

Sussex 2035 Creating Progressive Futures

Flourishing, Sustainability and
Progress for the Whole World

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“ The objects of the University shall be to advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research to the benefit of the wider community.

The University of Sussex Charter, as revised in 2012, para 3



1. Introduction

Sussex 2035 sets out the University of Sussex's strategy for the coming ten years. This decade, leading to the 75th anniversary of Sussex's founding, will be critical for the fate of humanity and our planet. It is our responsibility, as the community with custodianship of this remarkable university, to strengthen, grow and mobilise our collective capacity to tackle the complex challenges of this period in history and to develop the knowledge base, skills, and tools to drive progressive environmental, social, and technological change.

Sussex has an outstanding global reputation for academic leadership in equitable and sustainable development and, during our first 60+ years, Sussex has made ground-breaking, intellectually disruptive and transformational contributions to knowledge in the physical and life sciences, in artificial intelligence and informatics, in science, technology and innovation policy and management, in post-colonial thought and global studies, sexuality and gender studies, media and cultural studies, and across the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities. As we face the deep uncertainties of climate crisis and biodiversity loss, global conflict, intensifying inequalities, and cultural polarisation, the world needs Sussex's scientific rigour, creativity, critical thinking, and internationalism more than ever.

Sussex 2035 transformational themes:

1. Environmental sustainability
2. Human flourishing
3. Digital and data futures

Rationale

Sussex 2035 builds on our existing areas of academic strength to pursue excellence and innovation in research and education, and it articulates a distinctive direction for the University to enable us to attract and develop ambitious forward-thinking students and staff who are committed to creating flourishing and sustainable futures for the whole world.

The theory of change underlying the strategy is that a concerted, whole-university focus on developing our distinctive areas of excellence in our educational offer, our research, and our institutional life and actions, grounded in the foundational principles of Sussex 2035, will drive the change we so urgently need. The hypothesis is that pursuing this strategy over the coming decade with energy and consistency will significantly enhance Sussex's national and global reputation and our attractiveness to students, thereby ensuring that the University thrives in uncertain times.

The three Sussex 2035 transformational themes – environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures – both capture much of Sussex's existing distinctive excellence and identify the most critical challenges facing the whole world. They are themes that already motivate our staff, that speak to the concerns of our city and region, and that will inspire future cohorts of students and stakeholders who are not yet engaged with Sussex.

Overview

Sussex 2035 begins with a statement of our mission and values. It then lays out the foundational principles for Sussex 2035 and outlines the vision for Sussex 2035. The vision identifies what we want to achieve over the next decade and maps our high-level goals across our core activities of education and student life, research and innovation, and global and civic engagement, and in the areas of organisational work that enable our core activities – supporting our people and culture, ensuring our financial sustainability, and transforming our digital and physical infrastructure.



