

University Strategic Plan: Green Paper

Contents	Page number
Introduction	1
Issues	1
<i>Questions on issues section</i>	3
Strategic Plan Structure	3
<i>Questions on structure section</i>	4
Ambition and core values	4
<i>Questions on ambition section</i>	5
Research and Scholarship	5
<i>Questions on research section</i>	7
Teaching and Learning	7
<i>Questions on teaching section</i>	9
Enterprise and Third Mission	9
<i>Questions on enterprise section</i>	11
People	11
<i>Questions on people section</i>	13
Sustainability	13
<i>Questions on sustainability section</i>	15
Partnership	15
<i>Question on partnership section</i>	16
Governance, Leadership and Management	16
<i>Questions on governance section</i>	18
Financial implications	18
<i>Questions on financial section</i>	20
Next steps	21

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University of Sussex

Introduction

1. The aim of this *green paper* is to set out the basic framework for the emerging University strategic plan. It is built upon the initial paper *Describing the Preferred Future*, which laid out a series of questions about future ambition and a set of scenarios which described a version of the future for the University. The contents of this first paper were widely circulated and feedback received from Council, Senate, a series of discussion groups with senior academic staff, Professional Services directors, staff open meetings, and an invitation to all staff and students to submit their thoughts either directly in writing or via the web site.
2. This paper builds upon the initial round of work and consultation to move towards the proposed *University Strategic Plan* which is to be published in draft form in April 2008. Before the plan is drafted, this paper outlines the proposed structure of the strategic plan and identify more of the key strategies to deliver the plan. It also presents a series of questions for Council, Senate and the wider university community to comment upon.
3. This paper is structured into the following sections:
 - A summary of issues arising from the first round of consultation
 - An outline of the proposed structure of the strategic plan
 - An analysis of the financial implications of the proposed strategic plan themes and strategies.
4. Council, Senate and the wider university community are invited to comment on any aspect of this paper, although specific questions have been inserted at appropriate points in the paper on which responses are particularly welcome.

Issues

5. The initial round of consultation, summarised in paragraph 1, welcomed the intention of the University to prepare a strategic plan outlining its key priorities for the period to 2015. A wide range of views were received from formal bodies, informal groups and individuals and these have been collated and analysed. A full analysis of these views are not presented here, but a series of emerging issues have been identified which Council, as ultimate owner of the strategic plan, will need to take into account. These issues are summarised in the following paragraphs.
6. A clear tension between **top-down versus bottom-up** development of the strategic plan emerged from the initial consultation. On the one hand, if the university is to deliver step change and to break out of the cycle of reducing activity and contraction, then it must do more than change, incrementally and on the margins. At the extreme, a top-down approach may encourage greater thinking beyond existing structures and actions and to identify new forms of activity which can serve the university's purpose. On the other hand, starting a new activity *ab initio*, without prior experience or knowledge, is high risk and such an approach should only be considered if there is significant reward and manageable risk. In embracing a new strategic plan, Council will need to balance step change against the need to ensure risks are manageable and that plans have grassroot ownership.
7. Overwhelming support was offered for the University to operate at an **international level**, and not to become solely a regional/national player, as was the positive aspiration for high

quality, international research and teaching. To achieve this, the need for greater innovation and risk taking was emphasised, even by those who did not fully agree with the goal and this was closely linked to the concept that Sussex should continue its tradition to innovate in all its academic activities. The advantages of drawing on Brighton's leading role in IT and media were also highlighted.

8. Similar support was also given for seeking **excellence** in all our activities and the implications this had on the raising of performance standards.
9. The concept of cross-cutting **research themes** generated significant comment. There was considerable support for the notion of interdisciplinarity, but underpinned by strong disciplines. The primary concerns arose from how the desired interdisciplinarity might be achieved, its impact on disciplines which were either *small* or were not considered to be part of a major research theme, and the extent to which the concept implied structural reorganisation. It was also evident from the comments, that many have assumed the research themes to be science-oriented and would thereby exclude many of the arts, humanities and social science disciplines: this is an unfortunate misunderstanding of the original paper (*Describing the Preferred Future/Questions of Ambition* document, which did not seek to identify the themes. This issue is also related to the position of the *lone scholar* (a more common model in the arts and humanities) and how they would relate to research themes. If it is accepted that research themes are about coordination, direction and branding of the University's research, an environment can be created in which both lone scholar and team-based approaches to research can excel.
10. The notion of bottom-up development of themes was also dominant in the comments, consistent with the top-down v. bottom-up theme outlined in paragraph 6.
11. In terms of teaching and learning, the vast majority of responses endorsed the tradition that Sussex should produce students who were **critical, self-reliant thinkers** but there was clearly concern about the use of the term **entrepreneurial** with the assumption that this somehow implied a pro-capitalist stance at the exclusion of making a greater worldwide impact. Many alternative forms were suggested, a significant number of which captured the original intention of students who were **creative** and willing to take risks in their approach to problem solving.
12. Responses showed a willingness to consider much more **flexible forms of education**, although with full-time students studying at Sussex remaining core; however there was scepticism around the extent to which technology-supported flexibility would be cost-effective and whether Sussex had the technical capacity in ITS to deliver; there was also an eagerness to understand better such models of teaching and learning.
13. In terms of the web-based consultation, the only issue on which there was majority disagreement was on the question of whether **teaching should be confined to areas** where the majority of research was of international standing. The web-based question presented a stark choice which can account for the negativity; whereas in the discussion groups, the question was interpreted more broadly as a discussion as to the basis on which we should engage in teaching. Emerging themes from all inputs on this issue focused on the importance of maintaining a broad disciplinary base through to a recognition of the increasing importance of student demand. In many discussion groups, there was also recognition that the University might engage in some teaching activity in order to generate revenue streams to provide investment and support for other areas of activity.
14. In terms of **resource deployment and selectivity**, concern was expressed about the process and transparency by which decisions are made and what would constitute 'weak' activity. The absence of clear criteria and academic ownership of previous decisions clearly influenced responses, however discussion groups tended to support the need for discipline

areas to 'stand on their own feet' and for cross-subsidy decisions to be made explicitly and for a limited period.

