

### ANNUAL REVIEW 2016/17

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### **Foreword**



As I reflect on my second year as Chair of Council, I have been greatly encouraged by the first year of the implementation of our strategic plan, Five & Fifty. This University is now taking confident steps in delivering the very best in teaching and research excellence, stretching its global reach and building upon its considerable civic impact.

Ulster University is strongly associated with the prospects of the many other sectors who depend upon our teaching quality, our pioneering research and the power and impact of our leaders and critical thinkers in diverse disciplines and fields. Be that the skills for business and industry, the provision of vital professional specialisms for health and social care locally, or the research that changes lives, Ulster University and the work we do is vital to Northern Ireland's promise, potential and future development.

Integral to building the brightest and best future, investments in our physical estate are both enriching campus life and ensuring that the University is a vibrant local asset in its community. The £263 million state-of-the-art Belfast campus is revitalising the northern edge of the city and redefining the city centre. It marks a new era for the University and is crucial to Belfast's ambitions for a world-class "smart city" centre in which to live, work and learn. When complete it will bring together the diverse talents of artists, scientists, engineers and business entrepreneurs in a vibrant city location. A campus in, and of, the city, it will offer enhanced opportunity for partnership and collaboration with residential, commercial, cultural and social neighbours. The rich and proud creative heart of the campus launched a new commercial platform this year for emerging talent with the opening of UNIQUE, a student led art and design shop. Overlooking the thriving Cathedral Quarter, it is a fitting reminder of Ulster University's artistic pedigree and origins.

On the Coleraine campus, our Chancellor Dr James Nesbitt opened the new £5.1 milion sports complex, this regional development centre for sporting excellence in the area is accessible to everyone from elite athletes to staff, students and local clubs. The campus also saw the launch of Northern Ireland's first Enterprise Zone, a valuable proposition to attract inward investment and champion local growth and innovation.

Our ambitions for the Magee campus reached a milestone in the autumn of 2017 with the completion of a four story teaching block. Opening to students in January 2018, it offers modern teaching in the heart of the campus. Our commitment to building healthy communities is also progressing with our plans for a Graduate Entry Medical School in the North West. The proposal has garnered strong medical, community, business, academic and political support, addressing as it does the skills and workforce challenges faced by our health care sector.

At the centre of research, teaching and university life, are, of course, talented and ambitious students, supported and nurtured by skilled and committed staff – both academic and professional. From medicine and nursing to intelligent systems and the Irish language, the breadth of our staff achievements in the past year showcases the positive impact on our students and the extent of our credentials in diverse disciplines. Alumni continue to make their mark locally and globally in an equally diverse range of subjects; with high points in the past year in music and art reinforcing our role at the heart of the flourishing creative industries.

Our sustained commitment to widening access and opportunity continues to support students to overcome personal challenges and to ensure that those students who are most able can confidently succeed in carving out high value and rewarding careers through access to excellent learning opportunities.

As we invest in the surroundings in which success will be supported to thrive, it is our people and their successes that set Ulster University experience apart, and which bring to life our plans for the years ahead with such conviction, energy and enthusiasm.

John Hunter Chair of Council



In this, my second annual review as Vice-Chancellor of Ulster University, it is deeply inspiring to see how the essence and ethos of our Five & Fifty strategic plan is becoming firmly embedded in our work and our future plans.

At the heart of the strategy is our commitment, as Northern Ireland's civic university, to deliver the research and teaching that will transform lives, raise ambitions and help communities thrive, locally and globally.

Collectively, we can all be exceptionally proud of the volume and scale of our achievements over the last 12 months. As clear outworkings of our strategy, they demonstrate the positive impact this institution is having on our society.

Our student centred approach to learning and teaching, combined with our modern and engaging learning environment supports the intellectual and personal ambitions of each and every student.

It was therefore with great pride in November last year that I collected, on behalf of all of Ulster University, the prestigious Times Higher Education award for Most Improved Student Experience.

This award recognises our commitment to providing a transformative educational experience and our ultimate vision of nurturing a vibrant student community that prepares our graduates to make a positive, global impact.

We retained our position as one of the Time Higher Education (THE) Top 150 Young Universities in the World and joint 5th in the UK, another resounding endorsement of our talented people and our global relevance.

Our School of Nursing surpassed last year's performance to become 5th in the UK and 37th in the world. A tremendous achievement which highlights the dedication of students and academic staff, as well as underpinning our reputation for nursing and medical skills excellence.

Building upon our commitment to healthy communities and the provision of priority workforce and skills needs for the future, our plans for a medical school in the North West continue to gather pace. When it opens to students in 2019, it will see Ulster University take the lead in delivering practical, relevant, and evidence-based teaching to the doctors of the future.

This year also saw the first cohort of Stratified Medicine students in the UK graduate from Ulster University. This course, and others, have been created, not just in response to sectoral demand but in anticipation of demand, so Ulster University can be ready today, with the workforce of tomorrow.

By working with our partners in industry, healthcare, public life and beyond, we can continue to support key sectors by identifying skills needs and adapting or creating courses that provide relevant skills and industry -ready graduates.

Alongside this, we continue to maximise our ability to drive industry partnerships and deliver economic and societal impact through research collaborations. From the launch of our Agri-Food Business Development Centre, which will improve the competitive position of the important agri-food industry, to Northern Ireland's first data analytics research institute that brings businesses, government and research excellence together at our Magee campus, our focus on driving research impact is clearly evident.

A new Legal Innovation Centre positions us as a key player in the legal services sector and reinforces our position as the top institution in the UK for Law research impact. A £2 million Health Technology Hub further enhances our international reputation for the development of life-saving, life-changing technology.

Throughout the year, our research continued to focus on delivering informed analysis of key issues. Research that continues to inform public debate and influences social policy. From the first findings of Northern Ireland's Health and Wellbeing Study which are helping to shape the future of veteran support services, to the most in- depth study ever conducted into public attitudes towards abortion, I am proud of the increasingly significant and influential role our researchers are playing in areas that are both locally relevant and globally significant.

The University estate continues to be enhanced as we provide dynamic state-of-the-art space for teaching, research, sport and more. University Chancellor, Dr James Nesbitt, officially opened our new £5.1 million sports complex at our Coleraine campus. Only a few weeks later, a contract to develop Northern Ireland's first Enterprise Zone at the Coleraine campus was signed in an exciting collaboration with the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, which will be integral to the region's investment proposition and economic growth.

Construction at our Belfast campus is also well underway with the new, iconic buildings, that will change the Belfast skyline forever, becoming increasingly visible as we work towards our relocation from Jordanstown. At the Magee campus, the £11 million teaching block is nearing completion. When it opens to students in early 2018, it will foster a strong, collaborative teaching environment that reflects the changing needs of a modern, internationally focused university.

All of this has been achieved against a backdrop of political and financial uncertainty. But Ulster University has risen to the challenge. We secured 236 competitive research grants totalling £28.8 million, including £23 million of INTERREG EU funds. These research grants are not only critical to our ability to maximise our research capability and deliver impact in priority sectors. They help define our global research presence and world-leading reputation.

Ulster University's community of students, colleagues, parents, alumni and partners are ever more important as we embrace our societal responsibilities, enhance our teaching and research impact and, implement our strategic vision. Together, we are growing our economy, changing lives and nurturing ambition.

Our founders, I am sure, would be truly proud of what we have achieved.

Professor Paddy Nixon
Vice-Chancellor and President

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Foreword 04/05









## 2016/17 Highlights

- Ulster University presented a Life Stories event with Ryan Farquhar, Irish motorcycle road racing's most successful ever rider. Pictured here with Professor Paul Moore
- Ulster University launches Legal Innovation Centre.
   Pictured (I-r) are Andrew Brammer, Allen & Overy; Vice-Chancellor Professor Paddy Nixon; Jason Marty, Baker McKenzie and Professor Jonathan Askin, Brooklyn Law School
- 3. Ulster hosted the Irish Netball Intervarsities in February with our talented netball athletes winning the competition for the third year running
- Ulster University recognised and rewarded successful industry partnerships and pioneering research at our inaugural Impact Excellence Awards, compèred by Paul Clark MBE

- Lidl Northern Ireland awarded highly-skilled Ulster University students the opportunity to kick-start their management career with a £20,000 bursary
- Celebrating Biology Week; BSc Hons Biology student Stephanie Ashfield-Beattie with Year 7 pupils Kyle, Millie and Amelia from DH Christie Memorial Primary School
- Ulster staff, students and alumni raised over £35,000 through events such as the Belfast City Marathon and four campus cycle for student mental health initiative, Mind Your Mood
- 8. Ulster proudly hosted the AHUA 2017 Spring Conference, a landmark UK higher education conference
- Ulster University makes debut appearance on University Challenge – Captain Iain Jack with Cathal McDaid, Catherine Ritchie and Matthew Milliken, and host Jeremy Paxman
- 10. Sarah O'Neill, an inspirational young mum from Belfast, graduated with first class honours, less than two years after she donated part of her liver to save her baby son's life











08/09 **Excelling in Education** 

#### Pioneering courses

Ulster University is known as a leader and innovator in education, creating tailored courses that meet the needs of our fast-changing world. In 2017 three such courses produced their first cohort of graduates.