2. Our mission: Who we are and why we exist

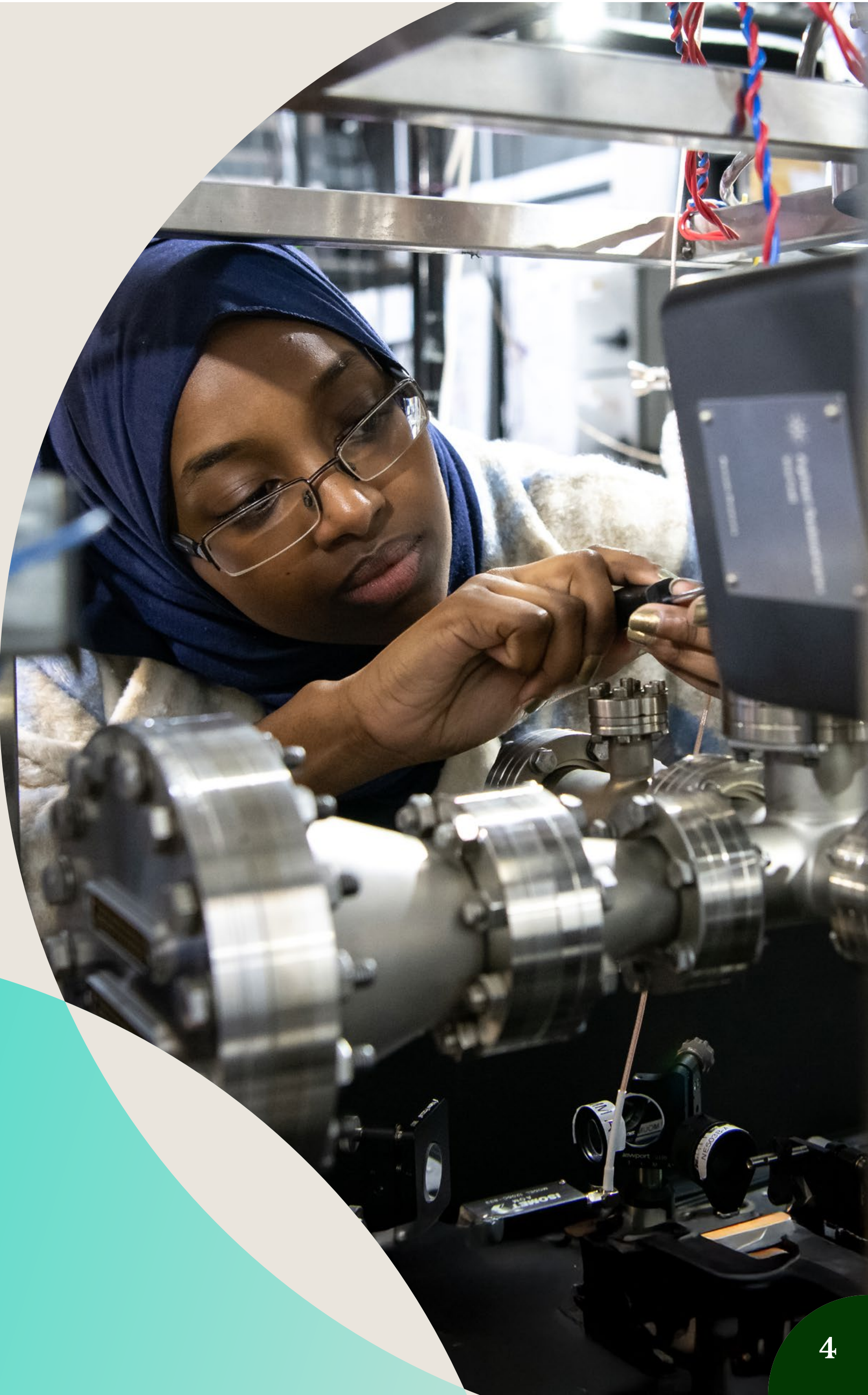
The University of Sussex is a diverse and globally minded community of staff, students, and alumni.

We work together, and with partners near and far, to make the world a progressively better place. We do this by educating generations of change-makers, and by creating, disseminating, and applying ground-breaking knowledge and understanding.

Our distinctive commitment to interdisciplinarity continues to open up new ways of thinking and solutions to environmental, scientific, social, and technological challenges.

Our research and teaching are curiosity-driven and rigorous, addressing the most important issues of our time, and exercising stewardship over, and questioning, existing knowledge.

We nurture academic excellence, professional leadership, and global citizenship amongst our students and staff through the development of creativity, critical thinking, and independence of mind.



3. Our values:

How we seek to work together

Our five core values, as expressed in the Sussex 2025 Strategic Framework, will continue to shape how we seek to work together and with others, with the addition of a new value - *openness*. Together, these six inter-related values offer a framework of collective aspiration for Sussex's culture that we will weave through our organisational life and interactions:



1.

Collaboration
We will recognise that cooperation and collegiality are at the heart of all that we do, creating equitable and mutually beneficial relationships across the University and with our external partners.
2.

Courage
We will be brave in the challenge we pose to established knowledge. We will support bold and experimental thinking, challenging conversations, and difficult decisions.
3.

Inclusion
We will embrace the diversity of our students, staff, alumni, partners, and stakeholders, actively addressing under-representation and disadvantage, and consciously creating the conditions for belonging to our community.
4.

Integrity
We will uphold the highest standards of accountability and honesty in our governance and ways of working together.
5.

Kindness
We will broaden and deepen our commitment to care, compassion, and respect for each other, and for the world and people around us, in our decision-making and everyday practices. We will value everyday acts of collegiality and mutual support.
6.

Openness
We will be open to each other, to the world, and to our city and region, welcoming and listening to people of all backgrounds, beliefs, and identities. We will share our knowledge, data, and the products of our research as widely as possible, valuing open-minds and seeking open dialogue.

4. The foundational principles of Sussex 2035

The foundational principles on which our strategy rests are:

Improvement and excellence

We are seeking improvement and excellence in everything we do. We will tackle unevenness of achievement and performance across the University, and we will ensure that by 2035 Sussex is in a significantly stronger position across all areas of our work.

