

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Learning and Teaching Strategy, 2015-18

1. Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy sets out University-wide priorities in Learning and Teaching for 2015-18 to maintain the internationally recognised quality of the student experience in Cambridge and to enhance it where appropriate. The strategy recognises the special character of the Cambridge environment where staff and students are partners in learning.

The General Board's Education Committee will review this strategy annually, taking account of other University strategies (including the strategy for student wellbeing and for the estate) where they relate to teaching and learning. This strategy will also be reviewed and, as necessary, updated in light of the outcomes of the annual planning rounds with the Schools and other institutions whose provision affects teaching and learning, and amended in light of external developments and requirements, and the University's financial position. In particular the Strategy will be amended so as to take into account of (i) future HEFCE requirements in relation to national quality assessment requirements and (ii) BIS's requirements and arrangements for a Teaching Excellence Framework (consultation on which is expected in the Michaelmas Term 2015).

The General Board will agree and periodically review an action plan (as proposed by their Education Committee) consistent with this strategy which will set out objectives, priorities, timescales, the bodies responsible for particular activities, and any resource implications.

Student satisfaction will be monitored through local student feedback and the Annual Quality Update exercise, and national surveys (the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)), which will also allow for benchmarking against competitor institutions in the UK.

2. Strategic Aims

The University's strategic aims in learning and teaching are to:

- maintain the standard of its degrees and other qualifications at the highest, internationally competitive level;
- attract and support outstanding students from the UK and overseas;
- provide opportunities for students to learn and to develop their full potential to pursue their future lives and careers;
- produce graduates who are the future leaders in their chosen field.

In support of these aims the University will, in partnership with the Colleges, endeavour to:

- foster a climate in which teaching is highly valued at all levels across the University;
- create an environment that promotes opportunities for students to learn and develop as individuals and which allows them to enhance their physical, mental and social health and wellbeing;
- enhance graduate provision;
- make best use of technology to enhance provision; and
- offer opportunities for students to broaden their educational experiences in Cambridge, elsewhere in the UK, and further afield.

3. Context

These aims are firmly grounded in an institution where, for the majority of programmes, students are required to be in residence, and where:

- students and staff are of the highest calibre and from a diversity of backgrounds;
- students are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their own learning and wellbeing;
- facilities, including library, IT and laboratory provision, are excellent;
- student retention and standards of achievement are expected to remain outstanding;
- teaching is informed by research and carried out predominantly by those engaged in research at the highest levels;
- the supervision element of undergraduate teaching and parity of provision is central;
- there is a significant level of local autonomy in delivery of provision (the quality of which is assured by proportionate central mechanisms);
- students are, in the main, full-time but part-time study is available for specific qualifications;
- support provided by both the Colleges and the University is an integral part of the student experience;
- the University's graduates are highly sought after by employers and other HEIs internationally;
- Faculties and Departments engage with relevant professional and regulatory bodies and employers in developing teaching; and
- the protection of the University's reputation and 'brand' is critical.

Care will continue to be given to the maintenance of standards and value for money, primarily through scrutiny of External Examiners' Reports, Learning and Teaching Reviews, the annual monitoring process and the General Board's other internal quality assurance mechanisms.

Reviews of this strategy and the associated action plans will take account of:

- changes to pre-university curricula and forms of assessment;
- government policy (in areas such as widening participation, sustainability, and skills development);
- legislation bearing on teaching and learning;
- external regulation, policies and guidance (provided by bodies such as BIS, HEFCE, the Quality Assurance Agency, Research Councils, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, OFFA, the CMA and the OIA);
- competition from other HE providers in the UK and overseas; and
- international influences.

In general the University will ensure that its provision, at all levels and in all its aspects, is at least of a standard that can successfully withstand external scrutiny.

5. Teaching and learning

The General Board is committed to excellence in teaching and learning, and will continue to foster a climate in which teaching is highly valued alongside research. The Board's general expectation is that all University Teaching Officers, including professors, will teach at all levels as part of their role.

During this period, the General Board, through its Education Committee and the Teaching and Learning Joint Committee, will seek to foster a climate where teaching is valued by

- i. emphasising the importance of teaching to the wider University;
- ii. ensuring that high quality teaching is valued as much as high quality research;
- iii. developing additional ways of recognising and rewarding excellent and innovative teaching;
- iv. undertaking activities to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and examining;
- v. developing resources via the Teaching & Learning@Cambridge website;
- vi. developing a Centre for Teaching and Learning Excellence;
- vii. cultivating an effective network of Directors of undergraduate and graduate teaching in Faculties and Departments.