15. The issue of **infrastructure** was highlighted in terms of a number of areas which needed improvement, such as IT Services and the Library. There was general endorsement that for some forms of infrastructure, collaborative working and partnerships might help, although concern about potential loss of control or reduced standards.
16. Responses on questions connected to **brand and reputation** suggest there is still a significant discussion to be had about such concepts and how they should influence the choices to be made by the University. For some, the concepts equate to league tables and a general distrust of them, which may have encouraged attitudes to dismiss these as unimportant (e.g. Sussex's continued poor NSS performance). For others, brand equated to the loss of autonomy and/or the Sussex 'identity'. However, there were also some positive comments on how international partnerships could enhance the university's reputation.
17. Finally, the issue of **academic structures** arose in many discussions and some web-based responses. Many of these responses were set in the context of the 2003 reorganisation and the length of time it has taken the University to adjust to new structures and a desire not to repeat such a wholesale change. However, there was also a very clear signal that academic departments would welcome more autonomy in academic decision making and the deployment of the resource which they are now clearly seen to be earning through the Resource Allocation Model. A review of functions and decision making and what took place at university senior management level, school level and department level was suggested and widely supported in discussion.
18. Questions on this *Issues* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

- Qu.1 Is the University prepared to invest in teaching activity which can make a clear financial contribution to its finances and thereby enable investment and support for other academic disciplines, even if research performance is modest or non-existent?
- Qu.2 If clear criteria were identified and approved by Council and a transparent decision making process identified, is the University prepared to accept the transfer of resources (e.g. funded student numbers, development funding) to expand and contract areas of activity in order to deliver the (to be) agreed strategic plan?
- Qu.3 Does the University accept brand and reputation as an important *asset* which must be nurtured, maintained and developed; also recognising that external opinion (however ill-informed and partial), including league tables, can have a positive or negative effect on the fortunes of the university necessitating management of the brand and reputation?

Strategic Plan Structure

19. The principal elements of the University Strategic Plan will comprise:
 - A statement of ambition, comprising a mission statement and explanatory text
 - A set of core values upon which the University will build its ambition
 - A series of mission themes, each of which will comprise:
 - A goal
 - A series of enabling strategies
 - One or more key performance indicators and targets for 2015.

20. The strategy document will be divided into a number mission themes. Although each theme will have interdependencies with other themes, such a structure will make presentation and understanding of the key strategies more manageable. The proposed themes are:

- Research and Scholarship
- Teaching and Learning
- Enterprise and Third Mission
- People
- Sustainability
- Partnership
- Governance, Leadership and Management.

21. Questions on this *Structures* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

- Qu.4 Is the proposed structure of the Strategic Plan appropriate? Does it have the right content for the following key audiences: Council- as governing body; Staff and Student- as members of the University; External Stakeholders- for whom the strategic plan is designed to set out the aims and objectives of the institution?
- Qu.5 Would a more appropriate structure for the key academic themes of research and teaching: (i) Academic Mission (covering research and teaching); (ii) Student Experience, thereby demonstrating a stronger link between research and teaching and making more explicit the issue of the student experience?

Ambition and Core Values

22. The current University mission statement states that:

The University of Sussex's mission is to contribute to the commonwealth of ideas and the development of society by:

- *pioneering research across disciplines, which inspires innovative thinking and our own teaching;*
- *attracting students with enquiring minds and offering a flexible curriculum which prepares them to be citizens of the world;*
- *creative collaboration with business and communities which supports social change and development.*

23. The core values of the University, as published in the current interim University Strategic Plan are as follows:

From its inception Sussex has been ambitious, attracting leading thinkers and researchers. Dynamic and stimulating, it appeals to people who value creativity and challenge. Its graduates are confident, articulate people who believe in what they are doing.

In the 21st Century we are:

- *a place of opportunity, which reaches out to people of all Background and Rationales and seeks to make a difference to their lives;*
- *a pioneering university, with inspiring research, developing new thinking and disciplines;*
- *a centre of excellence and professionalism, which boasts vitality, enthusiasm and energy, values freedom of expression and encourages debate;*
- *an engaged organisation, which maintains both a national and international outlook, but is strongly connected to our region;*

- *an innovative university, which nurtures new technologies and enterprise, and helps secure a viable future for them;*
- *a place of vision, investing in our facilities and the future of our students and staff.*

24. As the University seeks to make a step change in performance, the mission statement and core values should be reviewed to ensure that they effectively capture the essence of the University's ambition. Key themes to emerge in the consultation to date, include the concepts of:

- **Innovation**- reflecting the core business of the university
- **Internationalisation**- reflecting the global engagement the University has, both through the teaching and research agenda it embraces, as well as through the composition of its staff and student body
- **Impact**- reflecting the fact that the University seeks to educate students to take up fulfilling employment which will enable them to make an effective contribution to society, and that the University's research is undertaken in order to translate into improvements in economic well being and quality of life.

25. Questions on this *Ambition and Core Values* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

Qu.6	Is the current mission statement, in terms of its overall objective, appropriate for Sussex? Should the mission statement be redrafted in to a shorter, more punch format; for example "enabling positive change in individuals and their societies"
Qu.7	Is the wording of the current mission statement appropriate? Some people have commented that it is too wordy and not memorable- does this matter?
Qu.8	Are the core values complete and concise as a basis upon which we shall build the future of the University?
Qu.9	Does the University identify with the characteristics of <i>innovation, internationalisation</i> and <i>impact</i> ? Are these characteristics reflected in the mission statement and core values?

