineering principles, participating students also gained experience of project management and team working.

## Honeycomb – Creative Works!

2015 saw the conclusion of the pioneering Honeycomb – Creative Works programme. Part financed by the European Union's European Regional Development Fund through the INTERREG IVA Programme and managed by the Special EU Programmes Body, the programme was led by Ulster University with partners including Dundalk Institute of Technology and Creative Skillset.

This was a £3.58m project providing support for the economic, educational, social and cultural needs of the digital content sector across areas including animation, film & TV, games development, interactive media and music technology.

Across its core areas of research, networking, skills training and the provision of seed funding, the programme has enjoyed considerable success during its three years of activity.

The programme produced 19 reports on issues including the skills gaps within the sector, sectoral development and on the future of the industry. The dedicated website for the project has over 2,500 regular users and has produced an innovative, online skills database.

Almost £400,000 in contract work was secured across the lifetime of the project, with sales opportunities created both locally and globally through the hosting of more than 120 support events, including eight international events.

The programme led to the participation of more than 3,000 people in skills development courses, including 82 e-learning courses and 48 continuing professional development courses.

37 projects secured £235,000 in seed funding through the programme, through three core funds: Cog Fund, the Create Fund and the Captivate Fund.

The Honeycomb – Creative Works programme has seen the University connect with small businesses and digital content practitioners, developing their skills, connections and aspirations in a rapidly growing and economically important sector.

## 64 international partnerships

Academic collaboration was strengthened by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Luoyang Normal University to explore linkages with Ulster University Business School in September 2015.

Representatives from Ulster University Business School took part in the Invest NI trade mission to China in November 2015, highlighting the opportunities for business, research and academic collaboration to leading industry representatives there.



Ulster University Chancellor Dr James Nesbitt OBE, Fiona McElroy and Dr Colm Murphy with a copy of the University's Honeycomb – Creative Works *Framing your Future* report

### New partners, new ideas

In February 2015, Ulster University was proud to be a core partner in the inaugural NI Science Festival, inspiring thousands of local people to take a fresh look at the major impact of science and technology.

Over 1,000 people attended Ulster University events in Derry-Londonderry and Belfast to learn more about how the University is pioneering advances in a diverse range of areas; from robotics in healthcare and the latest virtual gaming and animation technology to the tailored diagnosis and treatment of serious illnesses, including heart disease and diabetes.

A further 1,000 attended events at our Jordanstown campus showcasing the very latest aerospace drone and electric car technology, 3D printing that is revolutionising the manufacturing industry, and the very latest health monitoring technology – including smart technology that can analyse your every move or support the elderly in an assisted living environment.

The festival provided a major opportunity to celebrate the positive impact that the University, and Northern Ireland as a whole, has on global research, the economy and the lives of people around the world.

Later in February, the University formed a new partnership with the inaugural Imagine! Belfast Festival of Ideas and Politics. The festival aimed to encourage participation of ordinary citizens in political debate and policy-making through a range of events including talks, theatre, workshops and debates.

The University's Institute for Research in Social Sciences hosted a series of lunchtime events on contemporary political issues including elections and voting; gender and dealing with the past; the role of history and historians in dealing with the past; the future of the UK; and commemoration.

The events stimulated political debate and discussion, creating the opportunities to challenge political thought and for new ideas to come forward.

We were delighted to continue our partnerships with these festivals in 2016, providing interesting, exciting, thought-provoking events that educate, engage, inspire and impact audiences.

### International affairs

Ulster University's global educational partnerships continued to flourish and develop this year, providing more students than ever with the opportunity to study abroad as part of their time with us. Over 2,600 students are undertaking full-time and part-time undergraduate courses and

postgraduate courses, including students from countries across the EU, North America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific.

The University now has 64 international partnerships with institutions in countries ranging from Portugal and Italy to the United States of America and Argentina.

### China

During 2015, Ulster University established six new non-research partnerships with China, creating either articulation arrangements, where students from the partner institution complete their studies at Ulster, or Memoranda of Understanding, establishing relationships between the parties to explore potential areas of collaboration.

This brings to 29 the total number of partnerships in place with China.

In June 2015, the University met with Minister Counsellor Jin Xu from the Chinese Embassy in London as part of a delegation to promote the opportunities co-operation with the University can provide both for students and for research development.



Computer science student, Jeremy Leung, gets to grips with IT training software with Dean Greer from Kainos at Ulster University's Autumn Recruitment Fair

## Brazil

In April 2015, Ulster University's Director of Research and Innovation, Tim Brundle, was the only Northern Ireland representative invited to present at the prestigious conference of the Brazilian Association for International Education in Cuiaba, Brazil.

The aim of the conference was to create sustainable partnerships between universities around the world. Ulster University's presentation considered the challenges presented in the global economy for the development of higher education, the importance of higher education in addressing these challenges and the need for global partnerships to ensure impact from research and the advancement of technology.

Presenting at the conference also provided an opportunity to establish relationships with Brazilian universities with a view to furthering our research and collaborative links as well as showcasing the experiences and successes of Ulster University in the local community and on a global stage.

## India

Ulster University currently has partnerships in place with four institutions in India, partnerships that were reflected on during the University's meeting with the Indian High Commissioner in Belfast in February 2015.

Our aim to further strengthen our links with India was enhanced greatly in September 2015 with a successful bid for funding to GREAT UK.

The GREAT campaign, established by the UK government, aims to promote the UK internationally as a good place to visit, study and do business. Ulster University and Queen's University, Belfast submitted a joint bid for funding to host a familiarisation visit for Indian recruitment agencies to the universities in March 2016.

The visit significantly strengthened our links with India and positioned Northern Ireland, and Ulster University, as an attractive place to study.



10 year old Alec Young with Ulster University's Dr Andrew McDowell during the NI Science Festival

## Internationalisation

Ulster University now has 37 study abroad or student exchange partnerships in place to provide students with the opportunity to spend time abroad as part of their university education.