6. Examining and Assessment

During the period to which this Strategy relates, the Board will, through the review chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, undertake a root-and-branch review of the University's examination arrangements, details of which were announced in the Reporter of 29 July 2015. That review will encompass all University examination processes and strategies (other than those which apply to examinations by thesis only) and is intended to deliver a long-term plan to map out the future direction of examination policy and operations across the University. In the first instance, the review will cover: forms of assessment; formative and summative feedback; policies of resits

and re-submission; the use of technology in examinations; and alternative examination arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

Subject to the outcome of Reports to the University (scheduled for the Michaelmas Term 2015) regarding new Triposes, and ongoing discussion of examinations, the Board's Education Committee expects also to reflect on the nature and objectives of the Tripos.

7. Student Wellbeing and Equality

The General Board, through its Committee on Student Health and Wellbeing, has set out a strategy for promoting student wellbeing

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/health-wellbeing/index.html>

This strategy supports the wider aims of this Learning and Teaching Strategy. In defining a strategy for student wellbeing, the University will provide opportunities and support for all students to have a positive experience in all aspects of their time at Cambridge and to develop themselves to be able to pursue their lives and careers when they leave the University – not just in terms of academic qualifications and intellectual capability, but also in terms of self-esteem, personal resilience and self-confidence. The strategy and associated action plan recognise the central role played by the Colleges and their responsibilities for the welfare of their students.

The University also has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate, and has a responsibility to all of its students to ensure that their rights under that legislation are protected and that they have the best possible opportunity to succeed. This will be realistic and achievable only if students are expected to be self-sustaining within the academic environment with the support that can be reasonably provided.

During this period, the University will:

- i. seek to address student wellbeing issues through initiatives under the umbrella of the Wellbeing Strategy. Key areas identified for attention are:
 - a) Raising awareness of the importance of wellbeing and building resilience;
 - b) Promotion of support networks, understanding of boundaries and referral routes;
 - c) Mental wellbeing and health;
 - d) Disability;
 - e) Behaviour, bullying and harassment, sexual violence; and
 - f) Alcohol misuse.
- ii. seek to investigate and address, through a Working Group chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), concerns raised by students through the NSS and CUSU about student workload. The Working Group will consider loads from both student and teacher perspectives

- with the aim of developing statements on good practice and appropriate expectations with regard to workload and contact hours;
- iii. ensure that the University's systems for complaints and appeals are accessible to all students, efficient and compliant with external expectations; and
 - iv. continue to monitor and address equality and diversity issues in teaching, learning and examinations, in particular relating to gender and disability.

8. Enhance Graduate provision

The University will continue to enhance the learning experience of its graduate students who comprise 40% of the student population. This group of students is diverse and has many different expectations and needs. In enhancing provision, the needs of part-time students will be appropriately accommodated.

The General Board will pay particular attention to: articulating a recruitment strategy to improve management of Graduate Student numbers, consistent with the University's strategy for expansion of graduate numbers; the fitness for purpose of graduate admissions procedures; and ensure the quality of incoming students. It will monitor the extent to which the forthcoming fund-raising campaign is successful in securing new funding for graduate students. It will continue to exploit, where it is in the University's interests to do so, national, European and international funding opportunities to attract and support the very best graduate students. The Board will encourage the adoption of administrative mechanisms to facilitate interdisciplinary programmes.

8.1 Master's programmes

The General Board will continue to pay particular attention to Master's provision, supporting the Schools in a wider review of Master's provision. Within the revised framework for examination approved in Easter term 2015, the Education Committee will complete the review of Ordinances for the MPhil degree and Special Regulations to ensure appropriate classification of courses as either by advanced study or by research. Arrangements for other Master's degrees will be reviewed in the light of the revised framework.

During this period, the Education Committee will seek to ensure that :

- i. expectations in respect of teaching and supervision for Master's courses, including quality assurance and examinations, are appropriate for a University of Cambridge's international standing;
- ii. students are clear about what they may reasonably expect of their course and what is expected of them from the outset; and
- iii. the Master's Self-Evaluation is rolled out to all Master's students.

Student feedback will be closely monitored through analysis of PTES results.