The University's cutting-edge degree in personalised medicine, BSc (Hons) Stratified Medicine, based at the Clinical Translational Research and Innovation Centre at Altnagelvin Hospital, teaches new approaches to managing chronic diseases such as arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

The course, which was the first of its kind in the UK and Ireland, focuses on the development of new technologies and systems to predict disease, select the best treatment, and reduce side effects for individual patients.

The new stratified medicine graduates will apply their skills to bringing the world of medicine a step closer to providing the right treatment, for the right person, at the right time.

The Centre for Renewable Energy (CERE) at the University's Magee campus also produced its first graduates. CERE offers a range of degrees in engineering covering all aspects of renewable energy, mechanical and manufacturing, and electrical and electronic engineering. The degrees are industry relevant and equip students with highly sought after skills.

In the Arts, the BSc (Hons) in Cinematic Arts delivered its first graduates in 2017. Introduced in 2014, the course brings storytelling to the modern age by considering output to all screens, from a mobile device or tablet right through to a modern digital cinema screen. The course has already opened doors for the graduates to work on local film projects and events.

### Continuous innovation

The University continued to innovate this year announcing a new Agri-food Business Development Centre and the island of Ireland's first ever football coaching degree.

The Agri-Food Business Development Centre aims to improve the competitive position of Northern Ireland's important agri-food industry by offering specialist teaching and evidence-informed research on agri-food business and engaging with industry and policy-makers. The new international centre of excellence will deliver its support using its links with local and international stakeholders such as CAFRE, St Joseph's College of Food Marketing, in Philadelphia, the Centres for Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship at Babson and Harvard and IDM Nations University, in Sri Lanka.

Underpinning its reputation as one of the leading universities for sport, Ulster University teamed up with the Irish Football Association to announce plans to create a unique football coaching degree.

The BSc (Hons) Football Coaching and Business Management degree will be delivered on a part-time basis at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park. The innovative degree will allow students to combine theory and practice with the completion of professional UEFA coaching qualifications along with an undergraduate degree.

### Transforming lives

Ulster University aims to transform lives and is recognised in the Top 10 UK Universities for widening access to higher education. Building on this, the University announced during the year that it is to scale up employability initiatives to tackle barriers to success for black and minority ethnic students, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as well as disabled, mature and part-time students.



Professor Mark Durkin (right) announces Ulster University Business School's new Agri-food Business Development Centre with Visiting Professor Tracy Hamilton and Mike Johnson at Balmoral Show

In collaboration with Aston University, Birmingham City University and University of London, the University secured £420,000 from the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) Catalyst Fund. It will use the funding to enhance the graduate attainment levels and employability prospects of students from under-represented groups by delivering initiatives including the Global Ambassadors Scheme, which allow undergraduates to take part in international work or study.

The University will also enhance its delivery of accredited employability modules that provide students with practical support in relation to their personal and professional development.

### **Science Shop**

Engaging with the community through the University's Science Shop initiative continues to deliver extensive benefits to both students and community groups alike. During the year, 782 students undertook projects with 69 community groups across a range of disciplines from sports coaching to creative arts.

# 782 students undertook projects with 69 community groups

The Science Shop pairs skilled students with groups who are seeking specific expertise, enabling students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations as part of their degree coursework and giving community and voluntary groups access to University knowledge and information resources.

### Schools engagement

Inspiring the next generation of students is an important aim of the University, which actively engages with schools throughout the year through its Schools Partnership programme. A range of activities were delivered in the areas of numeracy, art and design, technology, business, ICT, robotics and cyber safety.

These activities, which included Tutoring in Schools, a Dragons' Den style business challenge, an apps workshop and a Formula 1 kit car challenge, enabled schoolchildren to develop their STEM skills in a fun environment while also giving Ulster University students invaluable hands-on experience that increases their employability prospects.

As part of its drive to widen access to education the University also delivered its Ulster Ambassadors programme through which students present their life story in a school. The aim is to raise aspirations and, in particular, encourage young females to consider studying STEM subjects at university level.

### Placement power

Through the University's strong partnerships with businesses across all sectors, our students can benefit from excellent placement opportunities. Among the long list of businesses that recognise the value of Ulster University placement students is Lidl Northern Ireland, which launched a bursary package worth over £20,000 in 2017.

Students who are successful in their bursary application will get a paid work placement, their university fees funded for the year, access to a senior management mentoring programme and the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in all areas of the retail sector.

In addition, high performers will be offered a part-time job during their final year and have the opportunity to get their final year fees fully paid.

The bursary is an exceptional opportunity for Ulster University students to develop their skills, and equally is an opportunity for Lidl to benefit from the talents of our top-class students.

Ulster University is recognised in the Top 10 UK Universities for widening access to higher education

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Excelling in Education 10/11

The University is now ranked 37th in the world and 5th in the UK for teaching and research excellence in nursing

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### International standing

The University's international standing was further enhanced when, in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2017, it was ranked among the world's elite institutions in nursing and in the top 20 in the UK for four subjects.

The University is now ranked 37th in the world and 5th in the UK for teaching and research excellence in nursing and in the top 20 for architecture/built environment, agriculture/forestry and sports-related subjects.

Further accolades were received at the Education Awards 2017 in Dublin where Ulster University's School of Education picked up two awards.

The Postgraduate Diploma and MSc in Library & Information Management – accredited by the Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals – came out top in the 'Best Use of Educational Technology' category and also picked up plaudits in the 'Overall Excellence in Education' category.

The innovative postgraduate diploma provides an academic foundation for professional practice and is delivered through online webinar-style classes and discussion forums.

Ulster University was also shortlisted in four additional categories: Best Online Learning Experience: School of Geography & Environmental Sciences; Best Education Outreach Award: iMap Programme – School of Geography & Environmental Sciences; Business Collaboration Award: Ulster University Business School and Deloitte NI; Best Library Team: Coleraine Life & Health Sciences Library.

### Making an impact

In May, the University held its inaugural Impact Excellence Awards, which celebrated the transformational impact its students, graduates and research are having on societies and economies across the globe, and acknowledged the commitment of the University's local and international industry partners.

Sponsored by NIJobfinder.co.uk, the Awards recognised the University's research collaborations and placement partners in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

BBC, Kainos, Titanic Foundation Ltd, Citi and the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust were among the placement employers who were acknowledged by Ulster University for their role in supporting the next generation of highly skilled, industry-ready graduates.

Intelesens Ltd, HeartSine Technologies, International North West 200, Jubilee Australia and AVX Ltd received awards for research collaborations with the University that span human rights breaches and employment, connected health, new product development for the automotive market and digital development of the manufacturing and tourism sectors.

### Growing student satisfaction

Ulster University's focus on delivering an excellent student experience was highlighted at the Times Higher Education Awards 2016 where it won the Most Improved Student Experience award.

The award was determined from the results of a student survey, which took into account 21 different features of university life including course structure, lecture quality, social life, campus environment, industry connections and sports facilities.

Ulster University saw a rise of 37 places in the rankings reflecting the University's commitment to providing a transformative educational experience and nurturing a vibrant student community that prepares graduates to make a positive impact on global societies.

The University also saw its Student Union staff honoured at the NUS Awards 2017. UUSU won the Officer Team of The Year award and obtained Good Green Impact status.

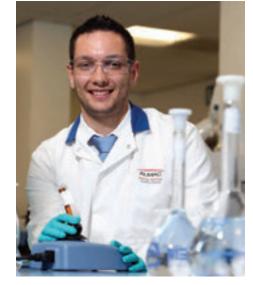
### Ulster University won the Most Improved Student Experience award at the THE Awards 2016

### Careering ahead

In 2016 the University launched a new online portal offering advice and guidance to young people aspiring for careers in the thriving sports industry, including everything from psychology, coaching and teaching to sports law, journalism and nutrition.

The Careers In portal provides tailored support for users depending on what stage they are at on their career journey, from schoolchildren and university students through to those who have graduated. Users can also explore a series of career journeys of successful sports graduates who offer insight into the steps they took to land their dream jobs.