For the academic year 2015/16, 224 were registered to participate in projects in countries including China, India and the USA, as well as across mainland Europe.

## Erasmus

Ulster University students continued to benefit from the opportunity to study in Europe as part of the ERASMUS+ programme in academic year 2015/16.

183 students took part in the programme. 103 undertook ERASMUS+ traineeships where they take up work placement opportunities. Students on traineeships this year have taken placements with organisations as diverse as the International Agency for Research on Cancer in France to Adidas in Germany.

80 students undertook study placements at partner universities, including for the first time at Dalarna University in Sweden where a number of our Hospitality and Tourism students have been placed.

The continuing popularity of this programme reflects the significant potential for students to enhance their education, employability and skills through participation, before returning to Ulster University to share their experiences and complete their chosen degrees.

## Confucius Institute

In June 2015, Ulster University's Confucius Institute signed a Memorandum of understanding with Hubei Normal University in Hubei Province, China. The agreement aims to foster greater links between the two organisations and build on the work of the Confucius Institute and Confucius Classroom Hubs at Ulster University that are going from strength to strength.

In 2015/16, the Confucius Classroom project, which delivers lessons in Mandarin Chinese and cultural awareness, operated across 123 primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland, supported by 39 Chinese teachers.

The number of students registered with the Confucius Institute at Ulster University across all programmes on offer saw a rise of more than 150 per cent during 2015. By October 2015 more than 15,000 were registered with the Institute, up from just over 6,000 in 2014.

More than 2,000 students working with the Institute successfully passed the Chinese Proficiency Test or the Youth Chinese Test during 2015.

In February 2016, we hosted the Sichuan Opera during our Chinese New Year celebrations marking the Year of the Monkey, with Madam Wang from the Chinese Consulate as our guest.

# Inspiring People

One of the great strengths of Ulster University is its great diversity. Our most important resource is people – each with different functions and responsibilities – but all vital to the achievement of the University's vision. These staff, students and partners bring a range of talent, professionalism and energy to Ulster and their wider influence underpins the positive impact that the University has on the region and beyond.

The accomplishments of the Ulster University community during 2015 and 2016 are too numerous for this short section, but some of the most notable are highlighted.

## Honoured

In recognition of their significant achievements, a number of individuals associated with the University were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list and the New Year Honours list.

**Dorothy Black**, lecturer, School of Education, was awarded an MBE for services to cross-community relations and education in Northern Ireland and Emeritus **Professor Roy McConkey** was awarded

the OBE for services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Ulster University Chancellor, **Dr James Nesbitt**, received an OBE for services to drama and the community in Northern Ireland, a fitting recognition of his contribution to drama on stage and screen, and of an acting career that began at Ulster University's Riverside Theatre.

**Valerie Barr**, personal assistant to the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, was awarded the British Empire Medal for Services to Higher Education and to the Community in Northern Ireland.

Ulster University graduate, **Terry Cross**, Chairman of the Board of Delta Packaging and winner of the Ulster University/First Trust Bank Distinguished Graduate of the year accolade in 2007, was awarded an OBE for services to the economy and voluntary service to the community in Northern Ireland.

Honorary graduate, **Dr AP McCoy**, who retired in 2015 after a career that saw him become the most successful jump jockey of all time, received a Knighthood for services to horse racing. Rounding off an exceptional year, he also received a lifetime achievement award at the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year show.

## Inspiring appointment

The University community was delighted to welcome **Professor Paddy Nixon** as Vice-Chancellor and President in July 2015.

Professor Nixon joined Ulster University from the University of Tasmania where he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), responsible for driving the research agenda. He has extensive industry and commercial experience, particularly in collaborations with global high tech firms.

Professor Nixon brings a truly international perspective to Ulster having been a visiting academic/professor at California Institute of Technology, the University of Warsaw, and Kaunas University of Technology.

## Business people

Ulster University Business School celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2015 and during the year, the School consolidated its reputation for excellence as evidenced in the awards received by staff. **Professor Marie McHugh**, Dean, won the Lifetime Achievement Award at the UTV Business Eye Awards in association with Flybe, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to business and the economy in Northern Ireland throughout her career.

**Maurice Smyth**, senior lecturer in the Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance was awarded an honorary professorship from Shijiazhuang University of Economics (SUE), China for his involvement in the development and establishment of the collaborative BSc Honours degree programme in Finance and Investment Management between Ulster University Business School and SUE. **Nick Read**, business development manager, was elected Chair of the CIM Ireland Board, which represents hundreds of Ireland's marketing professionals.

**Professor Mark Durkin** was made a Fellow of the Institute of Banking (FIOB) in Ireland, having been a member of the Institute for almost 30 years. The Institute of Directors' Overall Director of the Year Award was won by **Simon Hunter**, Ulster University alumnus and chief executive of Hunter Apparel Solutions, a family-run business based in Derry-Londonderry.

### Ulster's people power

**Professor Tara Moore**, Director of Ulster University's Biomedical Research Institute, was selected as a mentor for the 1000 Girls, 1000 Futures programme run by the New York Academy for Sciences' Global STEM Alliance. The mentoring programme aims to address the challenge of getting young women involved in careers in science, technology, engineering and maths.

Professor of Sociology and member of the Institute for Research in Social Sciences, **Professor Patricia Lundy**, was awarded a Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship to investigate and redress historical institutional abuse.

The British Psychological Society awarded **Dr Victoria Simms** the prestigious Neil O'Connor Award for excellence in the field of understanding the nature and causes of developmental disabilities.

**Dr Stephen McClean** was announced as one of the 50 most influential higher education (HE) professionals in the UK using social media.

**Professor Sonja McIlfatrick** was elected President of the International Network for Doctoral Education in Nursing (INDEN) and **Dr Patricia McClure**, Associate Head of the School of Health Sciences, was elected Chair of the Council of the British Association and College of Occupational Therapists.

