Learning and Teaching Strategy
(2013/14 – 2017/18)
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Foreword

Learning and Teaching Strategy
(2013/14 – 2017/18)
Foreword

The Learning and Teaching Strategy is a central component of the University’s standards assurance and quality enhancement framework. This Strategy sets out the University’s priorities and aspirations in learning and teaching for the period 2013/14 – 2017/18, to ensure the quality of the student learning experience and to enhance it, where appropriate.

The Strategy has been developed over the past six months through an institution-wide process, branded the ‘Big Conversation’. Initially drafted by a cross-institutional group of staff, it has been developed through consultation with academic colleagues, professional support staff, employers and students. The engagement has been both valuable and informative and the final Strategy has been informed by the feedback received.

The Strategy is informed by the University’s Corporate Plan (2011/12 – 2015/16) and overarching objectives, and is also closely aligned with many other key strategies (e.g. Employability and Marketing, Internationalisation, Library Service, Widening Participation, ICT Strategy etc.). The Strategy is relevant to anyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning including, importantly, our students. It encompasses, but is not limited to, academic, graduate teaching assistants, library staff, specialist support staff and technicians. It also includes those staff, not directly employed by the University, but who interact with our students, through, for example, collaborative partnerships, and supporting placement learning.

Its overarching aim is to provide students with a high quality teaching and learning experience that equips them with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to demonstrate critical intellectual inquiry, to progress in their career, to adapt to changing circumstances, to become responsible global citizens who make meaningful contributions to their profession and their communities. Its strategic intent is to enhance the student experience through the provision of well-designed, flexible, inclusive, relevant and accessible programmes and curricula that promote student engagement and success. That sense, it represents, both continuity and renewal. It recognises and builds upon the progress which the University has made over the past five years in relation to retention, assessment and feedback, employability and student representation. It also encompasses new dimensions reflecting the many challenges facing the University and those areas in which we have made less progress in relation to our previous ambitions viz the research-teaching nexus, creative and compartmentalised course provision and curricular design and delivery, and meeting the expectations of stakeholders in respect of the provision of public information. It also commits us to involving students more in operational development and quality enhancement.

Fundamentally, the Learning and Teaching Strategy (2013/14 – 2017/18) is an enabler. The strategic intent is to provide institutional coherence, purpose and leadership whilst enabling the Faculties to shape and tailor their delivery in ways that are appropriate in the contexts of their disciplines. It recognises the importance and critical role of academic and professional support staff in its effective implementation. It also recognises the need for compressed key challenges in our infrastructure, and changes to administrative processes and in institutional culture if our vision is to be realised.

In striving to achieve our goal we have identified four overlapping priority themes to shape and focus our activities viz student engagement and partnership, employability and quality enhancement, flexibility and responsiveness, and recognition and reward. The two Strategic Aims set out in more detail the ways in which these commitments will be pursued and delivered, assign responsibilities for achieving them, and identify key operational performance indicators and strategic performance measures. An overview of the Strategy is provided on pages 16/17.

The Strategy has been formulated in the context of a challenging and complex higher education landscape, which is experiencing ongoing turbulence, far-reaching and unprecedented change. Much of this change is driven by changing social behaviour embedded in technologies, which have become, and are now increasingly ubiquitous. Whilst the technologies themselves are in many ways peripheral, the social and behavioural shifts which they inspire and open up, are central. The online learning landscape has itself changed dramatically over the past year. Consideration will need to be given as to how Ulster can make the most of the opportunities that recent developments in massive, open and online learning (MOOCs) present.

The Strategy aims to better position the University to be more resilient and adaptable in the wake of these uncertainties. It is therefore, dynamic, in the sense that it is expected to evolve and change over the period in response to and emergence of new education contexts and University priorities.

I would like to express my appreciation to all those who have supported and contributed to the development and formulation of the Strategy, in particular, Cath Cochrane, Rosin Curran, Vicki Davies, Sarah Maguire, Patricia McCallough and Damian McGivern.

I look forward to our future work together in delivering our challenging goals.

Denise McAlister CBE
Pre-Vice-Chancellor
(Training & Learning)
Strategic Aim 1

Learning and Teaching Strategy (2013/14 – 2017/18)

To provide appropriate opportunities which are flexible, responsive to, and inclusive of, the needs of students, professions, industry and the wider community.
Strategic Aim 1

Key Supporting Objectives

- To provide appropriate learning opportunities which are flexible, responsive to, and inclusive of, the needs of students, professions, industry and the wider community.

- Key Risks

  - Failure to provide the resources and support required to effectively promote and embed technology-facilitated learning and management information systems, resulting in a reduction in flexible, accessible, inclusive and innovative learning opportunities and operational efficiencies?