Research and Scholarship

Background and Rationale

26. Since its founding, the University has been a research-intensive institution that has seen merit in a dual research-teaching mission, undertaking pioneering and transforming research and using this knowledge pipeline to inform the higher levels of teaching. There is no evidence to suggest its future mission should be any different.

27. However the key challenges for the University has been its ability to adjust to a government research funding policy in which there is much greater selectivity. Despite increases in the UK research budget, HM Treasury has repeatedly pressed the case for increased selectivity, demonstrating that truly world-leading universities have a concentration of resource. As a consequence in 2005-2006 60% of all UK Research Council funding was awarded to just 15 universities. In setting out its research strategy for the future, Sussex must find ways in which it can compete more effectively for research funding *from all sources*, particularly against the dominant top research universities. Such competition can be based on disciplinary research and/or interdisciplinary research.

28. If our strategy is to build disciplines- in both their own right and to support interdisciplinarity- it must result in critical mass so that activity is not over-dependent on one or two key individuals. The departure of key academics has seen the collapse of a number of high profile research areas and this must be avoided in the future. Critical mass can be built either through the concentration of resources into a number of target areas (as has happened in the concentration of mathematics appointments into Applied Mathematics), or through partnership working with like-minded organisations.
29. If there is sufficient disciplinary strength, then the University could also compete for research funding through interdisciplinary projects, in the style of the research themes already presented. Such themes are generally more closely aligned to UK Research Council special initiatives, the needs of industry research funders and many of the European-funded programmes.
30. As outlined in paragraph 9, there has been some concern about the possible *exclusive* nature of research themes. However the proposal has always been about providing a light-touch, focus to our research and not to create rigid management structures which create problems for those research-active staff not aligned to a particular theme.
31. Whilst research funding is important for most disciplines, it is recognised that in some disciplines significant resource is not required to undertake research- although even the support of doctoral and other research students may need funding. Scholarship is therefore recognised as an important activity and research and scholarly output should continue to be at the heart of the academic role.

Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

32. A goal has already been published for research (as part of the recent research strategy) and views are sought as to the appropriateness and format of the goal. The current goal is:
- “to develop the international renown of Sussex as a research-intensive centre of critical thinking, learning and discovery, where excellence and innovation flourish and every individual is encouraged to make a lasting contribution to scholarship, knowledge and society.”
33. Key strategies for realising this goal may include:
- a. Creation of critical mass in research excellence, through realignment of resources into areas of research strength and through partnership working with other research-intensive universities and organisations
 - b. Creation of a number of cross-cutting research themes, which are used to encourage alignment of research activity to build critical mass and create a clearer external understanding of the university’s research strengths
 - c. Appointment of high profile academic leadership to coordinate each agreed research theme
 - d. Creation of a doctoral school to provide a focus for the needs of doctoral students, including better coordinated training in generic research skills
 - e. Ensuring that the professional services offer the most effective to support to researchers, including greater focus on assisting researchers in the communication and presentation of research findings
34. Key performance indicators for this goal may include (see also the main KPI paper):
- Research grant and contract income
 - Research grant and contract contribution
 - Postgraduate research students

- Publication and citation measures

35. Questions on this *Research* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

- Qu.10 Is the proposed increase in research grant and contract income achievable or must we expand this measure to include greater emphasis on *Enterprise and Third Mission* income (see text starting at paragraph 50)? What are the implications of his goal?
- Qu.11 If research themes are regarded as loosely-coupled networks of researchers from across the university, will these add-value to the research mission of the University and in particular will they enable access to research grant funding and other resources which are not otherwise accessible to the University?
- Qu.12 What should the strategic plan additionally say about the role of postgraduate research students and what *infrastructure* should be provided for such students (e.g. is there a minimum standard of study space, computing resource etc which should be provided for every postgraduate research student, irrespective of their School or supervisor)?

Teaching and Learning

Background and Rationale

36. A key challenge for the teaching and learning agenda is to continue to adapt to a global market for educational services in which students are paying *customers* who are offered increasing choice and flexibility.
37. Sussex has always been a university offering programmes across the curriculum, from arts to science and with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity. The curriculum reforms in the first half of this decade saw substantial modernisation of the curriculum, which improved student intake and quality. However student numbers remain fragile and there are increasing signs that recruitment into many subjects is increasingly becoming a challenge through a combination of issues arising from the programme portfolio and the student experience.
38. Future student recruitment will increasingly be dominated by global markets, not only in terms of international students inbound to the UK, but an increasing number of UK students opting to study abroad, especially if the current UK fee cap is raised. The University must respond to these trends, changing from a *selecting* to a *recruiting* culture for UK and international students. As more UK students start to study overseas, together with changes to demographics, the University needs to redouble its efforts to recruit students from overseas through greater focus on key markets and subject areas, through increased relationships with international *feeder* institutions and recruitment agents and through international partnerships (see also paragraph 81).
39. The University's taught programme portfolio needs to continue to be revised to meet student demand and expectations, but also to create the step change in numbers desired through the *Questions of Ambition* consultation exercise. A key area for development will be new programmes in business and management (where 1 in 7 students worldwide study the subject area), creative arts, international security and bio-medical sciences. Alongside these developments, core discipline subjects need to maintain their market share, especially in areas such as English, History, Psychology and Film and Media. Careful attention will also need to be given to the future development of information technology and bioscience-based programmes where, despite recent student recruitment issues, there is likely to remain long-term demand.