Distinctiveness

Sussex has a distinctive heritage and 'spirit and style very much of its own' (Asa Briggs). We will build on this to analyse, address, and educate about contemporary challenges in ways that are distinctively 'Sussex.'

Ethical relations

Sussex is a diverse community of staff, students, and alumni, embedded in, and interdependently entangled with, wider local and global communities, and with the natural environment. As an organisation, we will seek to relate ethically to each other, to external stakeholders and partners, and to the natural environment.

Accountability

We must always meet our legal and regulatory obligations and be fully accountable to our stakeholders. We will do this in manageable and dynamic ways.

Adaptability and resilience

In a constantly changing world, we need to increase our agility and our capacity to adapt, and we must build resilience as an organisation. We recognise that we might need to change course on the way to 2035, and we will, therefore, develop 3-to-5-year Strategic Plans, under the auspices of Sussex 2035.

Financial sustainability

We need not just to meet our current financial commitments, but to invest in our future. This includes repairs and maintenance to our historic estate, new buildings and equipment, transformational digital projects, growing new areas of academic activity, improving the learning and working conditions of students and staff, and meeting our environmental sustainability commitments. We will ensure that we generate an operating margin sufficient to regenerate and improve Sussex, to realise the ambitions of Sussex 2035. Our financial sustainability will be delivered through the successful embedding of the foundational principles of improvement and excellence, distinctiveness, ethical relations, accountability, and adaptability and resilience across all areas of work, and through the work we do to achieve the goals of Sussex 2035.



5. The Sussex 2035 vision

Creating Progressive Futures

Flourishing, Sustainability and
Progress for the Whole World

5.1: Overview

Sussex 2035 is about harnessing our collective effort to create progressive futures, for the whole world, and for our own university.

For the whole world

Over the coming decade Sussex will make a distinctive, inventive, and positive contribution to **environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures** through our research and innovation, through our educational and student-life provision, through our global and civic engagement, and in our institutional life and actions.

To enable us to realise this vision, we will establish a new interdisciplinary school, The Sussex School for Progressive Futures, which will catalyse and coordinate a world-changing programme of education, research, and global and civic engagement activities around our three transformational themes of environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures. The new knowledge and understanding we create will be elaborated, tested, and applied in our teaching and university operations, and in partnership with change-makers around the world.

For Sussex

Over the coming decade we will take strategic action to enable Sussex to thrive as a comprehensive research-intensive, educationally excellent, student-centred university. We will build the strength of our University community, ensuring financial sustainability and developing fit-for-purpose infrastructure, driving improvement and excellence in all that we do, and enhancing our adaptability and resilience in the face of external pressures and social, technological, and environmental change.

Sussex will be a first-choice university for ambitious, creative, and forward-thinking students and staff. We will become a university in which every student and member of staff feels that they are in the best place to realise their goals, where they can develop, be themselves, and do their best work, and where we fully embrace diversity of background, identity, belief, thought, discipline, and method. We will preserve and make the most of our beautiful historic campus and our location on the South Downs and in The Living Coast UNESCO biosphere region.



5.2: Creating progressive futures through education and student life

We will create progressive futures through education and student life at Sussex. Through our strategic actions, Sussex will be a first-choice university for ambitious, creative, and forward-thinking students.

Goal 1

We will support students from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences to access education at Sussex and we will enable all students to flourish whilst here and beyond.

Goal 2

We will equip our students for global citizenship and for life and work in a changing world by embedding environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures in the curriculum.

Goal 3

In partnership with our students, we will deliver improvement and excellence, in all aspects of education and student life.





5.3: Creating progressive futures through research and innovation

We will create progressive futures through our research and innovation. Through our strategic actions, Sussex will be a first-choice university for ambitious, creative, and forward-thinking researchers.

Goal 1

We will contribute rigorous, impactful knowledge towards an environmentally sustainable, socially just, technologically empowered, healthy, and economically vibrant world.

Goal 2

We will broaden and deepen our research and innovation partnerships to promote global knowledge equity, supported by open research practices.

Goal 3

We will strengthen our research and innovation base to enhance excellence in research and innovation across all our disciplines and interdisciplinary fields.

5.4: Creating progressive futures through global and civic engagement

We will create progressive futures through our global and civic engagement.

Goal 1

We will strengthen our global reputation as a destination for international students and as a higher education partner-of-choice, building strong and equitable partnerships in education and research.

Goal 2

We will optimise civic engagement to maximise the visibility and impact of our work, catalysing interdisciplinary teams in education and research to respond to the challenges of our local and regional stakeholders, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.