The University also continued to encourage schoolchildren to explore and consider STEM-related careers, so vital for the development of the Northern Ireland economy. As part of the University's schools outreach initiative the University delivered a CSI workshop giving schoolchildren from Mercy College the opportunity to put their investigation skills to the test.



Stephen Morgan, Stratified Medicine graduate, in his new role with the Almac Group

#### Medical milestones

Building on its longstanding history of worldleading medical and health-related teaching, Ulster University has taken further steps to help meet the growing need for more doctors and nurses in Northern Ireland.

Its proposal to develop a medical school in the North West is currently being considered by the Department of Health, and in December 2016 the University submitted an application for accreditation to the General Medical Council (GMC). The GMC accreditation process can be lengthy and the University is keen to be in a position to welcome the first intake of Ulster University medical students in 2019.

The medical school proposal includes a graduate entry focus, and aims to provide broader access to medical training and address the skills and workforce challenges faced by the health care sector.

The University also opened a new Nursing and Midwifery Council competence test centre at Magee campus to meet growing demands for overseas nurses and midwives who wish to work in the UK.

It is one of only three such centres in the UK and delivers the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), which tests applicants' skills, knowledge and behaviours in a simulated practice environment.

The new test centre will help ensure that the hundreds of nurses and midwives who apply to work in the UK each year can gain professional registration and are fit to practice in the UK at the required standard.



Ulster University Chancellor encouraging schoolchildren to explore STEM related careers



Launch of Careers In portal



This year, Ulster University launched its five-year Research & Impact Strategy. It aims to empower Ulster University staff to undertake interdisciplinary research in a supportive environment and to produce internationally excellent and world-leading outputs, with transformative impact. It supports Ulster's vision to deliver globally significant research with local relevance and to make a positive contribution to society as a whole. This is an ambitious strategy with ambitious targets, which will help increase our research activity, providing the opportunity to transform lives, to drive innovation, to stimulate creativity and culture, and to inform and shape policy.

The strategy is already beginning to show results. In the past year, the University has secured a record number of research grant awards and has undertaken research which has resulted in breakthroughs in cancer treatment. We also established four spin-out companies, launched NI's first data analytics institute and created a Health Technology Hub.





236 competitive awards

with a combined value

The grant award figure included €23m of

via the highly competitive INTERREG VA

for collaborative research in three areas:

personalised medicine, renewable energy

University is leading the research, working

institutions and companies with existing

and connected health technology. The

with other UK and Republic of Ireland

The funding will facilitate some of the

personalised medicine currently being

undertaken globally. This research will

improve patient care and outcomes and

develop monitoring technology for heart

disease care through the enhancement

of sensor technology options. It will also

commercialisation of advanced renewable

technology solutions. The University plans

boost collaboration to accelerate the

to significantly grow the PhD student

community at Ulster and these three

INTERREG projects alone will fund

24 PhD researcher posts.

most exciting and advanced research in

global expertise in each sector.

The INTERREG funding is being used

European funding which the University won

of £28.8m

programme.

University researchers continue to lead the global battle against pancreatic cancer

### **Supporting innovation**

In 2017 the University completed its 500th Innovation Voucher project working with Limavady artisan business, The Gourmet Mallow Company, which makes hand-crafted, specialty marshmallows. Ulster University's state-of-the-art food and consumer testing suite provided specialist expertise to enable the company to analyse calorie count and

Ulster University also continues to commercialise

continue to play a significant role in collaborations with Ulster's researchers.

The University has a current portfolio of 18 KTPs worth £2.5m and a healthy pipeline of as James Leckey Design Ltd, which designs

Likewise, equipment manufacturer Rapid International Ltd has used multiple KTPs to develop new products, introduce computeraided manufacturing linked to computeraided design and is currently developing a next generation concrete reclaimer.

extend the shelf life of its products.

its research through spin-out companies - during the past year, four new spin-out companies were created.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) establishing local companies as global players and industry leaders through open innovation

new applicants. In its portfolio are companies that have benefitted from multiple KTPs such and manufactures positioning equipment for children and young people with special needs. Now on its third KTP the company is aiming to integrate existing and emerging technologies in sensors, data analysis and visualisation into new products.

### **Building healthy communities**

During the year the University further enhanced its world-leading track record in medical and health-related research with breakthroughs in cancer treatment and a significant investment in new healthcare technology development.

In a world first, Ulster University scientists at the forefront of the battle against prostate cancer, the most common cancer among men in Northern Ireland, discovered a new combined treatment that could effectively prevent tumour growth, spread and patient relapse.

The cancer researchers found that combining an existing hormone therapy, known as androgen deprivation, with a new drug called OCT1002 can improve treatment effectiveness. It works by targeting more resistant cancer cells and preventing malignancy and spread.

The research built on Ulster's University's breakthrough discovery earlier in 2016, that low oxygen levels in prostate cancer tumours are responsible for triggering genetic changes. Those changes accelerate the growth of new cancer cells and can cause patients to relapse within two years of starting the traditional hormone therapy treatment.

The combined therapy may offer a completely new way to treat prostate cancer, increasing the amount of time that hormone therapy works for. The next step is to consider a move to clinical trials so that the combined therapy can be tested, with the ultimate aim of developing tailored treatments for individual prostate cancer patients globally.

The three-year Ulster University study was supported by Prostate Cancer UK through a £213,000 grant from the Movember Foundation.

University researchers also continue to lead the global battle against pancreatic cancer, the fourth most common cause of cancerrelated deaths globally.

In 2015 Ulster University scientists identified a new therapy that can selectively target pancreatic cancer tumours using microbubble technology combined with harmless sound

waves. A new study, announced in 2017, will investigate if the microbubble technology can provide a similar boost alongside traditional radiotherapy treatments.

Radiotherapy is a very effective way of controlling cancer symptoms but it is limited by poor oxygen supply. The study will examine if the University's microbubble technology can improve tumour oxygen levels, making the radiotherapy treatment more effective.

The study, led by Ulster University, is being undertaken in partnership with the University of Oxford and is funded with £180,000 from the national charity Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund.

With little progress having been made in pancreatic cancer survival rates over the last 40 years, it is hoped that this innovative research will deliver significant benefits to patients.

To further strengthen its ability to carry out pioneering health-related research, the University announced, in May 2017, a £2m investment in a new Health Technology Hub, which centralises core expertise to support rapid development of new healthcare technology with strong input from clinicians.

### £2m investment in a new Health Technology Hub

Located within the Nanotechnology & Integrated Bioengineering Centre in the School of Engineering at Ulster University, the Hub can access expertise from the Connected Health Innovation Centre, the BioDevices Lab, the Eastern Corridor Medical Engineering Centre and the Centre for Advanced Cardiovascular Research.

As one of the top ten universities in the UK for world-leading research in biomedical engineering, Ulster University is at the forefront of multi-disciplinary research in nanotechnology, advanced materials, integrated smart sensors, smart computing algorithms and data analytics to provide new technology that is already changing patients' care pathways.

By bringing together knowledge and expertise, the new Health Technology Hub further enhances the University's ability to carry out pioneering research which could result in life-changing and life-saving technology and make a global impact on healthcare costs.



Dr Amy Burns (left) with owners of The Gourmet Mallow Company, Yolande and Alan Shannon



World-leading scientist in electromaterials, Professor Gordon Wallace (left) with Ulster University's Professor Jim McLaughlin launching the new Health Technology Research Hub

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### Advancing sustainable technology

Ulster University's world-leading expertise in sustainable technologies and renewable energy has set it at the forefront of global policy-making.

In March 2017 the University was awarded a prestigious £633,044 research grant bu the Department for the Economy for a major study into safeguarding the security and stability of renewable energy supply across the island of Ireland.

Ulster University researchers will work in partnership with University College Dublin to explore the extent to which variable renewable energy, especially wind energy, can generate a stable electricity source to meet the needs of the population.

The research findings will be used for Government policy guidance for 2020, 2030 and 2050 decarbonisation targets, as well as providing advice on operational strategies for maintaining system security and stability of an electricity network that meets the needs of end-users.

### Revolutionising data analytics research

In March 2017, the University launched Northern Ireland's first data analytics institute, the Cognitive Analytics Research Lab. Headquartered at the Magee campus, it brings together businesses, government and advanced research expertise to build upon the University's internationallyrenowned research expertise in data analytics.

The Cognitive Analytics Research Lab will harness the potential of over £30m already invested by the University into data analytics related research projects in recent years.