40. A further challenge for taught programme portfolio will be the university's ability to provide full curriculum coverage. Despite recent curriculum reforms, the Sussex portfolio is still complex either because of too many electives or because programmes are determined by staff preference and expertise rather than subject/student need. Even where professional accreditation dictates curriculum, some departments are finding it increasingly difficult to staff the necessary course units. Where possible the curriculum needs to be simplified and developed in such a way that units at levels 1 and 2 are *standard*, capable of being taught by many members of a department, with options and staff specialisms confined to levels 3 and 4.
41. Associated with overall curriculum issues is the extent to which students achieve graduate employment within 6 months of graduation. The Sussex performance is weak, partly because of discipline mix and the high proportion of graduates who remain in the Brighton area; however with public funding supporting students, the University will come under increasing pressure to improve graduate employability rates. *SussexPlus*, as previously described, will provide a vehicle in which to recognise added-value beyond the basic curriculum and to give greater prominence to issues of employability.
42. The student experience is also becoming more important with the publication of the National Student Survey and the impact this is having on student recruitment. The overriding themes which have emerged from consultations on the student experience are (a) increased flexibility in teaching and learning, (b) improved infrastructure and (c) a more holistic consideration of the student experience.
43. In terms of increased flexibility in teaching and learning, greater emphasis needs to be placed on technology-enriched, blended learning and alternative modes of delivery, such as part-time. Previous consultation has identified the concern from many staff that effective e-learning requires significant resourcing and the balance between technology-based developments and affordability (in both terms of money and staff time) will need to be balanced. However, it is also clear that there are many advocates of technology-assisted learning, with significant pockets of expertise and good practice. The University needs to take a more strategic approach to the roll out of services and support in this area.
44. Teaching and learning flexibility can also be enhanced by consideration of teaching and learning spaces. As boundaries between the classroom, study area, library, catering and study bedroom (in halls of residence) become increasingly blurred, the University must rethink the design and operation of many of these spaces. In particular, the Library, providing some 8% of the University's usable space needs reviewing to ensure that it is aligned to the changing needs of students, whilst preserving the needs of researchers.
45. The Professional Services Review, reinforced by the National Student Survey results, have identified the need for the total student experience to be considered in a more holistic manner. Initial steps have already been taken to organise services in a more integrated fashion, but further work remains.

Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

46. A goal has already been published for teaching and learning (as part of the recent teaching and learning strategy) and views are sought as to the appropriateness and format of the goal. The current goal is:

"The University will maximise its reputation as a world renowned research-intensive and critically engaged University by becoming a nationally and internationally recognised centre of teaching and learning innovation and excellence and a University of choice for staff, students and employers."

47. Key strategies for realising this goal may include:

- a. Investment in new programmes which will create significant student demand: business and management, creative arts, biomedical sciences and international security
- b. Continued realignment and reform of the undergraduate curriculum, to meet student demand and to create a manageable portfolio that can be delivered within the teaching resources available
- c. A focus on the increased flexibility in curriculum delivery, through use of technology support students, initially with the appointment of a senior academic to lead developments in this area and with consideration given to the role of Continuing Education in supporting staff and departments
- d. Development of *SussexPlus* to recognise student achievement outside the immediate curriculum
- e. Following the appointment of a Director of Student Support, further consideration given to the overall student experience with plans to integrate services more effectively
- f. Creation of a long-term development plan for the Library to provide support for teaching and learning which is more integrated with other services, whilst continuing to address the needs of the research community
- g. Development of international partnerships to allow delivery of educational programmes in locations other than Sussex, in order to reach academically qualified students who are unable to study in the UK

48. Key performance indicators for this goal may include (see also the main KPI paper):

- Student satisfaction
- Graduate employability
- Postgraduate taught student numbers
- International student fee income

49. Questions on this *Teaching and Learning* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

- Qu.13 What other areas of student growth should the University be considering, in addition to those outlined in paragraph a, above?
- Qu.14 Should the principle of simplification of the undergraduate curriculum be pursued further?
- Qu.15 What further measures might be taken to handle the student experience in a more holistic manner?
- Qu.16 What should be the key features of a long-term development plan for the Library?
- Qu.17 Is the University committed to developing programmes which are delivered to international students in their home countries?

Enterprise and Third Mission

Background and Rationale

50. The enterprise and third mission theme covers a wide range of activities which flow from research, scholarship, teaching and learning activities. Such diversity means that there is often a misunderstanding of the theme and a lack of focus. A clear action is therefore to create a university-wide consensus on the meaning of the theme, its role within the life of

the university, its staff, students and stakeholders, and the development of a clear set of objectives.

51. At one extreme, enterprise and third mission concerns the exploitation of research ideas and results and their application so that such research *can make a difference*. Such exploitation can take many forms from development of intellectual property through licensing and company spin-outs, to consultancy and knowledge exchange projects. Such activity will be important because it can add an income stream to the university, although experience elsewhere shows this to be a stream which has *bursts* rather than a steady flow of income. This will be critical to the university's overall goal of increasing income to support its other activities, especially in the light that increasing research grant and contract income is likely to be challenging given the limited size of the financial pot and the dominance of the Russell Group of universities.
52. Data tables for enterprise income are not provided in the Council Data Book as this income stream is negligible- either because activity is not taking place or that it is not properly captured and recorded. Further work will be needed to establish the true state of affairs, together with ensuring that University policies on promoting, supporting and rewarding such activity are properly aligned to an enterprise goal.
53. The enterprise and third mission theme also encompasses a broader *public mission* of the University to serve the needs of a wider stakeholder group through access to knowledge and education in forms other than award-bearing qualifications. Activities within this category would include opportunities for continuing education and adult education, the University being regarded as a source of knowledge and informed comment on *issues of the day*, through to 'exploitation' of knowledge in the arts and humanities through activities such as performance and special lectures. Raising awareness, through more direct outreach into the region, may also be regarded as a third mission activity; for example, by holding events during British Science Week in public venues such as supermarket forecourts.
54. As part of its service to the wider public, the University could make available resources, such as the University Library and its special collections, the Gardner Arts Centre, specialist teaching facilities (e.g. chemistry laboratories). Where these resources are not fully utilised, costs would be marginal (and could even generate income), as well as offering a public service.
55. Given the potential diversity of activity, the principle issue under this theme is to consider the *focus* of activity, the *extent* and *affordability* of the activity and how it must be *legitimised* as part of the everyday activity of staff.

Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

56. A suggested goal for enterprise and third mission is:

"The University seeks to make a difference in the world, by drawing on its research and educational resources to support activities which socially and economically enrich the lives of stakeholders".

57. Key strategies for realising this goal may include:

- a. Providing specialist support for the development and exploitation of intellectual property
- b. Align academic staff job descriptions, terms and conditions of appointment, reward and promotion procedures to explicitly include enterprise and third mission activities
- c. Development of a focused and coherent programme of public engagement, drawing upon the research and educational resources of the University

- d. Participation in the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove City Council ‘Keep’ project to provide better access to the University’s special collections
- e. Review of the Centre for Continuing Education to consider its role in public outreach and education (as well as flexible education, see paragraph 47c)
- f. Increasing the role of student volunteering, through *SussexPlus*, to make a more effective contribution to local communities
- g. Re-development of the Gardner Arts Centre to both support the University’s creative arts strategy and to provide a resource for wider, external use
- h. To engage with the government initiative of developing links with local schools and colleges

58. Key performance indicators for this goal will require further development, but may include

- Income stream derived from enterprise and third mission activities
- An appropriate measure to assess the extent of public engagement
- The number of students engaged in voluntary service in the local community.

59. Questions on this *Enterprise and Third Mission* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

- Qu.18 Can a more appropriate title for *Enterprise and Third Mission* be identified? Would *Knowledge Exchange and Public Communication* be a more appropriate title?
- Qu.19 How can the overall focus of the Enterprise and Third Mission agenda be made sharper?
- Qu.20 Whilst some Enterprise and Third Mission activities will generate income, many will not create a net income stream. How should the University determine the nature and volume of activities in this latter category.

People

Background and Rationale

60. The initial paper on the future strategy for the University raised a series of questions about the staff experience and the extent to which the University wished to embrace excellence. Responses to these questions highlighted a very strong commitment to excellence and desire to show explicit support and investment in staff to achieve this. Issues raised included whether the current reward and promotion procedures would deliver excellence, as well as questions on about the effectiveness of other non-financial forms of staff engagement and motivation. Also associated with this theme, but dealt with in a later theme in this paper (starting at paragraph 86), was the issue of the effectiveness of leadership and management. These comments are consistent with inputs from other parts of the planning process, which have highlighted the need for more effective career planning and development, and a more integrated approach to performance management.

61. The role of two-way communication is critical in any organisation. It is incumbent on the organisation to ensure that all its staff and stakeholders have a clear understanding of mission, goals and strategies, as well as the part that they are each expected to play in their delivery. The effectiveness of such communication must be tested, to both ensure that the message is received and understood, as well as providing genuine mechanisms for comment and feedback which is considered and, where appropriate, acted upon by managers.

62. Staff training, development and mentoring is a crucial element of a people strategy and needs to reflect the overall goals of the institution. Traditionally, as in many equivalent establishments, the University has sought to spread its staff development activities *thin and wide* so that as many staff can have an opportunity to engage in some form of activity. Whilst recognising that all staff should have proper guidance and support through their line management, the University should employ its limited staff development resources to greater strategic and tactical advantage. This will require greater selectivity in use of the resource, so that staff development opportunities focus on in areas where the greatest benefit can be derived for the University community as a whole. For example, helping a member of staff move into their first line management role (which impacts both them and the staff they manage) would be a higher priority than a member of staff wishing to take an open language course as a hobby. The effectiveness of staff development should also be measured, for example, by an appropriate survey at some time after delivery of a development activity, thereby creating a feedback loop which can support more effective staff development planning and selection of development events.
63. Equality and diversity issues, with respect to staff, students and University visitors remain a key area to be addressed under the theme of *People*. Considerable progress has been made at Sussex in embedding principles of good practice, whilst the estate is becoming increasing DDA compliant. A study of women in leadership has been undertaken and the findings of this report, together with actions plans on wider equality and diversity issues are a priority for implementation.
64. As both *good employer* and *good student destination*, the University has an increasing responsibility to support the health and well-being of its students. This broadens the scope of traditional support services, to embrace a *lifestyle* approach in which the wider support needs of all staff and students are considered. Work has already been undertaken on a catering strategy and healthy-living strategy and this needs to be progressed to develop specific actions to enhance the staff and student experience.

Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

65. A suggested goal for the people theme of the new strategy is:

“For the University of Sussex to become the employer of choice for the employee of choice.”

66. Key strategies for realising this goal may include:

- a. Ensuring that all staff of the University have a clear understanding of the mission and goals of the university and are appropriately engaged in the strategies for delivery
- b. Ensuring that formal line management structures are used for effective two-way communication
- c. Implementation of an effective performance management system which systematically ensures that all staff have a clear understanding of their personal goals and objectives within the context of the University's overall mission and goals, with supporting mechanisms for career planning, performance review, staff development, promotion and reward
- d. Revising people policies to ensure that they are fit for purpose in delivering the University mission and goals and that staff are appropriately prepared in their use, including appointment, probation and promotion procedures
- e. To review the mechanisms and organisation of staff training and development to ensure that the available resources are deployed selectively to strategic and tactical advantage
- f. To continue to monitor, refine and implement the disability and equality action plans
- g. Development of a comprehensive, non-financial staff recognition scheme (building upon the existing Chancellor's Awards)

h. Implementation of initiatives to support staff and student *well-being*

67. Key performance indicators for this goal may include:

- Numbers of staff promoted
- Numbers of staff appointed to leadership or management positions who have received appropriate training and development
- Measures demonstrating the extent to which equality and diversity issues are embedded within operational plan (planning and delivery)
- Effectiveness of staff development
- The number of non-financial staff awards

68. Questions on this *People* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

- Qu.21 What other key strategies should feature in the *People* mission that will add value and enable more effective delivery of the University's overall mission and goals?
- Qu.22 Is there agreement that effective two-way communication between staff should be primarily through the line management route, whilst recognising that other more informal mechanisms, such as open meetings, also have a role to play?
- Qu.23 Is there agreement on the need for an integrated approach to career planning, performance review, staff development, promotion and reward?
- Qu.24 What forms of non-financial staff recognition might the University adopt?
- Qu.25 What specific themes or actions should be considered as part of a staff and student *well-being* programme?

