



Universities UK

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-23

WORLD-LEADING IMPACT



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# UNIVERSITIES UK

**Universities UK is the collective voice of 136 universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.**

Our member universities' core purpose is to maximise their positive impact for students and the public, both in the UK and globally through teaching, research and scholarship.

Universities UK is led by its members and acts on behalf of universities, represented by their heads of institution.

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## OUR MISSION

**Our mission is to create the conditions for UK universities to be the best in the world; maximising their positive impact locally, nationally and globally.**



## OUR PURPOSE

**Universities UK leads collaboration among universities to ensure UK universities can maximise their positive impact.**

- › The success of UK higher education is built on a history of voluntary collaboration among diverse autonomous universities to shape policy, take collective responsibility for adhering to shared standards of governance, further the free exchange of ideas and demonstrate public leadership in tackling shared social challenges.
- › Through evidencing public benefit and by taking collective responsibility, universities can maintain and further build the trust of policymakers and the public.
- › We shape national and international policy, build public understanding of the quality and impact of UK universities, offer support and guidance for our members and advocate for the UK higher education sector in the UK and overseas.
- › We adopt a UK-wide approach, taking account of the diversity of policies and priorities in devolved nations. We work with partners within and outside higher education to amplify our impact and enhance our influence and reach.

## OUR PRINCIPLES

**As the collective voice of universities in the UK, we share the following principles with our members:**

- › A commitment to maximising the social and economic value of universities for the benefit of students, communities, business and civil society through research, teaching, knowledge transfer, the pursuit of truth and the free exchange of ideas.
- › A global outlook, supporting international exchange and collaboration for the benefit of the UK and our international partner countries.
- › A commitment to enhancing social cohesion and quality of life, and to tackling inequality through expanding access to educational opportunity.
- › The freedom to make decisions and adopt strategies in partnership with and according to the needs of their students and communities.
- › A belief that the diversity of universities' missions is a strength that allows UK higher education to achieve a breadth and depth of impact.

## OUR GOALS

Together with our members we aim to create a future in which:

- › Anyone with the will and potential to succeed, regardless of their background, has the **opportunity** to transform their lives through accessing an outstanding learning experience at a UK university.
- › UK universities are demonstrably world-leading in the production and application of knowledge and skills through research, teaching and innovation, evidencing significant economic, social, cultural and civic **impact** and contributing materially to national wellbeing.
- › Through demonstrating positive impact on students' lives, economic growth, public services and civil society, UK universities benefit from widespread public **trust** and political support.
- › UK universities are **global** leaders in international education and research, educating a significant proportion of globally mobile students, demonstrating high impact international research collaboration, and achieving increases in outwardly mobile students and students registered on UK programmes overseas.
- › UK universities are free to make **autonomous** decisions and adopt strategies according to their diverse missions and the needs of their students and communities, while taking collective responsibility for the quality of leadership and governance in higher education and benefiting from stable and sustainable funding that enables them to maximise their positive impact.

## PRIORITIES FOR 2018–23

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The external environment for UK universities over the next five years will present a range of challenges as well as opportunities. Global political instability, including the UK's departure from the EU, national and regional devolution within the UK, a changing regulatory and funding environment, and increased pressures on universities to consistently and meaningfully provide evidence of value and impact, will require a thoughtful and strategic response from UK universities.



# 1

## OPPORTUNITY



### Universities UK will:

- › Influence the regulatory and funding environment to create optimal conditions for UK universities to adopt strategic and high-impact approaches to improving social mobility.
- › Enhance the availability and use of evidence to support universities to narrow demographic gaps in student access, participation, retention and success.
- › Identify and advocate effective interventions for students, universities and employers that encourage the development and take-up of flexible learning opportunities.
- › Shape a policy environment that is favourable to universities and students, creatively enhancing their learning and teaching environment and student experience.
- › Enhance evidence and practice to foster sector-wide improvements in addressing major challenges including mental health, gender-based violence and hate crime.

### INDICATORS

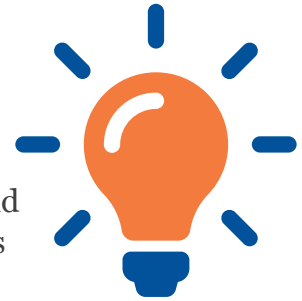
- Acceleration in narrowing of demographic gaps in access, retention and outcomes.
- Reversal of decline in part-time study and increase in other forms of flexible learning.
- Improving student sentiment on learning engagement and learning community.
- Improving student sentiment on strength of relationship with their university.



## 2

## IMPACT

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### Universities UK will:

- ▶ Foster the conditions for universities to engage in and shape the knowledge exchange, enterprise, and skills infrastructure at regional and city level.
- ▶ Improve the evidence base and strategic rationale for universities' cultural, community and civic impact, demonstrating the positive impact of universities on community cohesion, democratic engagement and quality of life.
- ▶ Influence the funding and regulatory environment to support the achievement of the government's target of research and development growth to 2.4% of GDP.
- ▶ Enhance evidence and practice to support excellent and diverse research environments and cultures in UK universities.

