

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Learning and Teaching Strategy, 2012-15

1. Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy sets out University-wide priorities in Learning and Teaching for 2012-15 to ensure the quality of the student experience and to enhance it where appropriate. Student satisfaction will be monitored through local student feedback, 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.

The General Board's Education Committee will annually review this strategy, taking account of other University strategies, including the paper on International Engagement (approved by the General Board and Council in June/July 2013), 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, at need, amended in light of the University's financial position.

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.

2. Strategic Aims

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

- provide a stimulating educational environment;
- attract and support outstanding students from the UK and overseas;
- maintain, within the resources available and paying due heed to student demand, the widest range of courses, including 'minority' and strategically important subjects, in disciplines where there is a critical mass of research-active staff;
- develop knowledge and skills which are relevant at all stages of each student's career and which equip students to continue to learn throughout life;
- produce graduates who are the future leaders in their field.

In support of these aims the University will, within the resources available and in partnership with the Colleges:

- maintain the standard of its degrees and other qualifications at the highest, internationally competitive level;
- through Faculties and Departments, continue to engage with relevant professional and regulatory bodies;

- maintain and enhance the quality of student learning opportunities¹;
- support students in reaching their full potential both academically and in extra-curricular activity;
- promote the principle of students taking responsibility for their own learning; and
- maintain the primacy of small group teaching.

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;
- 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 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 other modes of study are allowed for within 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; 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 within what is likely to be remain a difficult financial period, 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.

4. External factors

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 HEFCE, the Quality Assurance Agency, Research Councils, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, the Office of Fair Access and the OIA);
- competition from other HE providers in the UK and overseas; and
- the provisions of the Bologna Accord and other international influences.

In general the University will ensure that its provision is of a standard that can satisfy external scrutiny.

¹ Projects intended to enhance teaching and learning will be supported by the Education Committee/TLSSG subject to the criteria set out in the annex to this Strategy

5. Educational and Student Policy and Student Administration

During the lifetime of the last Learning and Teaching Strategy, the roles of the Education Committee and the Board of Graduate Studies were revised. A major restructuring was completed of administrative teams delivering student administration, including examinations and student registry functions.

The Education Committee now considers all teaching and learning issues, including those formerly dealt with by the Board of Graduate Studies. The intention is to provide a more integrated approach to enhancing the student experience, including quality assurance arrangements. The new arrangements will also reduce duplication of effort by reducing the number of central committees considering graduate matters.

Work will continue to review and reconfigure student and educational policy, and delivery of student support and administration, the better to align policy and operations for all types of students, to try to achieve greater clarity and fairness, and to ensure that no categories of students can fall into the gaps.

In developing an integrated approach to student policy, the General Board, through their Education Committee, expect during this period to pay particular attention to:

- equality and diversity issues in teaching and learning, in particular in relation to female students, and those with disabilities;
- encouraging interdisciplinarity through developing online publication of all lecture listings, in particular for Master's level teaching, to ensure that students have access to lectures in other Faculties and Departments;
- support for international students, including orientation and English language for academic and social purposes;
- the University's examination review and student complaints procedures.
- setting clear expectations by and of students through development of a Student Charter, and development of the Student Gateway and other web-based information;

In developing an integrated approach to student administration, the Academic Division expects during this period to pay particular attention to:

- continuing improvements in administrative processes that support graduate students and their supervisors, and to enable effective monitoring and oversight of student progress and achievement;
- reducing the bureaucratic load connected with teaching administration.

6. Student support

The University Council have agreed that 'student services' be brought to the fore in the future development of the central administration and support services (including accommodation strategies). Oversight of student-related activities, including health committees, trust funds management, and student complaints, has transferred to the Academic Division. During the course of this Strategy, key priorities will be defining and developing University student services, both and in terms of a coordinating activities, and physically in a new building on the New Museums Site.