This latest investment will create 12 new research posts to add to the 60 research staff already engaged in data analytics related

research in the University across a range of sectors from personalised medicine to financial technology.

Ulster University is partnering with Catalyst Inc to engage with the wider community and create an entrepreneurial eco-system. Letterkenny Institute of Technology is supporting skills development and delivery of increased research capacity on a cross border basis.

Through the Lab, the University aims to maximise its industry partnerships and academic collaborations to deliver economic and societal impact with pioneering solutions. One of the key priorities will be to ensure that the Lab leverages the potential of open government data, enabling the research to inform public policy and transform the lives of our citizens.

### Leading the way in legal services

February 2017 saw the launch of a new Legal Innovation Centre, which will be at the forefront of advancing the use of technologydriven innovation in legal services and legal education globally.

The Centre, a collaboration between the School of Law and the School of Computing and Intelligent Systems, is the first of its kind in the UK and was established with support from leading global law firms Allen & Overy and Baker McKenzie.

The Centre will undertake research on technological innovations to facilitate legal process improvement, and so promote greater economic efficiency and improved access

It will also give students and lawyers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with different types of legal technology software provided by the University's academic partners, Clio and Caselines.

At the launch of the Cognitive Analytics Research Lab was Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paddy Nixon; Professor Cathy Gormley-Hennan; Professor Liam Maguire, Ulster University; John Healy, Allstate; Peter Devine Ulster University and Greg McDaid, Fujitsu

Technology plays an increasingly central role in legal services and the new Centre will foster the emergence of legal technologists, ready for the challenges of legal service provision in the information age.

### Influencing social policy

Ulster University's research plays an important role in influencing policy-making within Northern Ireland and during the year, two landmark research reports were published.

In June, the first of several reports from the University's Northern Ireland Veterans Health and Wellbeing Study was published, presenting research findings on currently available and required future support services for veterans in the region.

The report was the result of research led by Ulster University's Dr Cherie Armour, who has extensive experience of researching military and veteran issues. It followed a lengthy and robust review of what supports for veterans currently exist, what they offer, where they are located and how they operate and communicate across sectors.

The University's study found that there is no veteran specific statutory service outside of those provided by the Ministry of Defence, and there is only minimal acknowledgement of the specific needs of veterans in Northern Ireland in local policy or service delivery.

The report also identified a need for specialist support in mental health services and called for a formally recognised body to better guide policy and support key agencies working to support veterans in Northern Ireland.

The research received £750,000 funding over three years from the Forces in Mind Trust.

During the year, University researchers also carried out the most in-depth survey of public attitudes to abortion ever conducted in Northern Ireland and presented key findings on local attitudes to existing law on abortion, whether the law should be changed and in what circumstances, and views on the criminalisation of abortion.

Ulster University's findings showed very strong support among the Northern Ireland public for abortion to be allowed where there is a risk to the life of the woman, a serious risk to her physical or mental health, in cases of fatal or serious foetal abnormality, or where a pregnancy is a result of rape or incest.

Northern Ireland currently has some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world and the research findings provide evidence that abortion legislation in Northern Ireland is out of step with public opinion.

The comprehensive and timely piece of research, which was published just after the Supreme High Court ruled that Northern Ireland women are still not entitled to free NHS abortions in England, will inform the discussion on the abortion issue and future decision-making on this very emotive topic.

### **Navigating BREXIT**

Ulster University took the lead in helping to build a 'Brexit ready' local business economy by launching a three-stage programme of activity which aims to create practical solutions and support for businesses in Northern Ireland.

The programme, led by Ulster University Business School, began with the launch of an online Brexit Business Survey to identify businesses' perceptions of Brexit. It took into account the significance of business size, sector and geographical location, with particular reference to border proximity. It also sought to identify key risks and perceived opportunities associated with Brexit.

After the results of the survey were analysed, a roundtable event took place in June 2017 to discuss the findings. Collaborative discussion ceramic competition Future Lights – Ceramics with invited businesses identified practical outcomes from the survey to form a Business Toolkit for Brexit which will be used to shape policy and positively influence practice.

A series of workshops were held focusing on key areas involving the Business School and other parties. The Business School is also creating a Toolkit of support for businesses that will provide academic and practical perspectives on issues such as management/ leadership issues; entrepreneurship; legalities such as changes to recruitment/employment law, customs procedures, product standards required; and finance matters including cashflow implications, exchange rate risk, changes to VAT, crowdfunding and changes to EU Funding available.

12 new research posts were added to the 60 research staff already engaged in data analytics related research

### Commercialising design talent

A talented design graduate from Ulster University became the first designer in Belleek Pottery's 160-year history to have a range of products named after them.

Wendy Ward graduated in Contemporary Applied Art, Ceramics and then went on to complete an MFA in Multidisciplinary Design at Ulster University, specialising in porcelain lighting design.

The porcelain specialist secured a 2-year placement with Belleek during which she designed the Belleek Living Lough Collection. Featuring a lamp and two vases, the collection was inspired by the Fermanagh landscape and brings contemporary design to the historic brand.

Since graduating, Wendy has won numerous awards and continues to research and experiment with new technologies and to test new processes and materials, such as 3D printing and water-jet cutting.

Wendy recently won the Ambassador for European Ceramics award in the international and its Dimensions. This international Jews in Ireland. award recognises her exceptional ability to incorporate the qualities of hand craft into an industrial production process.

### **Cultural insights**

Over 1,000 pieces of literature from the medieval period through to modern times were examined over three years in a groundbreaking research project carried out by Ulster University and the National University of Ireland, Galway.

The project looked at the history of Jewish people in Ireland and how they were represented through Irish literature.

The results expose the prejudice and racism that once existed but also reveal a later celebration of a vibrant, vocal community at ease with its sense of dual Jewish-Irish identity and culture, which made a major contribution to Irish life.

The research is a major output of a £400,000 project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council that also included a travelling exhibition – Representations of Jews in Irish Literature – and a database chronicling over 500 entries, which is available to the public.

The project is recognised as a very significant project for Irish literary studies as it makes a major contribution to our understanding of the history and the cultural expression of





Ulster University is resolutely focused on the needs of our students – past, present and future. We aim to provide an exceptional student-centred learning environment and are committed to the ongoing enhancement of our physical estate to deliver high-quality facilities for students, staff and the community.

On every campus, investments in the University's physical estate are creating new and improved facilities. During 2017 we reached a number of key milestones in our exciting campus development programmes.



#### **BELFAST**

In line with Belfast's vision of being a 'smart city', Ulster University is transforming higher education in the heart of Belfast with an investment of £263m to create a dynamic state-of-the-art teaching, learning and research environment. Due for completion in 2019, the campus will provide a space for academia, industry and local communities to collaborate and thrive.

### £263m investment into dynamic state-of-the-art teaching, learning and research environment

The first phase of the landmark campus development opened its doors in October 2015 and provides a progressive practice -based learning and teaching environment. Next generation learning spaces, student hubs and shared spaces increase collaboration across disciplines and nurture the creative talent of the future.

The construction of phase two of the transformation is well underway and the new buildings are now clearly visible above streetlevel. The emerging new campus is a visible symbol of regeneration, breathing new life into the northern end of Belfast and catalysing further investment and new opportunities for businesses and local communities.

When complete, the campus will be a worldclass centre for research and innovation. It will provide further collaborative opportunities for students, staff, neighbours and partner organisations by bringing together the diverse talents of artists, scientists, engineers, and business entrepreneurs on one site.

### **Nurturing potential**

Our infrastructural development programme provides opportunities for enhancing our student offer. During the year, we launched

an innovative physical and educational project



Ongoing building works at Belfast campus



Opening UNIQUE, our new art & design shop on the Belfast campus. Pictured are Kevin McStravock, UUSU President and Professor Raffi Folli, Provost of the Belfast/Jordanstown campus

- the opening of a student-led arts and design shop, UNIQUE, in one of the commercial units on the Belfast campus.

In its conception, the shop is an example of fruitful collaboration between students, staff and the University more broadly. Students from interior design led, as part of a student competition, the design of the interior of the shop; The Arts and Culture Society, staff from the Belfast School of Art, together with the Students' Union, steered the development of the project, with support from the Research & Impact department, as a pump-prime funder for the redevelopment of the space; and students on the MBA programme advised on the development of the business case.

The shop is home to the emerging talent of arts students, but also an innovative gateway for the public, connecting the University with the city and Belfast's vibrant artistic community. It effectively changes the face of the Academy Street entrance to the campus and ensures a valuable shopfront for our students. Visitors now have the opportunity to view and purchase bespoke pieces crafted by students and alumni, from an array of art and design disciplines.