Sustainability

Background and Rationale

69. A key theme in higher education has been the sustainability of activity. This theme has been reflected in many of the policies and procedures adopted by the HEFCE, each of which have encouraged universities to focus on defining their mission and aligning resources, in a sustainable fashion, to deliver. Staff at Sussex, and elsewhere, often criticise the sector for the 'boom and bust' approach that often results from poor planning and a failure to address long-term issues. The theme of sustainability therefore embodies the notion of financial sustainability, where the institution can have confidence in planning and delivering objectives overall the long-term, without intervening financial crises.
70. Whilst financial sustainability and stability is highly desirable, it comes at a price; with limited resources the University must deploy those resources to greatest effect. Recognising the rapidly changing global higher education market, the University must constantly review its deployment of resource to ensure that public money and student fees are being employed most effectively. Whilst there is recognition that this means critically appraising activities which are not covering their costs, it also means increasingly examining whether there is sufficient return from resource employed- in a competitive market where standards of performance and achievement are rising, resource may need to be switched to activities which create greater financial return, in order to preserve those activities which have lower return but are core to the University's mission.
71. An example where the University will need to switch resource occurs in the proposal to expand existing Business and Management activity. This activity is being expanded

because it has buoyant student demand and the University believes it can earn a greater financial surplus to invest in other areas of the academic enterprise and in staff and student infrastructure than from existing activity. However in order to deliver a mixed cohort of home and international students, the University will need to switch home funded student numbers from other disciplines- since these numbers are controlled by the HEFCE and the University cannot simply admit more home students. Those other disciplines will suffer a loss of income and consequent reduction in expenditure (staff, consumables etc.) unless the time released from teaching can usefully be employed in other income generating activities (e.g. additional research grants and contracts).

72. The approach to financial sustainability has to be taken also in the context of the overall academic portfolio and the natural cycle of student demand and research funding opportunities. For example, some disciplines have been very strong financially, in the past (e.g. computer science), but currently are suffering a downturn in student demand. It is inconceivable that there will not be future demand in this area, but the discipline area is currently in a recruitment *trough*. The case might also be made that for some disciplines or sub-disciplines the University must retain a presence as part of its overall portfolio. All these situations are concerned with making a case for cross-subsidy, but this can only be made possible if there is sufficient additional financial surplus generated from activities such as an expanded Business and Management portfolio.
73. The concept of sustainability can also be applied to the overall infrastructure. Offering first class programmes and recruiting the world's best researchers becomes meaningless if they cannot be offered an adequate infrastructure to support them. In this context, sustainability is concerned with capital resources such as staff and student accommodation, teaching space, research laboratories, social and recreational facilities, information technology and information services, transport etc. The HE sector has been very poor at maintaining its infrastructure (hence capital funding initiatives like SRIF and PCA) and it is important that Sussex restores an appropriate level of funding to these needs through improved income generation.
74. Finally, sustainability can be considered in an environmental context and the importance of acting as a *good citizen*. The University has a creditable track record in responding to the challenge of environmental sustainability and future initiatives need to ensure the University continues to make progress in this area.

Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

75. A suggested goal for sustainability is:

“The University seeks to operate in a sustainable fashion, recognising its responsibility to deliver financial stability to allow long-term planning and development of the academic mission, to ensure that academic activities are appropriately supported by a reliable and fit-for-purpose infrastructure and that it behaves in a manner which has regard for the environment and its neighbouring communities”

76. Key strategies for realising this goal may include:

- a. Ensuring financial decision making is devolved to appropriate levels of responsibility, with clear management information and appropriate mechanisms of accountability
- b. To set all income generating units the task of generated a minimum surplus of 4% on turnover, whilst recognising that time-limited, strategic cross-subsidy will be required from time to time
- c. To execute a capital investment and long-term maintenance programme which improves the condition of the University estate and increases its functional suitability

- d. To implement the recommendations of the PWC review of corporate information systems and embark upon a programme of systematic upgrading and replacement of key systems
- e. To implement the review of catering and retail provision on campus to improve the offering to staff and students
- f. To expand student residences up to a further 800 places and to replace East Slope with accommodation to modern standards
- g. To extend the district heating system to include residences and deploy a further CHP plant to improve the University's carbon footprint
- h. To explore and implement further energy saving measures, including a wind-powered turbine to reduce energy costs and carbon footprint

77. Key performance indicators for this goal may include (see also the main KPI paper):

- Financial surplus
- Extent of cross-subsidy
- Condition of the estate
- Progress against the corporate information systems replacement programme
- Proportion of energy consumed through environmentally sustainable measures

78. Questions on this *Sustainability* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

- Qu.26 Are the statements on surplus and cross-subsidy appropriate i.e. cross-subsidy for a time-limited, strategic purpose?
- Qu.27 Does the University accept the imperative of growing income through the transfer of some resource from one area to another, in order to provide financial capacity to grow and support other disciplinary areas?
- Qu.28 Does the University agree on the need to adequately fund infrastructure development and how might appropriate levels for the estate, IT infrastructure and staff/student facilities best be determined?
- Qu.29 What level of ambition does the University have to be regarded as 'green'?