### INDICATORS

- Increasing the economic impact of universities.
- Enhancements to the range and impact of university relationships with local and regional partners and bodies with responsibility for skills, innovation and enterprise.
- Evidence of positive sentiment from local communities towards the range of impacts of higher education on their area.
- Improved performance of the UK research base relative to its international competitors.

# 3

## TRUST

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### Universities UK will:

- ▶ Effectively deploy evidence of universities' economic, social, and civic impact to shape policy and to further build levels of public trust.
- ▶ Develop influential champions in the government, media and in civil society.
- ▶ Mobilise universities to campaign powerfully together on major issues and demonstrate collective responsibility.
- ▶ Work with universities and other higher education organisations to enhance evidence and practice to support flourishing academic and professional communities.

### INDICATORS

- Evidence of university impact widely referenced in policymaking and media.
- Improving positive sentiment toward universities among key segments of the public.
- Positive mentions of UK universities more visible in the media.
- Evidence of the government's political support and trust through positive policy change.

## 4

## GLOBAL UNIVERSITIES



### Universities UK will:

- Seek to double UK student international mobility.
- Influence policy to create the conditions for UK universities to attract a growing market share of international students studying UK qualifications in the UK or overseas.
- Foster rich networks of global strategic education partnerships.
- Shape the best possible conditions for growth in the range and value of international research collaboration.

### INDICATORS

- Growth in the rate of UK student outward mobility.
- Growth in the UK's market share of international students and students registered on transnational education programmes with a UK university.
- Growth and diversification in international research income.
- Evidence of UK performance in achieving global research impact and contributing to the global public good.

# 5

## AUTONOMY



### Universities UK will:

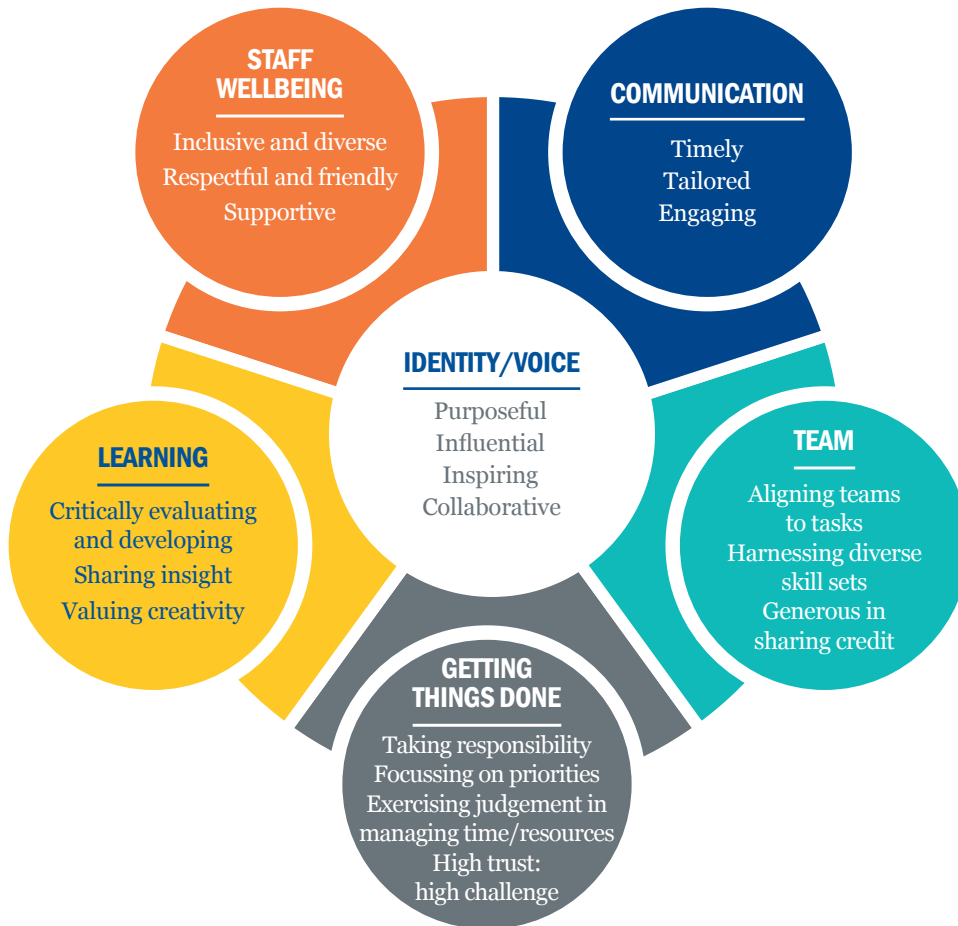
- › Influence the policy environment to ensure universities can access sufficient resource to sustain high-quality teaching, research and knowledge exchange.
- › Continue to advocate a co-regulatory approach, demonstrating leadership in areas where the sector has collective responsibility to act in the interests of students and the public.
- › Influence the priorities of sector agencies to address the most vital issues for the development and effectiveness of universities.
- › Support universities to evidence outstanding leadership and governance, including providing tailored peer-to-peer support for university leaders.
- › Facilitate the promotion of good practice across the sector to ensure universities learn from each other's strategic approaches to shared challenges.