### **COLERAINE**

### Sporting triumph

The turn of the year saw Ulster University Chancellor, Dr James Nesbitt, officially open our new £5.1 million state-of-the-art sports complex at the University's Coleraine campus.

Located at the north end of the estate, adjacent to eight pitches (including one 3G pitch) the complex serves as a regional development centre for sport in the area and bolsters the University's commitment to sport at all levels, from recreational users to competitive athletes.

The modern facility boasts eight multi-sport indoor courts; a fitness studio for daily classes; sauna and steam room; a fitness suite with a wide range of cardio and resistance training equipment and a dedicated strength and conditioning suite.

Funded by the Department for the Economy, this regional centre of sporting excellence is accessible by everyone, from elite athletes and local clubs to students and staff. The investment underpins the University's commitment to civic leadership and the development of healthy communities.

During 2017 the complex hosted training camps for professional teams, including the Super Cup NI teams. It was awarded official





capital allowances and the fastest high speed connectivity point between North America and UK via Project Kelvin.

The Enterprise Zone's first anchor tenant, 5NINES, a global data centre company will be investing an additional £20m in their operations there and creating up to 15 jobs in the process.

### MAGEE

### **Engaging environments**

Existing learning, teaching and social spaces are being systematically upgraded in a rolling programme, alongside major capital works at Magee.

A two-year construction project to expand teaching provision at the campus was completed in autumn 2017 and will be open for teaching in early 2018.

An extension to the existing university library, the new four-storey £11m teaching block covers a floor space of almost 4,000 sq metres and provides a mixture of new and flexible teaching facilities, including three lecture theatres, 20 teaching rooms, open plan student hubs and a cafe. There will be a 320-seat tiered lecture theatre, 80-seat interactive tiered lecture theatre and a 75-seat flat-bed lecture theatre. The teaching rooms range in size from 20 seats to 50 seats.

The new development delivers modern teaching accommodation which will facilitate a collaborative teaching approach at Magee and deliver additional, state-of-the-art teaching facilities for more than 4,300 undergraduate and postgraduate students attending the campus annually.

### **GEMS** proposal progressing

During 2017 our plans for a Graduate Entry Medical School (GEMS) continued to develop, following the initial submission of our application for accreditation to the General Medical Council.

The proposal – which has drawn strong support from medical, business, academic, community and political stakeholders – aims to provide broader access to medical training and address the skills and workforce challenges faced by the health care sector, mainly in the North West, but also across Northern Ireland as a whole.

As we progress this flagship project, our focus is on strengthening the health and social care workforce and responding to the changing health needs of the population across Northern Ireland. Significantly, our proposal will also see an investment in dedicated 'state-of-the-science' infrastructure designed specifically to enhance the experience of our students and staff.

State-of-the-art teaching facilities for more than 4,300 undergraduate and postgraduate students



Plans for a world-class Graduate Entry Medical School are progressing following the initial submission of our application



### **Showcasing creative talent**

Each year Ulster University's End of Year shows celebrate the outstanding work of graduating students and the University's leading role in fostering creative excellence, participation and innovation.

Across cinematic arts, music, drama and design, media, film and journalism, the creative talents of the students are put on show through performances, film screenings, exhibitions, installations, photo imaging and interactive media.

The flagship Graduate Fashion Show once again took place in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast showcasing the work of 28 emerging designers to a capacity crowd of 600. Considered to be one of the premier graduate shows nationally, it is an invaluable opportunity to put our student designers on the fashion map.

The central role that excellent design plays in everything from product development to quality of life was celebrated in a number of other exhibitions.

At the University's Belfast campus, original work by students of the Belfast School of Art drew excellent reviews, from the public, collectors, art enthusiasts and creative industry professionals highlighting the University's standing as a leader in producing top-class graduates who are making an impact on the creative industries sector here and worldwide.

In Derry~Londonderry employers also got the chance to view the work of the next generation of creative thinkers and commercial designers at exhibitions that encompassed animation, graphics, interactive design, film, 3D digital content and product design.

Other End of Year shows included a contemporary dance performance from the BA Hons Dance students entitled DUST, held in the Playhouse Theatre, Derry~Londonderry, and a screening of innovative work by students on the BSC Hons Cinematic Arts programme.

Over 90 media, film and journalism students launched their careers by showcasing their short films, photo imaging and interactive media work at the University's Coleraine campus.

The Foyle Arts Building, on Magee campus, was the venue for the drama students to stage a selection of performances and research presentations while music students displayed their vocal and instrumental virtuosity in lunchtime and evening concerts in Derry~Londonderry.

### Community engagement

Ulster University's positive and wide-ranging engagement with the local community is at the heart of its ethos of inclusivity.

During the year the University launched a new art exhibition to showcase young talent from schools across North Belfast, and to inspire young people to take their education and creativity to the next level. Painting, sculpture and ceramic works of year 13 and 14 pupils from seven schools were showcased at the exhibition.

The University also took centre stage on Culture Night 2016 when its Belfast campus hosted a wide range of events as part of the city's largest cultural celebration. Highlights from the night included The Museum of Tactile Art led by leading charity Blind Children UK, a live experimental drum performance from Ulster University graduate John Macormac and story-writing workshops.

At Christmas, Ulster University's choir delivered its carol concert in the spectacular surroundings of Clonard Monastery in Belfast, taking its talent and enthusiasm into the community to welcome the festive season.

### Mental health initiatives

With a recent National Union of Students report highlighting that eight out of ten students in UK universities experience some form of mental health issue, Ulster University launched two pioneering mental health initiatives during the year to improve the emotional wellbeing of students and tackle the social stigmas associated with seeking support.

Mind Your Mood, managed by Student

Support, is an innovative, student-led campaign run in partnership with leading mental health charities Action Mental Health and Aware NI. During the year, Action Mental Health delivered MindSet workshops across Ulster University's four campuses, providing a platform for discussion on mental health challenges and offering advice on enhancing

Over 220 staff, students, alumni and friends joined forces to raise £35,000 to support Mind Your Mood, a student-led mental health campaign



Conor McClure from Us Folk Illustrations, pictured during Culture Night celebrations at Ulster University



Ulster University's Choir at Clonard Monastery, Belfast

emotional wellbeing. Under the direction of the Development and Alumni relations team, over 220 staff, students, alumni and friends joined forces to raise funds to support Mind Your Mood in a major fundraising campaign for the charity through a series of events in early May – including the Belfast City Marathon, a Four Campus Cycle and a football tournament – leading to £35,000 being raised.

The second initiative was a sport-based mental health programme rolled out in partnership with leading charity, State of Mind Ireland.

The programme used sport as a setting for communicating healthy lifestyle messages around mental health, substance misuse and risk-taking behaviours. It involved group discussion on mental fitness, the practice of mindfulness and practical steps to enhance physical activity. It also used athletes as mental health ambassadors to reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues.

The sports-based programme built on Ulster University's world-leading research in sport and exercise science, which recently delivered a review of best-practice mental health and wellbeing interventions in sport for Sport Northern Ireland.





2016/17 saw an increase in donations to the University's work, boosting philanthropy's impact across the institution

### Philanthropic support

Philanthropic gifts are increasingly important in enabling the University to enhance the student learning experience as well as our research impact. 2016/17 saw an increase in the number of individuals and corporates donating to the University's work, increasing philanthropy's impact across the institution.

Thanks to the generosity of alumni, staff, friends and our corporate supporters, we were able to award more scholarships than ever before. These scholarships directly enhance our students' experience at Ulster, rewarding scholastic achievement and aspiration, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation. They provide opportunities for students to travel in support of their studies and for those challenged by difficult financial or personal circumstances.

The fourth annual Ulster University Scholarships and Awards Ceremony celebrated the achievements and ambitions of those who have received support.

Guests at the ceremony included awardees, their families, staff, donors and alumni as well as corporate supporters of scholarships and awards. These included KPMG, Allen & Overy, SSE Airtricity, Norbrook Laboratories, Department of Justice, Subway Ireland and Santander Universities. Santander Universities has provided significant funding to enhance opportunities for student mobility and to support internships, work placements and entrepreneurship.

Additionally the University has received donations from the Rotary Club of Londonderry and AFL-CIO, a USA-based federation of unions representing 12.5 million working men and women, to support both local and international students studying the process of peace-building and enable them to share the lessons learnt locally on a

### **Sporting success**

Ulster University offers over 70 sports clubs, covering both team and individual pursuits, involving over 1,900 students. These students currently hold 35 individual and team titles including European and world titles. In 2016/17 our golfers came second in the European Universities Championships and Jordan Sloan was selected to represent Ireland in swimming at the World University Games.