**Dr Philip McDermott** was one of the scholars awarded at the inaugural Royal Irish Academy Charlemont Awards in 2015 for his project entitled '*Linguistic Tradition, Policy and Identity in Scotland and Northern Ireland: A comparison of Scots and Ulster-Scots*'.

At the National Undergraduate Employability Awards, **Professor Paddy Gray**, Professor of Housing, took home the Award for Outstanding Contribution to Work Experience, sponsored by ASET, celebrating the tireless and invaluable contributions made by a particular individual within a university to help students apply and maximise their work experience opportunities.

Director of Ulster University's Institute of Nursing and Health Research, **Professor Tanya McCance** and honorary graduate, **Dr Janice Smyth**, were announced as two of the UK's most inspirational nursing leaders in 2015.

Our students made an impact too and their significant personal successes reflect well on the University. **Michaela Hollywood**, student on the MSc Communications and PR programme was included in the BBC listing of the 100 most inspirational women in the world in 2015. Michaela, who has the congenital muscle-wasting condition spinal muscular atrophy, was recognised by prime minister David Cameron for her services to young disabled people.

Third-year mental health nursing student, **Mark Collins**, won the 2015 Andrew Parker Student Nurse Award for developing an art therapy project during a six-week placement in the Western Health and Social Care Trust's acute mental health ward for over-65s at the Waterside Hospital.

Part-time masters' student, **Gary Lutton**, won the televised final of the Guitar Star talent competition and got the opportunity to perform in front of 30,000 at the Latitude Festival in Suffolk.

In March 2016, **Professor Vivien Coates** was appointed as a Florence Nightingale Foundation Chair in Clinical Nursing Practice Research at Ulster University. The Chair position is part of a pioneering three-way partnership between the University, the Western Health and Social Care Trust and the Florence Nightingale Foundation. In her role, Professor Coates will work across the three organisations to create a collaborative programme of research that advances clinical practice and patient care improvements.

**Dr Toni McAloon**, lecturer in nursing, won the Royal College of Nursing's (RCN) researcher of the year award at the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards in May 2016. Dr McAloon's award recognised her role in improving obesity management through establishing a virtual research laboratory – in collaboration with Project Implicit USA – to identify the influence of health professional and patient variables on obesity management.

### Ulster's global impact

The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies awarded the prestigious Chaim and Bela Danieli Young Professional Award to Ulster University's **Dr Cherie Armour** at a ceremony in New Orleans, in recognition of her contribution to the field of traumatic stress studies and her dedication to studying the impact of traumatic exposure on psychological well-being.

**Fionnuala Ní Aoláin**, Professor of Law within Ulster University's Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) and the Dorsey & Whitney Chair in Law at the University of Minnesota Law School, was appointed to a new chair – the Robina Chair in Law, Public Policy and Society at the University of Minnesota.

The Psychology Research Institute's **Professor Mickey Keenan** scooped a major international accolade for his pioneering work in developing resources for teaching parents the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis. He was presented with an award for International Dissemination of Behaviour Analysis at the annual Association for Behaviour Analysis Conference in Texas.

**Professor Monica McWilliams** addressed an Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) event in Vienna 'In Pursuit of Peace and Security: How Gender makes a Difference'; She was also invited to southern Turkey by Public International Law Group, a global pro bono law firm based in Washington DC, to participate in a workshop on inclusive peacebuilding and reconciliation in Syria.

Ulster alumnus **Colin Davidson** was commissioned by 'TIME' Magazine to paint the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, for the cover for its 'Person of the Year' issue in December 2015.



Renowned Formula One racing car designer and commentator, Gary Anderson, inspires the next generation of engineers



Ivan Cooper received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished services to peace and reconciliation in NI from Ulster University Chancellor Dr James Nesbitt

### Ulster welcomes friends

Ulster University hosted a number of esteemed visitors in 2015. **His Royal Highness Prince Richard, the Duke of Gloucester** visited the Belfast School of Architecture to look at models and concepts developed by our future generation of talented architects

The inaugural John J Sweeney Scholar, **Jennifer Johnson**, commenced her MSc in applied peace and conflict studies at our world-leading International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE).

**Tony Ward**, sports journalist and rugby commentator delivered the annual Chancellor's Lecture, hosted by Dr James Nesbitt.

Local businesswoman **Alyson Hogg** received the University's Distinguished Graduate Award at the 2015 winter ceremonies. Sponsored by First Trust Bank, the award recognised Alyson's outstanding contribution to business and the local economy.

Renowned Formula One racing car designer, commentator and Ulster University honorary graduate, **Gary Anderson**, visited the University in April 2016 to meet with students and take part in the Life Stories series.

US Ambassador **Melanne Vermeer** visited Ulster University in June 2016 and delivered a special lecture on women leading in the peace process and what Northern Ireland's example can teach the world. The special lecture was organised by Ulster University's Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) as part of its annual summer school.

In June 2016, we also welcomed the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, **Dr Arun Gandhi**. Dr Gandhi met with Ulster University students and staff as well as community leaders and special guests before delivering an inspiring speech on peace and non-violence at a special lecture, hosted by Ulster University's new John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace, Professor Brandon Hamber, which is funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI).

### VIP visits

In February 2016, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, **The Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP**, visited our Belfast campus and delivered a keynote speech addressing the Government's approach and proposed way forward to dealing with the legacy of the past. During her visit the Secretary of State also took time to meet Ulster University politics students.

As part of the University's prestigious Parliamentary Studies module, which is approved and co-taught by senior House of Commons and Ulster University staff, Speaker of the House of Commons, **The Rt Hon John Bercow MP**, gave a public lecture and a guest lecture to Politics students at Ulster University in April 2016.