The Education Committee will keep under review the number and range of Master's courses. Against a planning assumption that total graduate numbers (research, PGR and PGT) will grow at a rate of 2% per annum for the next decade, the Postgraduate Admissions Committee will proactively manage MPhil numbers, taking account of the aspirations of the Schools, and the capacity of the Colleges, and the development of North West Cambridge..

8.2 Research programmes

The General Board, through the Education Committee and Board of Graduate Studies (BGS), will aim to maintain the University's international reputation in this area and to improve its competitiveness (especially in attracting fully-funded PhD students of the highest calibre).

During this period particular attention will be paid to improved funding arrangements for research students, including fundraising and alignment of arrangements with expectations of the Research Councils, to generate coherent financial packages for the support of graduate students. This will include enhanced potential for use of internal funds (including those of the Colleges) to support postgraduate progression; funding for student development opportunities; and increased funding opportunities for home PhD students.

The Board will continue to promote compliance with the Code of Practice for Research Students and will monitor student feedback through PRES. In particular, attention will be given to improving feedback to students. Working through the University Researcher Development Committee, the General Board will also pay particular attention to:

- i. improved mechanisms for student feedback to help shape provision and ensure the highest quality professional development opportunities;
- ii. continue to create opportunities for graduate students, properly trained, to gain experience and, qualifications in supervising and teaching;
- iii. strengthen the links between personal and professional development, PhD progression and career trajectory;
- iv. consolidate information about various forms of personal and professional development; and

9. Use of technology to support and enhance education

The General Board's approach to technological innovations and the use of technologies in teaching and learning will be driven by the Board's pedagogical priorities. As a residential University, face to face interaction between academic staff and students will remain core to Cambridge's educational provision.

Nevertheless, the Board recognises that the ways in which the University engages with student learning, and vice versa, could harness ongoing technological developments.

Whilst lectures and supervisions will remain at the heart of a Cambridge education, the University will develop a digital strategy to support teaching and learning to make them (and the supporting administration) more efficient, and to enhance the student teaching and learning experience. This strategy will be primarily guided by the activities and interests of academic staff, with additional input from Annual Quality Updates, Learning and Teaching Reviews, projects supported by the Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund, regular meetings with Directors of Teaching, and digital learning 'champions'.

The General Board, through the Education Committee, will identify digital-learning 'champions' at the local level who, supported by the UIS, and in consultation with students, will help to develop a digital strategy and to promote ways for all staff to complement existing teaching through digital-learning.

A strategy for use of technology to enhance teaching and learning will:

- i. be based on the needs of those who teach and students in their learning;
- ii. recognise that technology offers opportunities to reduce resources spent on the teaching of basic material and concepts and giving feedback, and thereby to make teaching and learning more efficient;
- iii. acknowledge that there may be benefit in pursuing different technology at different stages of learning;
- iv. support the transition from school to University, building on work undertaken in the TranSkills Project;
- v. seek to incentivise academics to reflect on their teaching practice and to think about different ways of teaching and learning styles; take account of the needs of disabled students and the University's objectives for equality and diversity more broadly;
- vi. increase accessibility of teaching resources within Cambridge, whilst students are away in vacations or studying, before they matriculate, and for those with disabilities;
- vii. open new opportunities to engage with students;
- viii. make it clear that any proposal for investment in the development of systems or software will clearly state deliverables and associated benefits; specify the means and evidence by which the effectiveness of the technology will be measured; and include costings for development, roll out and maintenance.

10. Broadening of academic and related opportunities

The General Board, through its Education Committee, will aim to broaden further educational opportunities for all students, undergraduate and graduate. The aim will be both to attract the best students to Cambridge, and then to

encourage and help them to develop knowledge and skills which will be relevant at all stages of each of their careers and which equip them to continue to learn throughout life.

Arrangements should be permissive, flexible, optional and within available resources.

In the period, the Education Committee will pay particular attention to:

- i. working closely with students, the Careers Service, Faculties and Departments to identify gaps in employability skills, and to seek ways to improve provision to ensure that appropriate routes are available to students to develop their skills and employability;
- ii. articulating the value added by a Cambridge education;
- iii. promoting opportunities for students, at undergraduate and graduate levels, to spend time either elsewhere in the UK or overseas either studying, working or undertaking an internship;
- iv. promoting mobility between Triposes;
- v. encouraging students to take advantage of lectures offered in other Faculties and Departments;
- vi. encouraging interdepartmental collaboration at the level of individual modules, papers, or courses; and
- vii. promoting opportunities to learn a language .

19 October 2015