Goal 3

We will establish global and civic engagement as a core part of our institutional work, fostering a culture of public service and community engagement, building collaboration with external organisations into our taught programmes, and recognising contributions to global and civic engagement in our career pathways.





5.5: The Sussex School for Progressive Futures

We will establish The Sussex School for Progressive Futures as a flagship hub to catalyse and coordinate a distinctive, world-changing programme of interdisciplinary education, research and innovation, and global and civic engagement in relation to our Sussex 2035 transformational themes of environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.

In the spirit of Sussex's original ground-breaking interdisciplinarity, The Sussex School for Progressive Futures will build and support the strengths of the University's four Faculties to connect and transcend conventional disciplines and the traditional boundaries of the university, bringing together researchers, educators, students, and professional practitioners from across the whole university, and collaborators from business, industry, government, the arts, and the third sector, to work on understanding and solving the greatest challenges facing our planet. It will be a research-led learning and training laboratory for the creation of progressive futures.

The Sussex School for Progressive Futures will be a space for cross-University cooperation, rooted in our values of collaboration, inclusion, and openness. Working within the University's foundational commitment to academic freedom, as expressed in our Charter and Statutes¹, and seeking to promote and support freedom of speech, diversity of belief and method², the meaning of 'progressive futures' will always be subject to discussion and debate and will serve as an open concept signifying a commitment to innovation for equitable and positive environmental, social, and technological change.

¹ Statute 6(2).

² See here for more about Sussex's commitments to, and policies regarding, academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Goal 1

The Sussex School for Progressive Futures will catalyse and co-ordinate a distinctive programme of research-led interdisciplinary education, with a focus on experiential and practice-based learning, in relation to our Sussex 2035 transformational themes of environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.

Goal 2

The Sussex School for Progressive Futures will nurture and support an 'at scale' co-created programme to develop local and global citizenship and service around the Sussex 2035 transformational themes of environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.

Goal 3

The Sussex School for Progressive Futures will catalyse and provide a home for 'whole university' interdisciplinary research activities addressing the Sussex 2035 transformational themes of environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.

Through The Sussex School for Progressive Futures:

- We will become a global beacon of interdisciplinary excellence in tackling the most pressing issues of our time.
- We will attract and mobilise Sussex staff and students to work together on developing knowledge, understanding, and transformational action in relation to environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.
- We will welcome visiting fellows, international junior research associates, professors-of-practice, and artists in-residence to collaborate in creating progressive futures at and beyond Sussex.

- We will provide a compelling interdisciplinary research-led educational programme of minor pathways, electives and core modules in environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures, which embed experiential and practice-based learning and skills development.
- We will develop and deliver an 'at scale' co-created programme of community service, both credit-bearing and extra-curricular, to support the mutual flourishing of local communities and students around the themes of environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures (for example, inspired by Sussex Writes and the Sussex Law Clinics, supporting elderly people with digital skills, working alongside school children and local communities to develop Forest Food Gardens around the region etc).
- We will develop a student co-created extra-curricular programme of campus and regionally based activities in relation to environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures, including, for example, *gardening, growing food and cooking, crafts, making and mending, music making, reading groups, programming, web design, digital media content creation, and related entrepreneurship.*



- We will provide a home for 'whole university' interdisciplinary research activities/ programmes/ centres addressing the Sussex 2035 transformational themes.
- We will publish an annual report on *Sussex Research for Progressive Futures*, setting out the latest Sussex research findings and policy proposals from our transformational themes, launching each year with an open event for students and the interested public, and an invited policy-seminar for global and local leaders.
- We will develop and evaluate our ambitious institutional practice in relation to environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.
- We will engage global and civic partners and audiences of all ages in our work on progressive futures through an open programme of lectures, cultural and dialogue events (in person and online), and through an international summer school programme.
- We will develop a business-facing offer of consultancy and services (provided by both staff and students) in relation to environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures.
- We will develop a vibrant, engaged global alumni community of Sussex future-makers.

Example areas of focus for The Sussex School for Progressive Futures

Environmental sustainability

- climate crisis
- biodiversity
- energy
- pollution
- food and water
- circular economies
- just transitions
- ecological resilience and renewal

Human flourishing

- new approaches to physical and mental health and well-being
- aging societies
- diversity, social justice and inclusion
- the arts, culture and heritage
- values and ethics
- war, peace, conflict
- community, belonging and participation
- meaning, purpose and 'the good life'

Digital and data futures

- new forms of data
- data science, and computational methods
- AI and machine learning
- quantum computing
- digital humanities and creativity
- virtual reality
- ethics, applications and policy



5.6: Enabling Sussex to thrive

For Sussex itself to thrive as an institution, we will develop a sector-leading programme of strategic action on environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures to transform our campus and community operations. We will draw upon our research expertise in developing and evaluating our interventions.