On a visit to Ulster University's Belfast campus in June 2016, **Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD** delivered a keynote speech entitled 'Working Together for Stability and Prosperity' and engaged in a panel discussion in advance of the EU referendum.

### Inspiring excellence

Our honorary degree recipients embody the qualities that inspire our students to succeed. At our summer graduation ceremonies, we recognised the impressive achievements of individuals who have displayed leadership, progressive thinking and integrity.

### 2015 graduation

**Thomas P O'Neill III**, founder and chief executive of O'Neill and Associates, a public relations and government affairs consulting firm based in New England, USA received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished services to the University.

Television presenter and journalist **Paul Clark** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished services to broadcasting and charity.

Belfast born DJ, producer and composer **David Holmes**, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt) for his acclaimed work as DJ and producer.

Cinematographer **Seamus McGarvey** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA) for outstanding contributions to film making, contemporary art and cinematography.

Vice-president and general manager of Bombardier Aerospace **Michael Ryan**, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to business and corporate social responsibility.

**Reverend Bill Shaw** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished services to the community.

Director of the Royal College of Nursing in Northern Ireland, **Janice Smyth**, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to nursing.

**Nóirín O'Sullivan**, Commissioner, An Garda Síochána, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished services to public service and policing.



Alyson Hogg celebrates her Distinguished Graduate award with her father Fred

**Margaret Byrne**, former CEO Sunderland AFC, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to sport and business.

In recognition of his distinguished services to sport at the University, **John ‘Tommy Joe’ Farrell**, received the honorary degree of Doctor of the University (DUniv).

Former Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Ulster University Council, **Gerry Mallon** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to the University as Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council.

Director of the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre, **Dr Olive Buckley**, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to the vulnerable in society.

**Inspector Anne Marks**, Rowan Sexual Assault and Referral Centre, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to the vulnerable in society.

In recognition of his distinguished services to sport and cross-community development, **Gerry Storey**, head coach, Holy Family Boxing Club, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc).

Senior coroner, **John Leckey** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished public service.

### 2016 graduation

Politician and civil rights campaigner **Ivan Cooper** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished services to the Northern Ireland community.

**Terry Cross**, founder and Chair of Delta Print and Packaging, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to business.

In recognition of his distinguished services to the University and to the community, **Auxiliary Bishop Anthony Farquhar** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt).

Supreme Court Judge, **Lady Brenda Hale**, was recognised for her distinguished services to the legal system with the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD).

Occupational therapist **Betty Hutchon** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for distinguished services to the health service.

**Claire Keatinge**, former Commissioner for Older People for NI, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for distinguished services to the Northern Ireland community.

In recognition of her distinguished services to the Northern Ireland community, the Chief Executive Officer of WAVE trauma centre, **Sandra Peake**, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc).

**Emeritus Professor Robert Pinker**, former Acting Chair of the Press Complaints Commission, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (DDL) in recognition of his distinguished services to public life.

Environmental conservationist, maritime historian and kayaker **Robin Ruddock** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) in recognition of his distinguished services to the community.

**Dr Stephen Spinelli**, President of Philadelphia State University, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt) in recognition of his distinguished service to education.

In recognition of her distinguished services to the community, **Sister Mary Turley** of the Flax Trust received the honorary degree of Doctor of the University (DUniv).

Finally, the University community was deeply saddened to lose a number of great colleagues and friends during 2015 and the beginning of 2016 – Ulster is diminished by the loss. Among them, we remember **Dr Jeremy Harbison**, Pro-Chancellor of the University who served on Council for 11 years until his death in August 2015.



Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, admires final year art work with Ulster University Vice Chancellor Professor Paddy Nixon during his visit to the University's Belfast campus



# Five <sup>2016</sup> & Fifty <sub>2034</sub>

*Five Year Strategic Plan  
Fiftieth Year Strategic Vision  
2016–2034*

**In January 2016 the Vice Chancellor commenced the development of a new Strategic Plan, designed to chart a roadmap for the next five years of growth and a dynamic vision to take Ulster University to its fiftieth anniversary with purpose and confidence.**

Through focus groups, drop-in sessions, campus conversations and digital surveys with staff across the University, early thoughts on the future potential and direction of the University were informed and refined, resulting in the completion of the strategy by June 2016 and its introduction in October 2016.

Civic in nature and global in ambition, Five & Fifty has academic excellence at its heart, underpinned by the professional skills and services necessary to enable academic ambitions to thrive.

Against a backdrop of challenging times for higher education, Five & Fifty sets out a vision for the staff and students who are part of the Ulster University community, alongside the impact and influence in the local community in which we are based. Academic expertise and leadership will find expression through four strategic themes, as the University focuses its efforts on global issues with local relevance.



### Vision & Mission

As Northern Ireland's civic university, Ulster University will deliver outstanding research and teaching that encourages the innovation, leadership and vision needed to help our community thrive.

#### Grounded in the heart of the community Ulster University will:

- transform lives, stretch minds, develop skills and raise ambitions
- deliver globally significant research with local relevance
- encourage a diverse university community
- make a lasting contribution to society as a whole.

### Themes

We will focus our civic endeavours around themes that will act as a common narrative across the entire University. These themes will be embedded within each strategic priority.

#### Social Renewal

Peace, conflict and transition, educational attainment, social and economic leadership, communication and leadership

#### Sustainability

Urban renewal, energy and the environment, national infrastructure, food security, digital futures

#### Healthy Communities

Mental health, ageing, health innovation and policy, sport for life, history and heritage

#### Creativity and Culture

Creative economy, cultural diversity, design, media & the arts, innovation and creative entrepreneurship

### Priorities & Objectives

Structured around four priorities, this plan is focused on delivering a university that is innovative and sustainable with a strong academic and international reputation.