During the year, we hosted a number of intervarsities at our world-class facilities including hockey, cricket, canoeing and netball competitions. The netball intervarsity was played in the new state-of-the-art Coleraine indoor sports facility and Ulster University won for the third year in a row.

Over 50 Ulster University students across 14 sports were awarded Performance Sport Scholarships in 2016/17

### Sporting chance

As part of the University's commitment to the development of sport in the region it announced a £1 million investment in a major sports programme over the next three years.

The aim is to help sport to thrive at all levels in Northern Ireland, from elite athletes and university teams to local schools and community clubs.

The University will fund over £300,000 worth of scholarships and has created nine new sports development officer posts to drive forward participation and performance in hockey, athletics, rugby, basketball, football, cricket, golf and Gaelic games, both at Ulster University and in the community. New partnerships with a number of sporting national governing bodies will also be formed.

Over 50 Ulster University students across 14 sports were awarded Performance Sport Scholarships in 2016/17. The scholarships provide funding towards the course fees of high performing athletes for one year and students benefit from flexible study options as well as specialist sports performance services.

During the year, Ulster University also became the official Northern Ireland partner of the Irish Football Association's Girls' and Women's Football Academy and was awarded official training venue status for the UEFA Women's U19 European Championship.

The Football Academy will provide players with extra coaching and fitness training and will use some of the best coaches and sports scientists in Northern Ireland and beyond. Through the scheme, the University hopes to encourage players to stay at home to develop their game as well as receiving education here.

Further support for sportswomen came in the form of funding from the Department of Communities and Sport NI enabling the University to deliver an initiative as part of a Women in Sport Leadership programme.

### Community engagement through sport

Through our Sports Outreach programme we use the abilities and enthusiasm of our students to reach young people in schools and communities at greatest disadvantage. By delivering stimulating and fulfilling research-informed sport and physical activity programmes, students get the opportunity for continuous development of workplace readiness and lifelong skills while at the same time encouraging learning, influencing behaviour and presenting the possibility of a brighter, healthier future to children and young people.

During 2016/17, the Sports Outreach programme delivered 8,867 sport and physical activity sessions creating 206,515 participation opportunities for children and young people in disadvantaged areas. This work took place in 134 schools and involved 80 student volunteers.

Some 600 young people benefitted from the Junior Elks Camps, which were held across the Coleraine, Jordanstown and Magee campuses. The young people got the opportunity to take part in multi-skill, multi-sport and sport specific camps delivered by six members of Sports Services staff, six members of UUSU Sport and over 30 specially recruited coaches.

The Harry Gregg Foundation continued to help students from the North Coast area develop their skills both on and off the football pitch announcing £10,000 of sports scholarships. The programme attracts around 1,000 players (aged 8–12) and 2,000 spectators each week to the Coleraine campus. The scholarships will support the development of over 20 new student coaches.

The Sports Outreach programme delivered 8,867 sport and physical activity sessions



Pictured (I-r) Sam Kelly; Dr Nigel Dobson, Ulster University; Chloe McGlade; Alfie Wylie, IFA and Teresa Burns. The three players are part of the IFA Performance Academy and in receipt of Ulster University sports scholarships.

Ulster University Annual Review 2016/17



# Global Engagement

Engaging with our international community through the creation of mutually beneficial partnerships, impactful research and through student and staff exchange is central to Ulster University's aim of delivering academic excellence and embedding Northern Ireland as a place of importance on the world stage. With ambitious targets and our commitment to global engagement at the year heart of our institutional engagement at the very heart of our institutional objectives, we have witnessed a revitalisation of our internationalisation activity, and already we have seen our global engagement activity thrive.



ever before, with new pathways and programmes This year, our international student community

spent a week living at the Elephant Conservation boosted her confidence and gave her an entirely award and gain valuable recognition for all that

Ten students also took part in the first Experience Nashville trip which gave them a two-week cultural immersion in Nashville, Tennessee and the opportunity to engage with a range of academics, employers and social enterprises in the not-for-profit sector. The programme focused on learning about the history of Nashville and Tennessee, with a specific focus on the Civil Rights Movement, the economic growth in the city and the opportunities and challenges inherent in one of the fastest growing cities in the USA.

### Global dialogue

In addition to our outreach activity, Ulster's campuses and staff also played host to an extended range of conferences, dialogues and events, during which a wide range of societal issues and challenges were discussed.

Following the visit of the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, in November 2016, the University hosted key Colombian academics, politicians and business communities for a conference during which the experiences of societies building peace and transforming from conflict was shared. Delegates included the EU Special Envoy to the Colombian Peace Process and civil society representatives, who worked together with leaders and practitioners to deliver in-depth analysis of a wide range of topics including changes in policing post-ceasefire, legacy and gender issues, human security, compromise, healing, collaboration on economic investment and the attitudinal changes required to build sustainable peace.

The University further strengthened its international research links after a delegation from Korea Conformity Laboratories travelled to Northern Ireland to extend its Memorandum of Understanding with the University. Since 2008, our School of the Built Environment has partnered with the leading testing and certification organisation in Korea, jointly securing over £1.5 million for pioneering research into fire safety engineering. The institutions have signed a further 10-year commitment to future collaboration on ground-breaking research into innovative sustainable technologies.

During May, the University organised a landmark symposium and called decisionmakers to urgently consider solutions to address the unique complexity of Northern Ireland in Brexit negotiations. Leading business people, academics, unions, and healthcare representatives gathered to participate in open discussions with the objective of generating workable solutions to safeguard

the wider prosperity of the UK economy. More than 150 senior executives and community leaders attended and the event outcomes were captured in a dedicated website housing ongoing analysis and thought leadership, articles, papers and presentations that explore key Brexit issues.

In July, the University hosted the 15th International Pragmatics Conference at the Belfast Waterfront; a significant event on the global academic calendar, which attracted 1,300 delegates and encouraged debate around contemporary issues including fake news, translation and the language of authority.

Since 2008, our School of the Built Environment has partnered with the leading testing and certification organisation in Korea, jointly securing over £1.5 million for pioneering research into fire safety engineering



President of Korea Conformity Laboratories, Kyungsik Kim with Professor Neil Hewitt during visit to extend its Memorandum of Understanding with the University



James Naughtie, journalist and broadcaster; Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive, The RSA and Professor Paddy Nixon, Vice-Chancellor at the Brexit Symposium



Ulster University has already conducted preliminary studies in this area while Tsinghua University has developed a number of intelligent processing solutions. Combining these skills will produce a solution that helps people selfmanage lifestule risk factors and in addition

will stimulate new international partnerships.

In another collaboration, researchers from our Centre for Stratified Medicine have been working with a Chinese group, Allcure, on the early detection of cancers as part of the Chinese 'One Belt-One Road' initiative. Working with staff from our School of Computing and Intelligent Systems the consortium aims to develop an integrated Big Data approach to early detection of cancers, and to generate repeatable and globally transferable biomarkers.

### **Developing partnerships**

The School of Nursing is working in partnership with Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine to provide undergraduate and postgraduate education for nursing students. A new International Nursing Studies pathway is being developed within the BSc (Hons) Health and Wellbeing programme at Magee and the first cohort of 20 students from China will undertake this study from 2018/19. On completion of their licensing examinations in China, the students will return to undertake the MSc Nursing at Magee. Opportunities for student and staff exchanges are also being progressed with some activities contributing to EDGE awards (given for completing developmental extracurricular activities) for home students.

During the year the Minister Counsellor for Science and Technology from the Chinese Embassy in the UK, Mr Sunan Jiang, visited Ulster University where he presented the China Sciences Innovation Strategy and highlighted a number of opportunities for future collaboration between China and the UK in the fields of science and innovation.

There were a number of other visits by Chinese officials during the year including six visitors from Beijing Orient Institute of Measurement and Test who undertook a threeweek research exchange and training in our Centre for Sustainable Technologies, School of the Built Environment. Following visits from Anyang Normal University and Shaanxi University of Science and Technology, two Memoranda of Understanding were signed.

#### **Confucius Institute**

The University's commitment to furthering the teaching of the Chinese language and culture in primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland was recognised when it won the Confucius Institute of the Year award 2106. The Confucius Institute at Ulster University (CIUU) develops academic, cultural, economic and social ties between Northern Ireland and China. It supports the teaching of Chinese in schools across Northern Ireland, as well as the education of Chinese culture through community liaison initiatives and events.

Over 18,000 pupils from 153 schools have registered with CUII and almost 3,000 pupils sat a Chinese proficiency test during the year.