Partnership

Background and Rationale

79. There have been many signals from government, the HEFCE and Research Councils concerning the importance of partnership working- in many cases such working being a condition of funding. Partnership working provides opportunities for the University, together with its preferred partners, to offer a wider range of services, which they could not offer independently, either by creating critical mass or by offering complementary services. Such partnerships can address a range of activities from joint research projects, to shared service provision, to joint ventures at home and internationally.

80. Partnerships are also important in enhancing the University's activities by becoming a preferred partner and, as a consequence, adding value to its brand and reputation. There are already some well established examples of such partnership, including the Rolls Royce University Technology Centre conducting leading edge thermo-fluid mechanics research, and the joint American Express Master Programme in Informatics. Such partnerships open up a wide range of opportunities to develop research projects, add value to the curriculum and create employment opportunities for graduates.

81. Such partnerships arrangements are not confined to UK universities or businesses, but could embrace international universities and university groupings, as well as UK and international commercial, political or welfare organisations.

Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

82. A suggested goal for the partnership theme is:

“The University of Sussex will seek to work in partnership with appropriate organisations in the furtherance of its mission and where there are clear mutual benefits and a sound business case for doing so.”

83. Key strategies for realising this goal may include:

- a. Development of a series of strategic partnerships, in particular to support the major cross-cutting research themes
- b. Development of strategic partnerships to support international delivery of Sussex programmes?
- c. To create a series of bi-lateral and multi-lateral partnerships in pursuit of specific academic and shared service initiatives, including offering educational services overseas, the mutual provision of IT disaster recovery facilities and a shared accommodation service for students in the Brighton region
- d. To continue working with the University of Brighton to identify areas of collaboration which are mutually beneficial, particularly in areas where there is a strong local and regional identity
- e. To contribute effectively to the 1994 Group of Universities, in order to press the case for the needs of staff and students working in medium-sized, research-intensive universities
- f. To work with local and regional organisations to clearly articulate and deliver benefit to the local and regional economy and society

84. Key performance indicators for this goal may include (see also the main KPI paper):

- Number of strategic partnerships
- Measures of the effectiveness of strategic partnerships

85. Questions on this *Partnership* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

Qu.30 Are there any specific areas in which the University should be seeking additional partnerships?

Qu.31 What forms of international collaboration should be considered in order to support the delivery of Sussex programmes overseas?

Governance, Leadership and Management

Background and Rationale

86. The theme of effective governance, leadership and management has emerged in a number of contexts, including the annual planning process, Executive Group meetings with Schools and Departments, and through responses to the initial round of consultation on the strategic plan. Significant changes in governance and leadership arrangements over the past 2-3 years have already led to a refocusing of university activity, improved morale and greater sense of partnership working. In creating an ambitious agenda for change, effective governance, leadership and management remains a major priority.

87. With the change of senior leadership, the style of working in Council is undergoing significant change and many staff have indicated a wish for a review of Senate to ensure that it maintains its central role in the academic governance of the University, whilst ensuring that its structure and operation enables efficient and effective decision making.
88. The University has recently made many external appointments to senior leadership positions and, whilst external appointments can bring new ideas and creativity to the institution, it is important that the University also has the capacity and resources to develop its own leaders. Linked to the theme of people and excellence, the University should also consider the extent to which it wishes to become the provider of leadership to other institutions (considering the impact this will have on University brand and reputation).
89. A common theme to emerge in consultation has been the position of heads of academic departments- that it is a job people often do not want to do, that it is hard work with relatively little reward and that it has little or no support. With departments occupying a key role in delivering the academic mission, it is imperative for the University to review the role, position, remuneration and support of heads of department and to ensure that they have the position and resources to meet the challenges which are increasingly placed upon them as academic leaders and managers.

Key Elements of the Strategic Plan

90. A suggested goal for this theme is:

“The University of Sussex will adopt best practice in its governance, leadership and management arrangements, in particular by paying special attention to the preparation and continuing development of relevant personnel.”

91. Key strategies for realising this goal may include:

- a. In accordance with CUC guidelines, to continue to review the effectiveness of Council and the overall governance arrangements, and to ensure that prospective, new and existing members are properly briefed, inducted, trained and developed
- b. To reaffirm the importance of Senate in the decision making processes of the University and to implement reforms to ensure its efficient and effective operation
- c. To review all aspects of the role, operation and reward of Head of an academic department to ensure that it is equipped to operate as a strategic resource in the delivery of the University’s mission
- d. To ensure that staff development is focused on the critical needs of new and existing managers and leaders, both for their induction and ongoing professional development, and in particular to develop more effectively leaders from within the University staff.

92. Key performance indicators for this goal may include (see also the main KPI paper):

- Proportion of governors, leaders and managers who have been trained for their role

93. Questions on this *Governance, Leadership and Management* section, to which views are particularly sought, are:

Qu.32 To what extent does the University see its role as developing leaders of the future, both for positions within Sussex and beyond?

Qu.33 What other areas of governance, leadership and management should be reviewed and/or reformed?

Financial Implications

94. The aim of this 'green paper' is to present a flavour of the emerging strategic themes and issues in order to provoke further discussion and refinement.
95. However in considering the contents of this paper, Council will wish to be assured that there is a financial realism to the proposals. To this end, the key themes and strategies in this paper have been considered in a level of detail not presented here, in order to start to build a financial model of the impact of the plan.
96. Given the level of detail in this plan, a detailed financial model is not appropriate at this stage, however the followings tables below provides *outline* summary figures of the revenue and capital implications. These figures should not be taken as targets or commitments and will need to be refined as a result of further discussion and prioritisation of the plan.

Revenue Modelling

97. The revenue table below shows the planned position for 2006-2007 and 2010-2011 based on already agreed development plans. Note that growth has already been planned and factored into the University's financial forecasts (column 2). These figures are updated by the additional step change (column 3) to provide a revised position for 2010-2011 (column 4). The additional income of £42m arising from the strategic plan, set against the agreed planned income of £163m in 2010-2011 is a measure of the *step change* proposed.