#### Civic Contribution

- Employment and Widening Access
- Social and Economic Development
- Campus Identities
- Meaningful Networks

#### Global Vision

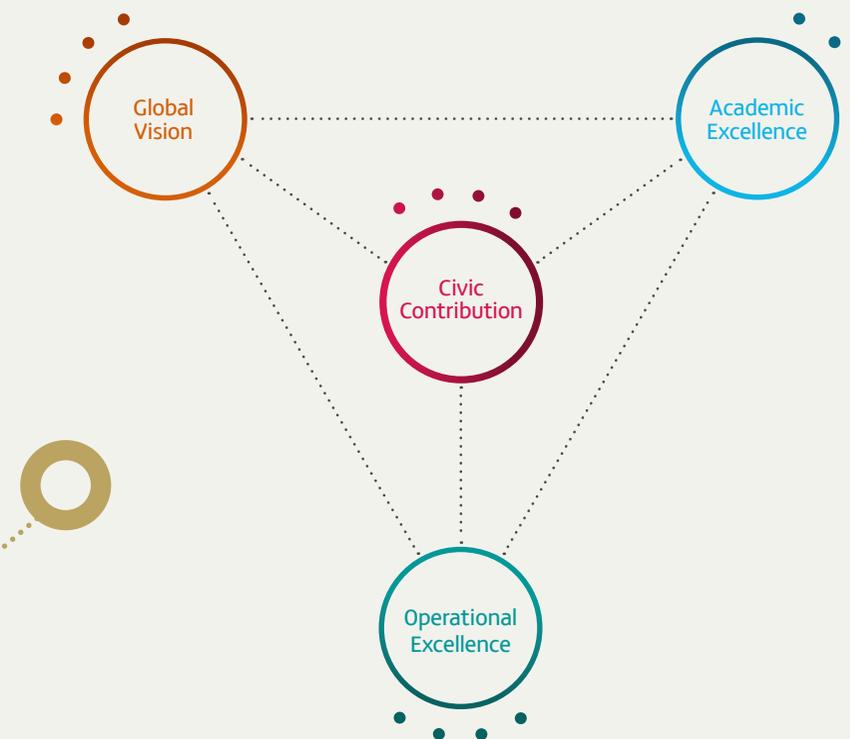
- Global Citizenship
- International Networks
- Global Challenge, Local Impact
- Diverse University Community

#### Academic Excellence

- Teaching Excellence
- Student Experience
- Research with Impact
- Researcher Development

#### Operational Excellence

- People and Culture
- Reputation
- World-Class Infrastructure
- Financial Sustainability



## Civic Contribution

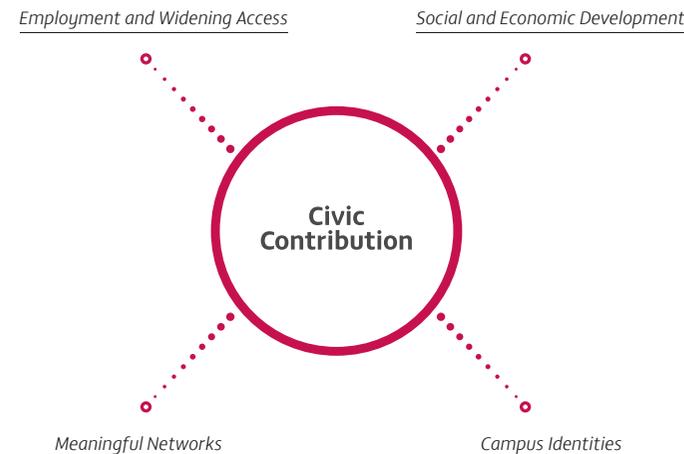
As Northern Ireland's civic university we will focus our efforts on global societal issues relevant to Northern Ireland. Collectively our impact will contribute towards the wellbeing and economic prosperity of our society.

Ulster University has always had a strong sense of civic responsibility. Our history, formed on a solid foundation of civic endeavour, is a source of great pride. As the only university distributed across the region, we have a tremendous opportunity to fully participate and deliver meaningful impact across the wider community. The imperative for redefining our civic contribution is also a reflection of the societal transformation that Northern Ireland is undergoing. We need to be

cognisant of and fully engaged in this change. Issues such as educational attainment and access to higher education are central to our society and we must maintain our focus on widening access. More broadly, we will continue to proactively contribute to the full spectrum of intellectual, economic, social and cultural life of Northern Ireland.

We will focus our civic endeavours around themes that will act as a common

narrative across the entire University; across schools, faculties, research and teaching. Capturing our civic focus in a more coherent way will help Ulster University collectively achieve greater impact. These are global challenges that have a particular significance within Northern Ireland and will influence how we approach our civic space. These themes will be embedded within each of the strategic priorities. By doing this we are positioning ourselves as a truly international university.



## Academic Excellence

We will deliver teaching and research of the highest academic standing. Our research activities and outcomes will continue to have global significance and meaningful impact. Our educational experience will transform lives, develop skills, raise ambitions and prepare future leaders.

Excellence in teaching underpinned by world-leading research is the foundation upon which every quality university is built. Ulster University has an outstanding reputation for teaching and research; in developing knowledgeable and skilled individuals who consistently reach their goals and transform our economy and society. This reputation, based on a rich historic legacy, is one that we aim to continually grow and enhance. In terms of research power, we are currently ranked in the top 25% of UK universities with 72% of our research activity judged by an international review panel as 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent' in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework.