Over 18,000 pupils from 153 schools have registered with CUII and almost 3,000 pupils sat a Chinese proficiency test during the year

#### **Chinese summer school**

The School of Education welcomed 14 University English language teachers from Hebei GEO University in China, one of Ulster's partner universities, for a monthlong Continuing Professional Development summer school.

The aim was to improve the participants' teaching skills, and in particular to help them develop a more effective way to teach their learners English and to make them fluent English speakers with appropriate cultural understanding. It was an opportunity for the Hebei English teachers to learn cutting-edge English language teaching techniques from the School's education experts and to try them out in a series of microteaching sessions. Topics covered included teaching young learners, drama, active learning, digital literacy, cultural adjustment, language assessment and ICT in language learning.

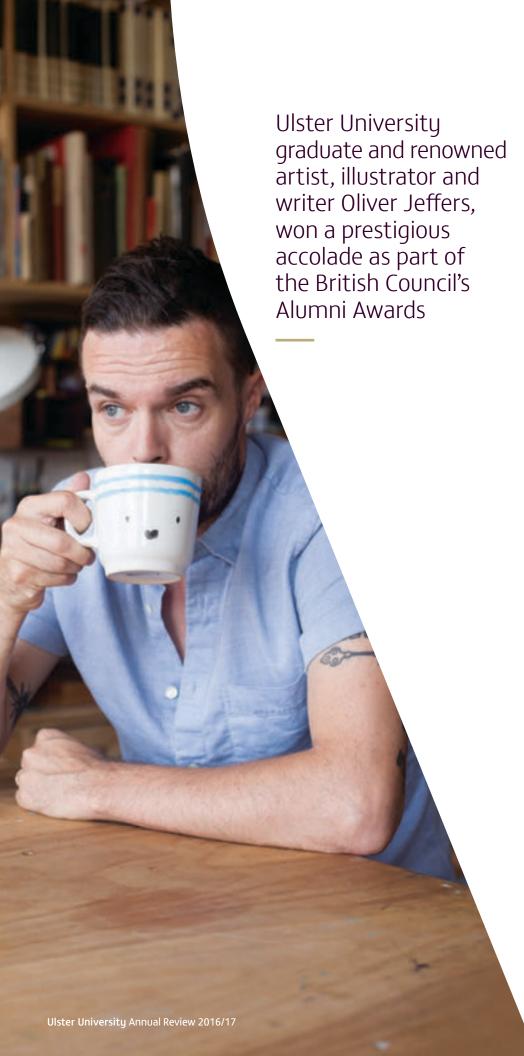
#### **Chinese New Year**

Ulster University was proud to host the Guangzhou Art Troupe to celebrate the Chinese New Year and mark the Year of the Rooster at a special event held at The MAC in Belfast.



Ulster University's Confucius Institute hosted Chinese New Year celebrations





### Ulster University's people power

The quality and achievements of Ulster's teaching and research staff were highlighted in a number of awards and accomplishments during the year.

**Victor Gault**, Professor of Experimental Medicine, was awarded the RD Lawrence Lecture Award and presented the RD Lawrence lecture at the 2017 Diabetes UK Professional Conference.

Ulster University scooped a number of awards at the Royal College of Nursing Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards 2017. **Neal Cook**, Reader in the School of Nursing, won the Nursing Research Award for leading research aimed at enhancing the practice learning element of a pre-registration nursing curriculum.

Sarah Penney, Teaching Fellow in the School of Nursing, won the Learning in Practice Award, sponsored by the Open University. Sarah was nominated for her leadership of the 'My Home Life' programme which provides support to care home managers to improve the quality of life for patients and residents.

An award to celebrate outstanding achievement in nursing, sponsored by the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council, was presented to Professor **Tanya McCance**, Director of the Institute of Nursing and Health Research for her exceptional contribution to nursing research.

Marking his outstanding contribution to the field of microscopy across both the life and physical sciences, **Vyvyan Howard**, Professor of Bioimaging, was awarded the prestigious Royal Microscopical Society (RMS) President's Medal, first launched in 2014. Professor Howard, Emeritus Professor at Ulster University, has served as both the Honorary Treasurer and President of the RMS, as well as holding the post of general editor of the 'Journal of Microscopy' from 1986–1991.

Ulster University picked up two key prizes in the 18th annual Northern Ireland Healthcare Awards. Researchers from the Northern Ireland Connected Health Innovation Competence Centre won the award for the 'Most Innovative Use of an E-health Solution to Improve Patient Care and Safety' and Ulster University pharmacy student, **Oliver McKee** picked up the Pharmacy Student Leadership Award.

Three Ulster University researchers – **Dr Bryan Gardiner**, School of Computing and Intelligent Systems and **Drs Jessica Leigh Doyle** and **Thomas Hansen**, Transitional Justice Institute – were awarded prestigious 2017 Charlemont Award grants for their research projects.

**Professor Scott Kelso**, Visiting Professor at the Intelligent Systems Research Centre and native of Derry~Londonderry, was admitted to The Royal Irish Academy, Ireland's leading body of experts in sciences and humanities.

Taking up key positions were **Dr Robert Eadie**, academic lead for civil engineering and MSc Infrastructure Engineering course director, who was appointed Chair of Engineers Ireland Northern Region and **Dr Niall Comer**, lecturer in Irish and member of the Research Institute for Irish and Celtic Studies. Dr Comer was elected as President of Conradh na Gaeilge – a social and cultural organisation which promotes the Irish language in Ireland and worldwide.

### **Positive impact**

The fourth annual Students' Union Learning and Teaching awards took place to celebrate the 340 staff and student representatives – nominated by the student body – who had made the most positive and influential impact on their learning experience at Ulster University. **Dr Liz Doherty** won the Inspirational Teacher of the Year Award 2017.

#### Student success

The achievements of a number of students and alumni were also recognised during the year.

BSc Hons Environmental Health student **Sarah-Jane Hunter** won a Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) NI Ambassador Award for her work on health and safety best practice in vehicle visibility.

The Vice-President of SoundCloud, Sonia Flynn, was named First Trust Bank/Ulster University Distinguished Graduate of the Year. Sonia graduated from Ulster University in 1997 with a BA in Applied Languages. She is responsible for the global expansion of SoundCloud, the world's largest music and audio platform, which already has over 172 million monthly listeners.

Two of the University's art graduates won international acclaim during the year.

Adding to his many other awards, Ulster University graduate and renowned artist, illustrator and writer **Oliver Jeffers**, won a prestigious accolade as part of the British Council's Alumni Awards, which recognise UK alumni now living in the United States. Oliver, who graduated from Ulster University in 2001, was confirmed as the recipient of the Professional Achievement Award in recognition of his distinguished and exemplary leadership and achievements in his industry, and for demonstrating the highest level of integrity and character in his professional career.

Mohammed Sami Al Amili (Sami), who graduated in 2016 with a degree in Fine Art was Global Winner of the Visual Art and Design category at the prestigious 2016 Undergraduate Awards, the world's largest awards recognising undergraduate excellence across the sciences, humanities, business and creative arts. Born in Iraq, Sami created a collection of acrylic artworks that was inspired by his experience of Iraq's turbulent history.

Several students overcame challenging personal circumstances to achieve their degrees, and their success served as an inspiration to the Ulster University community.

Hollie George, who graduated with a BSc Sociology & Criminology, was in foster care for most of her life leaving her with some confidence issues, but she received a wide range of advice and support through Ulster's Widening Access and Participation programme. The programme helps those who are currently underrepresented in higher education to gain access to higher education and and go on to secure high-value careers. Hollie has now secured a position with PwC.

A leukaemia diagnosis during his final year put **Shaun Haw's** dreams of graduating on hold. He underwent six months of intensive chemotherapy and eventually was able to take up his studies again, graduating with a BSc Hons Accounting and Advertising.



Shaun Haw



Sound Cloud VP, Sonia Flynn



Jonathan Williamson, PwC Belfast and Hollie George, Ulster University graduate

### **Welcoming friends**

The University was pleased to welcome a number of alumni and friends during the year to share their personal stories and professional insights.

Among these was **Sir Richard Needham**, Britain's longest serving minister in Northern Ireland. Sir Richard, who was the driving force behind many local regeneration schemes including Laganside and Foyleside, delivered the 2016 Civic Lecture at the Belfast campus. His lecture, entitled "Tale of two cities: Belfast and Bristol. Past, Present and Smart Future", drew parallels between the old port city and Belfast.