Through this:

- We will achieve the highest levels of environmental sustainability in our operations and on our campus.
- We will provide all members of the University with opportunities and support to flourish, and to contribute to the flourishing of the communities of which we are part.
- We will provide innovative and advanced digital tools, resources and infrastructure for education, research, and operations, robust management data and analytics tools to enable evidence-based decision-making, and training programmes to empower their users.

We will also enable Sussex to thrive through strategic actions to drive improvement and excellence, agility, and resilience, in relation to **people and culture, financial sustainability, and infrastructure.**





5.7: Creating progressive futures through Sussex's people and culture

We will create progressive futures through our work to support Sussex's people and culture. Through this we will make Sussex an employer-of-choice for ambitious, creative, and forward-thinking people, in which diversity of background, identity, belief and thought is embraced and enhanced.

Goal 1

We will enable every member of our diverse community to flourish in their working lives by providing an equitable and inclusive environment, in which everyone can be themselves, and where they are supported to develop their skills and capacities to do their best work and realise their ambitions. We will focus on addressing entrenched inequalities and processes of marginalisation.

Goal 2

We will provide excellent support to all staff through digitally enabled HR services and programmes of action to ensure that staff are well led, fairly managed, and fully engaged in shaping the development of the University.

Goal 3

We will nurture high-performance by individuals and teams, empowering staff to innovate and strive for improvement and excellence in their own work and the work of colleagues.

5.8: Creating progressive futures through Sussex's financial sustainability

We will ensure financial sustainability and resilience for Sussex.

Goal 1

We will deliver a reliable operating margin for strategic investment in order to invest in our academic and institutional ambitions.

Goal 2

We will ensure sustainable, planned income growth from education, research and innovation.

Goal 3

We will focus on delivering financial efficiency, alongside improvement and excellence, and adaptability and resilience, in our institutional operations and ways of working.



5.9: Creating progressive futures through Sussex’s infrastructure

We will centre the development of our digital and physical infrastructure around our transformational themes of environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures, always seeking improvement and excellence, adaptability and resilience, efficiency, and financial sustainability, and preserving and making the most of our beautiful historic campus and our location on the South Downs and in The Living Coast UNESCO biosphere region.



Goal 1

We will make Sussex an environmentally sustainable, biodiverse, net zero, transition university.

Goal 2

We will design the transformation and maintenance of our physical and digital infrastructure and services to meet the diverse, changing, and specialist needs of our whole community, developing state-of-the-art scientific facilities, and driving inclusion and accessibility for all.

Goal 3

We will ensure that our operations, governance, and decision-making are informed by insight based on reliable, up-to-date data.

Goal 4

We will innovate in the creative use of indoor and outdoor space, and in employing new digital technologies and data to enable our people and work to flourish, and to produce an inspirational, fit-for-purpose, climate resilient, safe, and secure physical and digital campus.



5.10: Creating progressive futures through three transformational themes

Over the coming decade Sussex will make a distinctive, inventive, and positive contribution to progressive futures for the University and the whole world through our three transformational themes of *environmental sustainability*, *human flourishing*, and *digital and data futures*. These transformational themes will be realised through our research and innovation, our educational and student-life provision, our global and civic engagement, and through our institutional life and actions.

Environmental sustainability

- Goal 1

We will conduct world-leading research and innovation that contribute to environmental sustainability.
- Goal 2

We will enable Sussex students to understand and engage with the challenges of environmental sustainability.
- Goal 3

We will develop Sussex's operations, infrastructure, and people, to meet the challenges of environmental sustainability, to minimise our carbon footprint, and to achieve net zero for scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2035 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Human flourishing

- Goal 1

We will conduct world-leading research and innovation that contribute to human flourishing.
- Goal 2

We will enable Sussex students to understand and engage with the challenges of human flourishing.
- Goal 3

We will develop Sussex's operations, infrastructure, and people to enable the flourishing of the university community, the city, region and the whole world.

Digital and data futures

- Goal 1

We will conduct world-leading research and innovation in digital technologies and making rigorous and creative use of data.
- Goal 2

We will enable Sussex students to understand and engage with the challenges of digital and data futures.
- Goal 3

We will develop Sussex's operations, infrastructure, and people to make best use of current and future digital technologies and data.