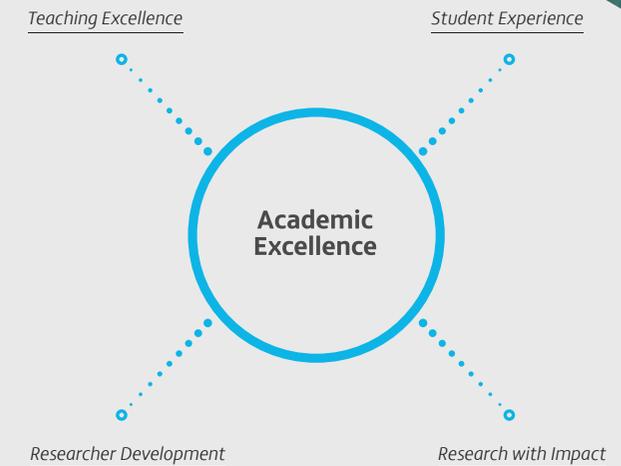
The University has always been a leader and innovator in education; preparing our students to take a leading role in civil society and providing an engaging, caring and supportive learning environment. Our educational experience promotes inter-disciplinary thinking and innovative solutions to contemporary issues.

Academic excellence permeates every aspect of our endeavour. We have individual schools that are recognised as the number one in their discipline for teaching or research, we have graduates that have won Turner prizes and Emmy awards, and we have Fellows of the Academies. In short, academic excellence is the cornerstone of Ulster University.

We will continue to stretch ourselves by setting ambitious academic goals. We will confirm our position as one of the leading educational institutions as gauged by our teaching excellence and student satisfaction. We will focus on strengthening our research endeavour and will aim to double the number of staff actively engaged in research activity around a smaller number of research foci. This ambition will only be achieved by ensuring a deep link between our thematic priorities in research and our teaching mission; addressing issues of global relevance but with meaningful local impact on the social, economic and cultural life of Northern Ireland.

In order to deliver against these challenging ambitions, we must consider the broader experience that will be unique for each staff member and student; from campus life through to student placements and thematic exposure through to employability. These goals will only be achieved through genuine partnerships with our staff, students, Students' Union, employers, government, and community stakeholders.

As a relentlessly ambitious university, Ulster is committed to developing Northern Ireland's relevance in an increasingly global society. Where meaningful and appropriate, we strive to be aligned to the Programme for Government. Understanding the direction and priorities of the Executive ensures that we are sensitive to local issues, as an institution playing our part while preparing our students to be future leaders and global citizens.





### Global Vision

**Our global vision is premised on building a globally engaged and globally relevant university; one which collaborates with the leading universities in the world and that attracts the highest quality staff and students.**

Because of this, Ulster University will embrace a highly multicultural community of learners, promote a strong, internationally relevant curriculum, and deliver a transformative international experience for all students. We will also grow and enhance our international standing and identity through building concentrations of research excellence around a small number of focused themes. These endeavours will be underpinned by deep partnerships with institutions that share our values and civic focus.

We will equip our students with the capacity to understand and engage meaningfully in an increasingly globalised society.

A strong, research-led university is characterised by extensive international engagement. Engagement that encompasses every aspect of our teaching, research and civic mission. This is our ambition.

Geographical boundaries are less limiting than ever and we have an opportunity to educate the next generation of global citizens. Increased collaboration with local and international partners with similar values, mutual understanding and shared objectives is key. Cultivating networks, including with our local and global alumni, will enable us to extend and enhance our research endeavour. Our curriculum will increasingly be internationalised to make Ulster University more globally relevant and attractive.

Developing a global focus has clear benefits. An international university experience can be transformational for the students who participate; a larger international community improves the overall cultural, social and economic fabric of Northern Ireland; and it enhances a wider shared understanding of cultural and economic norms and social mores. In addition, international academic exchanges have the potential to build capacity in those countries to learn from Northern Ireland's rich and complex history.

### Operational Excellence

**We recognise that delivering this Five & Fifty plan is ambitious; particularly in such a challenging economic climate and within an increasingly competitive global market. For that reason, we have prioritised operational excellence within the strategic plan; both creating the right conditions to let people flourish and ensuring that every member of this University is recognised as playing a central role in achieving our ambitions.**

Establishing challenging goals around people and culture, operational effectiveness and sustainability and world-class infrastructure helps ensure those conditions are in place.

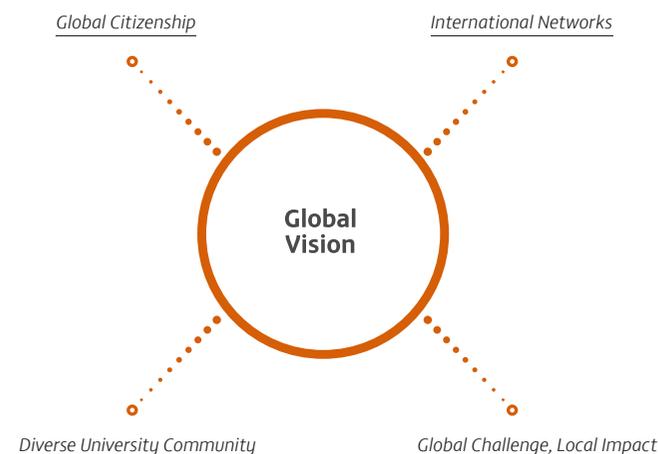
Ulster University strives to be student-centred. Providing an outstanding educational experience for our students is ultimately what we are about. Our teaching and learning is already excellent. To provide a seamless, responsive and holistic student service we need to ensure we operate collaboratively. To continue to attract the brightest and best students we need to be flexible and agile in how we engage and support those students.

Our staff is a vibrant community of talented and skilled individuals across a mix of disciplines and professions. A strong developmental framework will build capacity and capability to ensure our University continues to thrive.

World-class infrastructure is a priority without which we cannot hope to compete. We are already investing in this space across our campuses because we recognise the need for facilities that offer our staff and students the best possible experience. Our efforts will be concentrated both on ensuring each of our campuses has the best possible facilities to deliver on its distinctive mission and that we have the necessary specialist facilities to support our researchers and their ambitions.

We will prioritise the development of a digital first approach to systems and services supported by the necessary technology and infrastructure. This focus will be essential to facilitate collaboration, support research, and deliver our learning and student support.