All figures £k	2006-07 July 2007 plan	2010-11 July 2007 plan	Add new strategic plan	2010-11 Total indicative
Income				
Funding council grants	54,140	57,655	9,233	66,888
Academic fees and support grants	26,473	44,592	3,750	48,342
Research grants and contracts	20,022	31,805	29,982	61,787
Other operating income	22,553	29,330		29,330
Endowment income and interest receivable	450	540		540
Total income	<u>123,638</u>	<u>163,922</u>	<u>42,964</u>	<u>206,886</u>
Expenditure				
Staff costs	72,603	94,927	28,730	123,657
Other operating expenses	39,549	53,745	7,398	61,143
Depreciation	7,069	7,190	600	7,790
Interest payable	2,555	3,631	2,400	6,031
Total expenditure	<u>121,776</u>	<u>159,493</u>	<u>39,127</u>	<u>198,621</u>
Operating surplus	<u>1,862</u>	<u>4,428</u>	<u>3,837</u>	<u>8,265</u>
Operating surplus as percentage of turnover	1.5%	2.7%		4.0%

98. Key features of the revenue forecast are as follows.

Student number growth	Undergraduate Home/EU	1065 (465 not funded)
	Postgraduate Home/EU	630
	Undergraduate International	435
	Postgraduate International	475

New staff appointments (assuming 20:1 staff-student ratio)	Professor Senior Lecturer Lecturer	25 41 60
Research theme support (per theme)	Leadership and support Pump-priming PhD scholarships Visitor support programme	3 new scholarships p.a.
Research income growth	From additional staff recruited for teaching initiatives Additional gross income	£4m p.a. £28m p.a.
Support cost uplift	School costs, agent fees, Library Infrastructure contribution	£3m p.a. £1m p.a.
Resource transfer (not all student/ staff numbers can be funded and will require transfer of resource)	To transfer from other disciplines • Student numbers • Staff	465 FTEs 23 FTEs (or £1.2m)

99. 465 home/EU undergraduate numbers are shown in the above table as *unfunded*. This represents growth in home/EU business and management students which will not attract HEFCE financial support. Unless the University is prepared to teach these students on a fees only basis (i.e. below the full economic cost), such numbers will need to transfer from other discipline areas, with the need to recover the £1.2m of income lost to those disciplines, either by new income generating activity or through the reduction of 23 FTE staff posts. The 465 is necessary to create a balance home/international student intake and attract the majority of the proposed 435 international fee paying undergraduate students.
100. The largest increase in income is in the area of research grants and contracts and the above figures demonstrate significant growth. Whilst a proportion of this will come from additional overhead recovery through increased FEC rates, it is largely underpinned real growth in volume. Given the comments in paragraph 51, it is clear that the growth in this figure must be derived from both additional research grants and contracts and enterprise/ third mission activity.

Capital Modelling

101. An initial capital model is shown in the tables below. The model has been constructed from the capital implications of the initiatives outlined in this paper and assumptions/ estimates made about capital income sources. The funding shortfall demonstrates the need to further refine the model and prioritise developments.

£k	Total	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Potential capital projects	180.35	6.00	26.52	50.84	29.25	43.28
Funding source						
Loan (new teaching building)	7.00	5.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
New HEFCE capital stream	41.07	0.00	4.00	4.00	4.37	4.37
Self-funding (e.g. residences)	60.01	0.00	9.36	19.47	10.12	21.06
Benefaction (e.g. sport)	11.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.70
Funded	119.78	5.00	15.36	23.47	14.49	37.13
Unfunded	60.57	1.00	11.16	27.37	14.75	6.16

£k	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Potential capital projects	7.30	2.53	11.84	1.37	1.42
Funding source					
Loan (new teaching building)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
New HEFCE capital stream	4.64	4.64	4.92	4.92	5.22
Self-funding (e.g. residences)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Benefaction (e.g. sport)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Funded	4.64	4.64	4.92	4.92	5.22
Unfunded	2.66	-2.11	6.92	-3.55	-3.80

Qu.34 It is likely that further detailed financial analysis of the proposed strategies will reveal additional cost which makes some unaffordable; therefore which 5 strategies would the University consider to be most important.

HEFCE Strategic Development Fund Bid

102. Some of the initial cost of change and capital programme can be funded from a bid to the HEFCE strategic development fund. The core of the bid will focus on academic restructuring and include, as a minimum, a development of the relationship with the University of Brighton.
103. The fund is unlikely to support any growth in business and management (to be handled separately) but is likely to include:
- A major initiative in the Creative Arts, building upon synergies from complementary activities at Sussex and Brighton and possible use of the Gardner Arts Centre
 - A major initiative in biomedical sciences, increasing the role played by the School of Life Sciences in this important subject area, links to the Brighton and Sussex Medical School and possible development of a new building to support the activity
 - New programmes in International Relations
 - Coordination of foreign language provision at Sussex and Brighton in order to preserve an offering in modern foreign language.

104. Dialogue around other initiatives is also taking place and may be included in a bid in due course. Particular attention is being given to possible research collaborations.
105. It is expected that a bid will be submitted to the HEFCE in Summer 2008.

Next Steps

106. This paper is subject to consultation with Council, Senate and the wider University community. Following receipt of comments, a *white paper* will be produced for the meeting of Council on 4th April 2008, containing the draft University Strategic Plan.
107. In parallel to this process, management will start the 2008-2009 Planning Process which through engagement with academic departments and service units, will subsequently generate the 2008-2009 *University Operational Plan and Budget*, for approval by Council at its meeting in July 2008. The process will also develop a 5 year Operational Plan which will be used by management to guide the implementation of the strategic plan and inform the resource choices to be made during the period. This 5 year plan will be used to create the 5 year financial forecasts which must be submitted to the HEFCE