As part of efforts to integrate student support activities with policy and operations underpinning teaching and learning, the Disability Resource Centre transferred to the Academic Division in 2011. Work will continue to embed activities within the Division and to strengthen communication between the DRC, Faculties and Departments and the Colleges on issues relating to the support of disabled students.

The Council and the General Board, through the Education Committee, will during this period

- review the role of the Committee of Management of the University Health Services to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in guiding the health services in supporting students in their studies;
- continue to work closely with the Careers Service, Faculties and Departments, and the Colleges to ensure that appropriate routes are available to students to develop their skills and employability. Skills training will focus on areas of demonstrable student need and demand. Data on employability of graduates will be collected and analysed.

To ensure a quality experience for international students, and in line with the issues identified in the paper on International Engagement, the International Student Team will develop the University's support for international students. Support will also be given to teaching of English for academic purposes to ensure that international students are able to benefit fully from opportunities offered to them in Cambridge.

In support of the University's aim to ensure that our graduates remain highly sought after by employers and other HEIs internationally, the University will support language learning for personal, academic and professional purposes.

7. Undergraduate provision: the Tripos system

The University will continue to offer an undergraduate education which encourages students to sample the breadth of a subject or cognate group of subjects before specialising, and also to promote mobility across Triposes.

Whilst there is intercollegiate agreement that there will be no growth in numbers of undergraduate students over the period of this strategy, the balance between subjects will be agreed annually with the Colleges through the Undergraduate Admissions Committee and the Schools, through the Annual Planning Round.

The paper on International Engagement identified issues relating to the development and integration of admissions policies for undergraduates and postgraduates. A sub-group of the Undergraduate Admissions Committee has been established to consider international undergraduate recruitment and admissions matters.

During this period, the General Board, through their Education Committee, expect to pay particular attention to:

- promoting effectiveness and efficiency of teaching;
- and supporting the efforts of the Senior Tutors' Committee in development of supervision norms and good supervision practice;
- the need to make academic expectations clear to students at the application stage and during their studies through clear information about workloads, development of study and examination skills, and marking criteria;
- the introduction of the new Psychology and Behavioural Sciences and Human and Social Sciences Triposes;

The General Board will also support small group teaching by making explicit an expectation that UTOs will contribute to small group teaching and to Direction of Studies.

8. Postgraduate provision: the PhD

The General Board, with the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS), will continue to give attention to postgraduate matters during the period, so as to maintain the University's international reputation in this area and to improve its competitiveness (especially in attracting PhD students of the highest calibre).

Further steps will be taken to improve the University's admissions procedures for both research and Master's students, with particular attention to earlier funding and college placement decisions. Graduate Admissions will promote effective decision making in graduate admissions, including promotion of gathered fields, ensuring that deadlines are competitive with rival institutions and streamlining offer making processes.

During this period, the General Board, through their Education Committee and the Board of Graduate Studies, expect to pay particular attention to:

- clarifying expectations of research students and their supervisors, and monitoring supervision provision with the aim of improving the experiences of research students;
- ensuring availability of and access to appropriate language training (languages, specific skills required for textual research, fieldwork, and international collaboration) across all Faculties and Departments
- embedding the requirements of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees, and consideration of whether certain expectations should become formal requirements by inclusion in Ordinances;
- funding arrangements for research students, including fundraising and alignment of arrangements with expectations of the Research Councils, to generate coherent financial packages for support of graduate students. This will provide enhanced potential for use of internal funds (including those of the Colleges) to support postgraduate progression; funding for student development opportunities; and increased funding for home PhD students.

Working through their Researcher Development Committee, the General Board expect to pay particular attention to:

- increasing student involvement in planning and evaluating training provision and career development;
- supporting creation of opportunities for graduate students, properly trained, to gain supervising and teaching experience;
- where appropriate, establishing links between transferable skills development and formal assessment.