  - Failure to capitalise upon the impact of changes in the HE funding model(s) and emerging policy contexts.

  - Inflexible, inappropriate and unattractive programme provision including their associated pedagogies and modes of delivery.

  - Failure to adapt existing processes and/or structures which act as a barrier to innovative approaches to standards assurance, quality management and enhancement.

- Key Risks

  - Failure to achieve the overall Academic Plan and effectively oversee and manage its constituent parts.

- Indicative Operational Performance Indicators

  - Student Profile Data
  - Staff and Student Surveys
  - Employer Feedback
  - UCAS Application Data
  - Conversion Rates
  - Evaluation and Revalidation Reports
  - External Examiner Reports

- Key Strategic Performance Measures

  - DEL Regulated Academic Plan
  - DHSSPS Contract Numbers
  - Non-Regulated Academic Plan (including international and fully on-line student numbers)
  - GB Academic Plan
  - National Student Survey Results and Response Rates
  - HESA Widening Participation Benchmark
Strategic Aim 2

To provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff-student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility.
To provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility.

Key Supporting Objectives

- To develop students’ knowledge, skills and confidence through active learning experiences with fellow students from diverse backgrounds, to engender a sense of student belonging and identity.
- To develop supportive partnerships and learning communities amongst and between students and staff to engender mutual respect and trust.
- To develop ways of working that foster students’ active engagement with their learning and career progression and values their contributions to shaping the design and delivery of programmes.
- To effectively embed Ulster’s Principles of Assessment and Feedback for learning in the practice of all involved in the student learning experience.
- To ensure that all students are clear about what they can reasonably expect of their course and what is expected from them.
- To embed within the curriculum opportunities for students to develop as global citizens, socially, ethically and environmentally aware, sensitive to international contexts and cultures.
- To exploit opportunities within course design and programme delivery for internationalising the curriculum and the student body.
- To provide explicit opportunities for students to learn about sustainability, formally and informally, engaging with communities and employers.
- To develop and implement more efficient and effective methods for collecting, analysing and responding to student feedback on a timely basis.

Key Risks

- Failure to adopt a partnership approach resulting in staff and students missing opportunities to work collaboratively in pursuit of transformative change.
- Failure to secure the necessary quality and level of human and infrastructural resources to successfully implement the Strategy.
- Lack of effective oversight (academic, corporate, financial) thereby undermining award standards, the quality of the student learning experience and the University’s Highly Trusted Status.
- Failure of academic staff to see the relevance of the embedding of issues such as sustainability and internationalisation.

Indicative Operational Performance Indicators

- Internal Non-Continuation and Progression Data
- Student Satisfaction Ratings/ Surveys (PTES and PRES)
- Student Profile Data
- External Examiner Reports
- Student Complaints and Appeals
- Evaluation and Revalidation Reports

Key Strategic Performance Measures

- HESA Non-Continuation and Progression Rates
- National Student Survey (NSS)
- PhD Completion Rates
- HESA Widening Participation Benchmark
- QAA Institutional Review Report
Vision, Goal and Strategic Aims

Learning and Teaching Strategy (2013/14 – 2017/18)

Vision
Empowering learners to excel in professional life through transformative higher education

Goal
To lead innovation in learning through flexible, inclusive and accessible provision

We will realise our goal through the following three strategic aims:

1. To provide appropriate learning opportunities which are flexible, responsive to, and inclusive of, the needs of students, professions, industry and the wider community.

2. To provide transformative, high quality, learning experiences through the promotion of meaningful staff-student partnerships that engender a shared responsibility.

3. To enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience.

and enabling aim:
To provide a supportive environment, in which innovative approaches to learning, teaching and leadership are encouraged, recognised, valued and rewarded, for all staff and students in the University.
Strategic Aim 3

To enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience.
To enhance Ulster’s role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience.

Key Supporting Objectives

- To provide students with opportunities to avail of flexible work-based learning opportunities in a wide variety of settings in the UK and internationally.
- To build upon and further support enhancements for work-based/related learning opportunities for students and graduates through the development of new, flexible models of provision.
- To encourage faculty approaches to employability in curriculum design and delivery that are transparent to both potential and current students, their families, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Through Faculties and Schools, to continue to pro-actively engage with professional, regulatory and statutory bodies to gain co-terminus awards, where appropriate.
- To actively promote, support and enhance student employability as delivered through a range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and associated awards working in partnership with the Students’ Union, as appropriate.
- To embed and make visible Ulster graduate attributes throughout all programmes of study.
- To embed and make transparent within our programmes the skills and learning opportunities that encourage entrepreneurship and enhance employability and enterprise.
- To widen and strengthen engagement with industry and business locally, nationally and internationally to enhance the student learning experience, support student and graduate employability, and promote Ulster’s portfolio of taught programmes.
- To encourage personal reflection and the acquisition of subject-specific, critical thinking and broad-based skills to enable students and graduates to achieve success in their career paths and make a valuable contribution to society.
- To actively promote, support and enhance student employability as delivered through a range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and associated awards working in partnership with the Students’ Union, as appropriate.
- To encourage personal reflection and the acquisition of subject-specific, critical thinking and broad-based skills to enable students and graduates to achieve success in their career paths and make a valuable contribution to society.
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Key Risks