This is a difficult time for higher education generally. We need to create a more sustainable financial and operational model for the University; one which makes the most efficient and focused use of current financial resources whilst continuing to make the case for enhanced investment in higher education.



## Financial Review

The 2015/16 results show that Ulster University achieved in the main its financial strategy targets and, in particular, delivered an operating surplus sufficient to support its sustainability investment strategy. This has been achieved against a background where, in the last 12 months, there have been significant cuts in Executive funding to the University that have necessitated significant reductions in both staff and student numbers.

### Financial Statements

The financial statements comprise the financial results of the University, consolidated with the results of its subsidiary companies. The University is an independent educational charity whose legal status is derived from a Royal Charter granted in 1984. The distinctiveness of the University within the higher education sector places it within a small group of institutions that are research-engaged and business-focussed with significant commercialisation of research, major knowledge transfer, relationships and diversity in the student population. It has a focus on contributing to economic, social and cultural development in Northern Ireland and its global standing. This theme is continued in the University's new Strategic Plan 'Five & Fifty'.

### Future Financial Health

Key performance indicators are set out below with an assessment on progress against the financial strategy target with **red** meaning immediate action required, **amber** more work required and **green** on track. When taken together, these measures reflect the strong governance and effective management of the University's resources in sustaining financial health in the short, medium and long term.

Financial Sustainability Indicators	2016 Actual	2015 Actual		Comments
Four year average historical cost surplus as percentage of income	7.7%	7.8%	■	This indicates the level of return necessary for investment in capital.
	£19.9m	£18.6m	■	This is a measure of operating surplus excluding accounting adjustments and finance charges. It is a good indicator of financial capability to service debt and/or capital expenditure from internally generated cash.
Liquidity ratio	250 days	250 days	■	This measures our ability to fund short term cash requirements.
Current assets to current liabilities	3.8:1	4.5:1	■	An indicator of financial strength to meet short term liabilities.
Non-regulated income as a percentage of total teaching income	9.5%	10.7%	■	This measures the diversification of income sources.

### Long Term Borrowing Indicators

Long term borrowing indicators are targets set within the Financial Memorandum and Banking Covenants established to support the Greater Belfast Development.

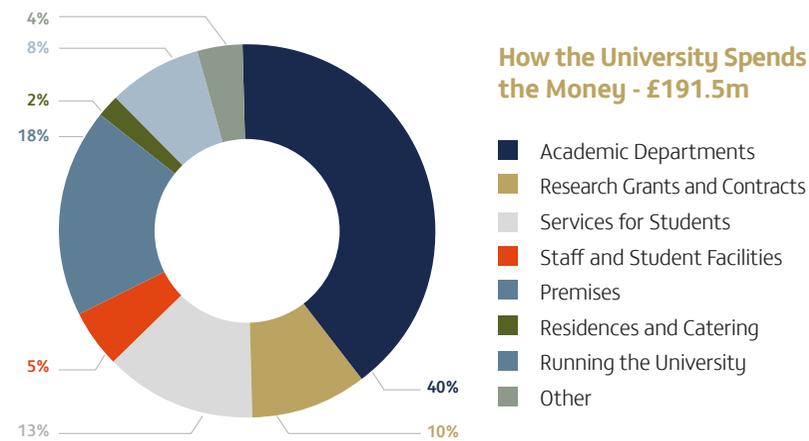
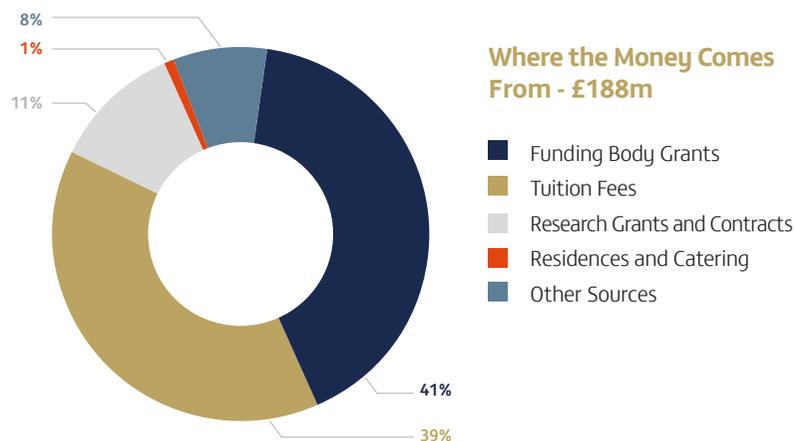
	2016 Actual	2015 Actual		Comments
Annual servicing cost of finance less than 6% of income (ASC)	2.8%	2.6%	■	
Net indebtedness less than 50% of net assets	N/A	N/A	■	Currently in a net cash position
EBITDA to ASC is greater than 1.5 times	3.83 times	3.58 times	■	

### Summary of Financial Position

Key Performance Indicators from the financial statements.

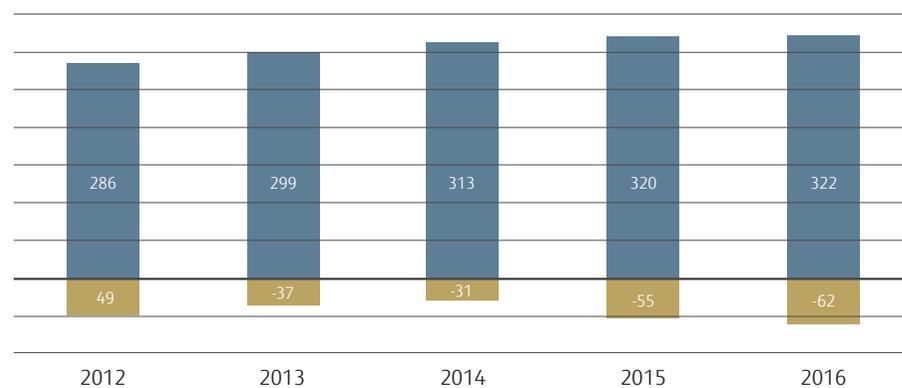
Year Ended 31 July	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Total income in £m	188	201.3	199.2	191.7	199.4
Cash generated by operating activities in £m	10.6	21.0	21.0	10.3	14.8
EBITDA £m	19.9	18.6	27.7	21.8	20.5
Net assets £m	259.6	264.5	282.9	262.6	236.5

The following tables provide further information on the University's financial statements.