The annual Chancellor's lecture was delivered by Ulster University honorary graduate **Dr Christopher Moran**, a successful entrepreneur and Chair of Co-operation Ireland. Well-known for his strong commitment

to wider society and his support for institutions in a range of sectors, he spoke about "New challenges, new partnerships and new horizons for higher education and civic society throughout Northern Ireland, Britain and the Republic of Ireland".

The latest in Ulster University's Life Stories series, which shines a spotlight on the successful careers of the University's alumni and friends, put record-breaking road racer **Ryan Farquhar** in the hot seat. Ryan has amassed an impressive 646 race wins and podium placings since 1995, making him Irish motorcycle road racing's most successful rider ever. He shared the highs and lows of his sporting career in an inspiring interview at the Riverside Theatre.



Professor Alastair Adair, Sir Richard Needham and Professor Raffi Folli



Dr Christopher Moran; Dr James Nesbitt, Chancellor and Professor Paddy Nixon, Vice-Chancellor

### **Honorary graduates**

In our honorary degree awards the University recognised the contribution, talent and integrity of leading minds from the worlds of arts, politics, engineering, sport, business and the community.

The honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) was conferred on **Wendy Blundell**, Director of UK Regions of the Institution of Civil Engineers, in recognition of her distinguished career in civil engineering and her positive influence as an exceptional role model for young women.

Chief Executive Officer of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) Housing Investment Trust, **Stephen Coyle** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for his support for economic regeneration and peace building in the North West of Ireland.

The 54th Comptroller of the State of New York, **Thomas DiNapoli** received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for his support of the Northern Ireland peace process and promoting US investment in the region.

Passionist priest, **Fr Gary Donegan**, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for his outstanding community work within Northern Ireland.

For his outstanding contribution to the English National Opera, **Seán Doran**, an artistic director working in the international arts world, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA).

The honorary degree of doctor of Letters (DLitt) was conferred on ITV News' international correspondent, **John Irvine**, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to journalism.

**Dáithí O'Ceallaigh**, former Irish Ambassador in London, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt) for his outstanding contribution to the Press Council of Ireland and the Peace Process.

In the field of sports, manager of the Republic of Ireland football team, Martin O'Neill and manager of the Northern Ireland football team, Michael O'Neill, both received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) for their contribution to football.

Leading human rights advocate, Sally O'Neill received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) for her tireless work as an overseas development worker.



# Financial Review

Despite the challenging political and economic environment in which the University operated, particularly with the absence of the Executive during the year and uncertainty around the consequences of Brexit, it is pleasing that the University has been able to operate in line with the approved finance strategy targets for the last 12 months with a reported surplus of £14.4m against a deficit in the previous year of £2.8m. In particular this reflects the impact of the cost reduction programme that had been completed in the previous year as well as an increase in government grant funding and an increase in earnings through external research projects which is in line with the targets set through the University's new "Five & Fifty" Strategic plan.

### **Financial statements**

The financial statements comprise the financial results of the University consolidated with the results of its subsidiary company. 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-focused with significant commercialisation of research and major knowledge transfer relationships. It has a focus on contributing to economic, social and cultural development in Northern Ireland and its global standing.

### **Future financial health**

Key performance indicators are set out below with an assessment on progress against the financial strategy target with red meaning 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	2017 Actual	2016 Actual		Comments
Surplus/(deficit) for the year as a % of total income	7.1%	(2.6)%	•	This indicates the level of return necessary for investment in capital.
Earnings before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBITDA)	£32.9m	£19.9m	•	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	239 days	250 days	٠	This measures our ability to fund short term cash requirements.
Current assets to current liabilities	3.6:1	3.8:1	•	An indicator of financial strength to meet short term liabilities.
% Income from Non-Government sources	21.4%	23.3%	•	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.

	2017 Actual	2016 Actual		Comments
Annual servicing cost of finance less than 6% of income (ASC)	2.6%	2.8%	•	
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	6.31 times	3.58 times	-	

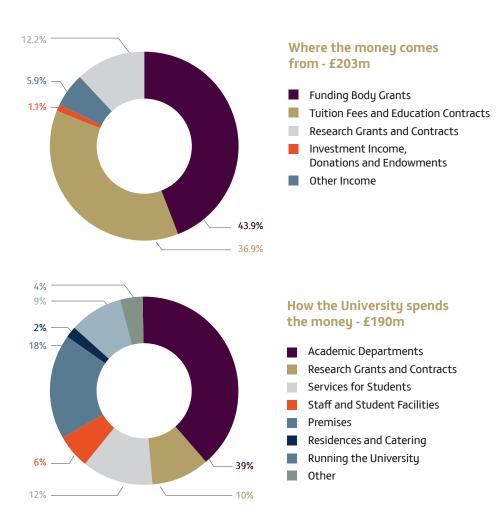
### Summary of financial position

Key Performance Indicators from the financial statements.

Year Ended 31 July	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Total income in £m	203.2	188.0	201.3	199.2	191.7
Cash generated by operating activities in £m	26.8	10.3	21.0	21.0	10.3
EBITDA £m	32.9	19.9	18.6	27.7	21.8
Net assets £m	277.3	259.6	264.5	282.9	262.6

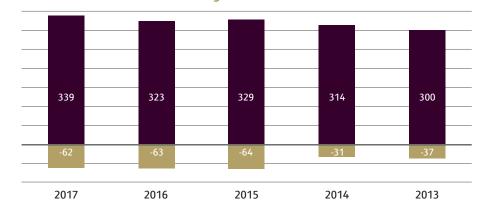
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The following tables provide further information on the University's financial statements.



The underlying financial strength of the University is demonstrated by the financial worth which is shown below:-

### Financial worth of the University £m



Excluding PensionPension Liability

### Treasury, borrowings and investments

Net cash decreased by £6.4m during the year. The movement in funds is summarised below:-

	2017 £m	2016 £m	change £m
Investments and short term deposits	107.2	106.6	0.6
Cash at bank and in hand	17.3	24.6	(7.3)
Bank loans	(77.3)	(77.6)	0.3
Net cash	47.2	53.6	(6.4)

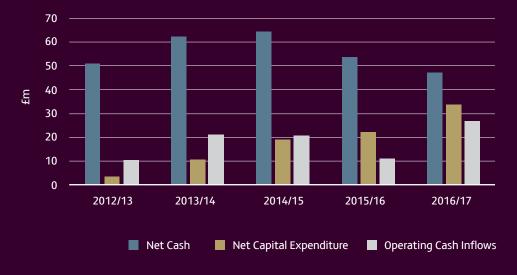
The net cash inflow from operating activities for the year was £26.8m (2016: £10.3m), interest paid totalled £0.8m (2016 £0.8m), and interest received totalled £0.9m (2016 £1.3m). The main movement in cash is the impact of net capital expenditure during the year of £33.8m of which £21m relates to the Belfast development. 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

Endowment assets at the year end were £9.0m and are managed by Rathbones Investment Management.

monitored against minimum criteria.

During the year £40.1m was spent on acquiring fixed assets against which £6.3m of capital grants were received. The table below shows the impact of this capital investment on our cash balances.

### Cash movement and capital expenditure 2012/13 to 2016/17



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### Governance

### **Council Composition**

**Ex-Officio Members** 

**Pro-Chancellors** 

Mr J Hunter

**Vice-Chancellor** 

Professor P Nixon

Honorary Treasurer

Mr D Clements

President of the Students' Union

Mr C Mackey

### **Appointed Members**

Eight persons not being members of staff or students of the University Mr A Langan Mr P Lobban Ms M McKee Dr P McNaney Mrs J Pyper Mrs H Quigley Sir Robert Salisbury Dr J Stuart

### **Elected Members**

Two members of Academic Staff Professor M Stringer Dr K Burnett

One member of Academic-Related Staff Mrs H Bingham

One member of Non-Academic Staff Mrs L McKeown

### **Audit Committee Composition**

Members appointed by the Council Mr A Langan (Chair) Mrs H Bingham Dr K Burnett Ms M McKee Mrs J Pyper Mrs H Quigley

### **Council Committee**

**Governance, Nominations** and Remuneration Committee Composition

**Chairman of Council** 

Mr J Hunter

**Vice-Chancellor** 

Professor P Nixon

**Honorary Treasurer** 

Mr D Clements

**Council members** 

Mr A Langan Dr J Stuart

**Independent members** 

Ms K Erwin Dame Geraldine Keegan Professor D Licence

**Statement of Primary** Responsibilities

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

https://ulster.ac.uk/ statementofprimaryresponsibilities

### Contacts

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and postgraduate study
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Prospective International Students T: +44 (0)28 7012 4383

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