- Continued depressed graduate employment market.
- Failure to effectively research and match the University’s course provision to employer and regional skills shortages and priorities.
- Reducing opportunities for work-based and work-related learning opportunities.
- Insular student aspirations and perspectives.
- Failure to provide accurate, reliable, relevant and accessible information to meet the needs of stakeholders.
- Poor articulation and presentation of the Ulster brand to our target audiences.

Indicative Operational Performance Indicators

- Increased percentages of students gaining professional level jobs.
- Engagement of undergraduate students with the Ulster EDGE award.
- Increased percentage of students availing of placement opportunities.
- UCAS Application Data and Conversion Rates.
- Student Employability Data (DLHE).
- PSRB Reports.
- Matrix Accreditation Reports.
- Employer Feedback.
- KIS Data.

Key Strategic Performance Measures

- HESA Benchmark of Graduate Employability.
- National Student Survey.
Enabling Aim

To provide a supportive environment, in which innovative approaches to learning, teaching and leadership are encouraged, recognised, valued and rewarded, for all staff and students in the University.
To provide a supportive environment, in which innovative approaches to learning, teaching and leadership are encouraged, recognised, valued and rewarded, for all staff and students in the University.

Key Supporting Objectives

> To provide appropriate initial and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for early career and experienced academic and professional support staff to develop and enhance the capabilities and capacities needed for effective learner engagement.
> To further develop communities of practice, including students, in order to promote scholarly dialogue and encourage and facilitate the sharing of effective practice between and within subjects and departments including engagement with appropriate (international) initiatives and professional networks.
> To promote, support and recognise professionalism, leadership, achievement and excellence in learning and teaching through a range of internal and external opportunities.
> To build capacity and competence in academic and professional staff in support of the University’s local and overseas internationalisation agendas.
> To promote and encourage professional reflection, critical thinking and pedagogic research on the student learning experience by all those involved in the facilitation of learning and teaching.
> To create opportunities for staff and students to gain both formal and informal education and training in developing info-literacies including data analytics, and their associated pedagogical implications.
> To formalise career paths and implement promotion and recognition procedures that value and reward the contributions made by staff to the development, support and leadership of teaching excellence.
> To increase the proportion of, and support for, staff seeking internal recognition of effective learning and teaching practice through alignment to the UK PSE and teaching excellence through appropriate internal/external awards.
> To lead, encourage, support and disseminate scholarship of learning and teaching and pedagogic developments, by staff and students, locally and (international) nationally through the Centre for Higher Education Practice.

Key Risks

> Inadequate or poor engagement by staff in professional reflection and development and related CPD activities.
> Failure to strategically align and make provision for capacity and capability development plans at faculty, school, departmental and individual levels.
> Failure to articulate and implement University-wide Organisational Development/Human Resources strategies, systems, and processes to deliver the transformative change required to successfully implement the Strategy.

Indicative Operational Performance Indicators

- Staff Exchanges
- Professional Development Scheme Uptake
- Pedagogic-related Public Output
- Engagement with CHEP
- Internal and National Teaching Fellowship Awards
- Compliance with EPO Policy for Academic and Non-academic Staff
- HESA Benchmarking Framework for Internationalisation

Key Strategic Performance Measures

- Annual Promotion and Advancement Statistics
- Staff Surveys
- Development Appraisal and Review Uptake
- Percentage of staff with an academic teaching qualification professionally recognised with the UKPSF
Implementation

Implementation of this Strategy will be through the development of annual action plans and key operational performance indicators, the formulation of which will be facilitated through an annual briefing event for staff and student representatives on the ‘Big Conversation’, to be organised under the auspices of the University’s Centre for Higher Education Practice and endorsed by the Senior Executive Team (SET). The key implementation roles are:

1. University Teaching and Learning Committee
   The University Teaching and Learning Committee has delegated responsibility for the review and oversight of the University’s Learning and Teaching Strategy including those policies and procedures relating to learning, teaching and assessment and quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching.