9. Postgraduate provision: Master's courses

The General Board, through the Education Committee will develop a framework to ensure greater clarity and consistency in the University's Master's provision. In particular, the General Board, will encourage distinction of research preparation Master's routes, while promoting the value of Master's study as a professional qualification as well as a progression route to doctoral study. During this period, the Education Committee expects to pay particular attention to:

- expectations in respect of teaching and supervision on taught Master's courses, including quality assurance and examinations;
- ensuring that students are clear about what they may reasonably expect of their course and what is expected of them from the outset.

The Education Committee will keep under review the number and range of MPhil courses, paying particular attention to the financial viability of courses attracting small numbers of students. Against a planning assumption that total graduate numbers (research, PGR and PGT) will grow at a rate of 2% per annum for the next 10 years, the Postgraduate Admissions Committee will proactively manage Master's numbers, taking account of the aspirations of the Schools, and the capacity of the Colleges, and as North West Cambridge develops.

The General Board will continue to monitor the actual and potential impact on the University's Master's degrees of the 'Bologna' Accord, by contact with UUK's Europe Unit, through departmental contact with professional bodies and by monitoring of the destination data for those graduates. Action will be taken as appropriate, including exploring issues related to language training or support (for in-coming or out-going students).

10. Lifelong Learning and Continuing Professional Development

The General Board and the Institute of Continuing Education's Strategic Committee will aim to build on improvements made to the integration of ICE's activities with those of other University institutions, and to ensure that the Institute's provision has actual or potential linkages with provision elsewhere in the University.

Working through their Board of Executive and Professional Education (BEPE), the General Board will take steps to ensure that the activities of the collegiate University's main Executive and Professional Education providers are complementary. The potential for other institutions to become better engaged with these activities will be pursued. Information will be coordinated and better promoted through the development of a new website.

The General Board will support ICE to improve and articulate the support available within the University for part-time and non-matriculated students.

11. Communication and engagement

The General Board will seek to develop improved methods of identifying and disseminating good practice to encourage enhancement of teaching and learning. Efforts will continue to promote and develop the Learning and Teaching Support (LTS) initiative. Information gathered through the Education Committee's annual monitoring updates will be reviewed to identify areas for improvement and good practice.

The General Board will continue to promote School level involvement in educational matters, by supporting the establishment of School Directors of Education and/or School Teaching and Learning Committees, or by other appropriate means.

The Education Section, working with CUSU and the GU, will develop ways of increasing student engagement, in particular with student groups representing the 'protected characteristics' and international students, and will continue to support and build relationships with student representatives on Faculty Boards and Councils of the Schools.

The relevant bodies will review and enhance the value, for informing policies, of statutory annual reports for which they are responsible (including the Admissions and Student Numbers issues of *Reporter*, the annual report of the Board of Graduate Studies, and Examinations data).

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Appendix

Projects intended to inform and enhance learning and teaching will, within the resources available, be endorsed by the Education Committee and/or Teaching and Learning Support Service Steering Group (TLSSG) subject to the following criteria:

- The proposal should state either a clear set of hypotheses that will be investigated and the means by which they will be tested; or a defined area for exploratory research and the associated protocols.
- Where relevant, the proposal should justify the statistical power associated with the sample size: conclusions should be statistically sound; otherwise systematic analysis must be demonstrated.
- If the justification for the proposal involves ongoing expenditure beyond the period of the grant, the source of that funding should be identified.
- Confirmation must be given that (a) the final report will be submitted to the Education Committee in advance of submission to the project sponsors and (b) it must include an explanatory summary in a format meaningful in a committee context and with an indication of decisions or options arising from the project's conclusions.

In considering projects producing innovative technology/software the following additional criteria will be applied:

- The proposal should state the intended deliverables and associated beneficiaries.
- It should specify the means and evidence by which the effectiveness of the technology will be measured, including the statistical power.
- It should indicate the cost and means by which the technology will be carried forward beyond the period of the grant, and how it is intended that these costs will be met.