The underlying financial strength of the University is demonstrated by the financial worth which is shown in the following table:-

### Financial Worth of the University £m



■ Excluding Pension  
■ Pension Liability

### Treasury, Borrowings and Investments

Net cash decreased by £10.8m during the year. The movement in funds is summarised in the following table:-

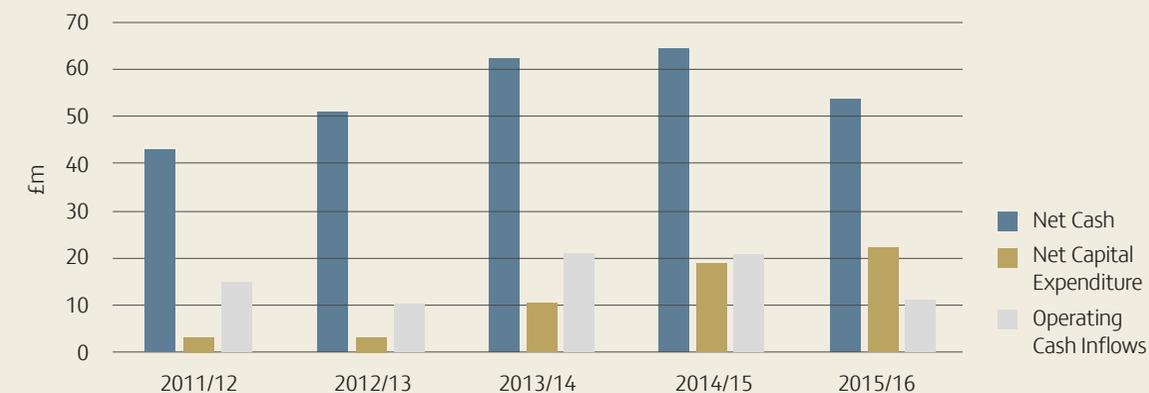
	2016 £m	2015 £m	Change £m
Investments and short term deposits	106.6	116.6	(10)
Cash at bank and in hand	24.6	26.2	(1.6)
Bank loans	(77.6)	(78.4)	0.8
Net cash	53.6	64.4	(10.8)

The net cash inflow from operating activities for the year was £10.6m (2015: £21m), interest paid totalled £0.8m (2015 £0.8m), and interest received totalled £1.5m (2015 £1.2m). Throughout the year, the University operated with a cash surplus and in line with its banking covenants. All treasury decisions are undertaken within the framework of the University's treasury policy. The underlying principle of this policy is that the University operates a low risk approach in managing its investments and liquidity. All funds are placed with counter parties whose underlying credit rating is monitored against minimum criteria.

Endowment assets at the year end were £7.5m and are managed by Rathbones Investment Management.

During the year £26.7m was spent on acquiring fixed assets against which £4.4m of capital grants were received. The table on the right shows the impact of this capital investment on our cash balances.

### Cash Movements and Capital Expenditure



# Governance

## Council Composition

### Ex-Officio Members

#### Pro-Chancellors

Mr G Mallon (until 31 March 2015)  
Dr J Harbison (until August 2015)\*  
Mr J Hunter (from 1 April 2015)

#### Vice-Chancellor

Professor Sir R Barnett  
(retired March 2015)  
Professor A Adair, Acting Vice-Chancellor  
(1 April 2015 – 30 June 2015)  
Professor P Nixon  
(with effect from 1 July 2015)

#### Honorary Treasurer

Ms R Peters-Gallagher

#### President of the Students' Union

Mr M Bell (until 30 June 2015)  
Mr C Mackey (from 1 July 2015)

## Appointed Members

*Eight persons not being members of staff or students of the University*

Mrs M Clark  
Mr J Hunter  
(Pro-Chancellor from 1 April 2015)  
Mrs R Laird  
Mr A Langan  
Mr L Nellis  
Mrs H Quigley  
Dr AM Telford (member to June 2015)

## Elected Members

*Two members of Academic Staff*  
Professor N Black  
Dr B Mason

## One member of Academic-Related Staff

Mr T Leath

## One member of Non-Academic Staff

Mr B Magee (retired April 2016)

## Audit Committee Composition

*Members appointed by the Council*  
Mr J Hunter (Chair to May 2015)  
Mr A Langan (Chair from September 2015)  
Mr L Nellis  
Mrs H Quigley

## Council Sub-Committee of The Organisational Development Committee 2014-2015

### Nominations Sub-Committee Composition

#### Chairman of Council

Dr J Harbison (Chair) (until August 2015)\*  
Mr J Hunter (Chair with effect from August 2015)

#### Vice-Chancellor

Professor Sir R Barnett  
(retired March 2015)  
Professor A Adair, Acting Vice-Chancellor  
(1 April 2015 – 30 June 2015)  
Professor P Nixon  
(with effect from 1 July 2015)

## Independent members

Ms K Erwin  
Dame G Keegan  
Professor D Licence

## Statement of Primary Responsibilities

The University has also adopted a statement of primary responsibilities which is available for download at:

[http://www.ulster.ac.uk/secretary/secretariat/council/statement\\_of\\_primary\\_responsibilities.pdf](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/secretary/secretariat/council/statement_of_primary_responsibilities.pdf)

# Contacts

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This publication is available in alternative formats on request from the Public Relations and Communications Department.

\* Dr Jeremy Harbison passed away on 14 August 2015