2. Senate Sub-Committees
   The Strategy informs, is informed by, and complements other related University strategies. These are overseen by, and are accountable to, relevant Senate Sub-Committees viz Research and Innovation, Educational Partnerships and International Affairs, Library, Information and Student Administrative Services, Academic Development and Enhancement. Annual action plans pertaining to the Learning and Teaching Strategy may be reported, as appropriate, via these channels.

3. Faculties
   Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees will develop and oversee Subject/School Learning and Teaching Action Plans for the implementation of the University’s Strategy to ensure that they reflect school and subject/discipline-specific context and needs.

4. University Research Degrees Committee and Heads of Research Graduate Schools
   The learning experiences of postgraduate research students will continue to be managed and overseen in accordance with Chapter B11: Research Degrees of the QAA Quality Code by the University’s Research Degrees Committee (RDC) and the Heads of Research Graduate Schools. RDC reports to Senate through the University’s Research and Innovation Committee chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

5. Student Voice
   Student representation at University, Faculty and Course/Programme levels will continue and will be enhanced in some areas through membership of project teams and working groups dealing with aspects of learning, teaching and assessment. In particular, the University will seek to further support the excellent work being undertaken by the Students’ Union, and to work collaboratively with them in furtherance of our joint goals. More generally, opportunities for students to provide feedback both formally (e.g. Students’ Union Forum) and informally, through focus groups, will be enhanced as part of the University’s participation in the HEA’s Students as Partners project. Student representation on Revalidation Review Panels will continue.

6. Central Departments
   All central support Departments (viz Student Administration, ISD, Finance, HR, Physical Resources, etc) have a crucial role to play in the effective implementation of the Strategy. They too will be required to demonstrate how they propose to implement, respond to, and be accountable for, areas of the Strategy which are relevant to them.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The University’s Teaching and Learning Committee chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) will continue to oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy and the progress being made, both formatively and summatively, in respect of each of its Strategic and Enabling aims.

The key supporting objectives will also be reviewed annually to ensure their currency and validity and will be updated, where necessary, to reflect new University priorities as reflected in the Corporate Plan and in response to external regulatory changes and government policy.
CHEP  
Centre for Higher Education Practice  
Aligned with the Staff Development Unit, the Centre functions as a facilitating and enabling arm of teaching and learning in the University role to progress the implementation of aspects of the learning and Teaching Strategy in collaborative and role. It is aimed at promoting a learning experience in the work of teaching and research.  
www.ulst.ac.uk/centrehep/index.html

Corporate Plan  
University of Ulster Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2015/16  
www.ulst.ac.uk/corporateplan

CPD  
Continuing Professional Development is the means by which people maintain their knowledge and skills related to their professional lives. It can involve any relevant learning activity, whether formal and structured or informal and self-directed. CPD obligations are common to most professions.

DEL  
Department for Employment and Learning  
The department’s aim is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy. It provides funding and support for HEIs in relation to the four learning and teaching roles within the University.  
www.delni.gov.uk

DLHE  
Destinations of Leavers in Higher Education  
The DLHE workforce survey is conducted each year to the end of the academic year. The survey provides information about student has taken place. Results are anonymous, allowing comparison against the sector and within benchmarking clubs, while ensuring that they are used for internal enhancement.  
www.heacademy.ac.uk/kpsf

EDGE  
The EDGE Award  
A vehicle by which the University can formally recognise achievements that promote opportunities for employability skills development.  
www.ulst.ac.uk/edge

HEA  
Higher Education Academy  
The scheme is to provide a national framework, organisation, funded by the four UK HE funding bodies and by subscriptions and grants, to champion excellent learning and teaching in HE and in a mission to improve the quality of learning and teaching. They do this by recognising and rewarding excellent teaching, bringing together people and resources to research and share best practice, and by helping to influence, shape and implement policy.  
www.heacademy.ac.uk

HEA  
Higher Education Statistics Agency  
The official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education. The Agency was set up by agreement between the relevant government departments, the higher education funding councils and the universities.  
www.heas.ac.uk

KIS  
Key Information Set (KIS)  
The KIS comprises the two of information about full-time or part-time undergraduate courses and are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students and employers.  
www.heacademy.ac.uk/kpsf

KPSF  
The UK Professional Standards Framework  
Provides a general description of the main dimensions of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the HE environment. It is written from the perspective of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within the LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY  

KPSF  
University of Ulster Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2015/16  
www.ulst.ac.uk/corporateplan

PSRB  
Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies  
Many higher education courses leading to a professional or vocational qualification are required to be accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body. The accreditation relates to the qualifications and standards of the teaching and learning which is undertaken by the institution.
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