### INDICATORS

- UK sustains autonomy measures in the European Universities Association autonomy scorecard.
- Unit of resource for teaching is sustained, alongside progress towards a full economic costing for research.
- Evidence of universities' positive engagement with sector agencies.
- Instance and scale of regulatory intervention at sector-level, demonstrating confidence in universities' collective accountability.

# OUR ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITIES

Universities UK has significant organisational strengths to build on, including a talented workforce, strong support and commitment from members, and a well-developed network of influencing and partnership relationships within and outside the higher education sector.



However, to achieve our ambitious goals and increase our value to our members we will need to enhance our capabilities. We need to ensure that we are making the most of our members, our people, our external profile, our resources and our work.

Our new organisational values and behaviours will define a working culture in which everyone who works for Universities UK is challenged and supported to achieve to the best of their capabilities.

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

- › We will seek to close the gap between current and desired member engagement, ensuring that we engage across the diversity of our membership. We will focus on issues that will draw members together in common purpose.
- › Our member engagement will increasingly be shaped by member demand for engagement on activity and issues, rather than structures. It will be informed by national and regional diversity, place-based issues, more effective member intelligence and regular interaction with the full range of our members across all four nations. Current member engagement structures will be reviewed for efficacy.
- › We will facilitate knowledge sharing, development and support between our members and foster a shared sense of purpose and connectedness among university leaders across the UK.
- › We will welcome new members where they meet our published criteria for membership, but will not seek to radically expand our membership during the next five years.
- › We will regularly monitor and measure the engagement of our members and their desired engagement, drawing on their feedback to enhance our engagement activities.



### KEY INDICATORS:

- Member engagement in shaping Universities UK policy positions through surveys, networks and working groups.
- Alignment between current and desired member engagement.
- Member perception of value for money.
- Member participation and engagement in Universities UK events, activities, elections.
- Diversity of our membership reflected through our most highly engaged members.
- Member retention.

## OUR PEOPLE

- › We will review our offer as an employer to ensure we continue to attract, develop, support and retain talented staff, with a focus on reward and recognition, wellbeing, development, flexible working, diversity and inclusion, employee engagement and providing an appropriate workspace and technology to support their work.
- › Developing the way we work means we will need to invest in skills development at the individual, team and organisation level so that staff are supported to achieve and are empowered to make good decisions about what they work on and how they work.
- › We will support staff to make an impact through effective management of staff capacity, workload and objectives.

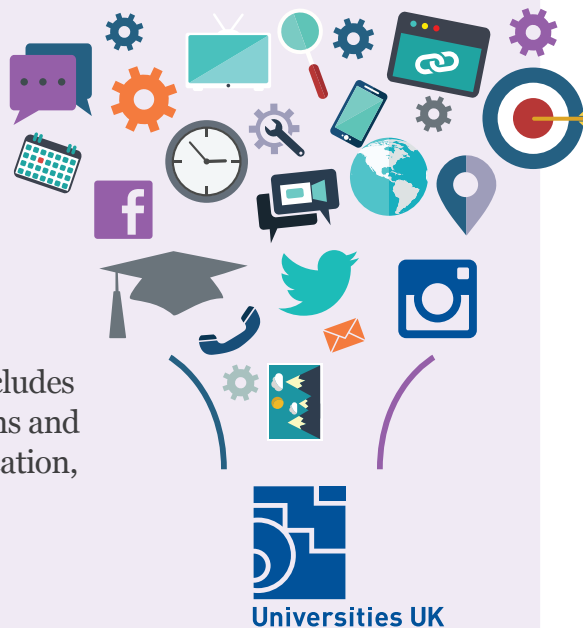


### KEY INDICATORS:

- Staff survey responses on learning, wellbeing, reward, recognition and engagement.
- Staff turnover.
- Absence rate.
- Diversity of staff.

## EXTERNAL PROFILE

- › We will be proactive and robust in championing universities, seeking opportunities to lead and shape the public debate.
- › To ensure we sustain our relevance we will develop our organisational tone and personality, making more creative use of people and stories, and data and evidence across a range of media to engage those who work in and around universities, students, partner organisations and the public.
- › We will seek to improve our relationships outside the immediate higher education sector, developing impactful partnerships with organisations that represent the beneficiaries of higher education or that have an interest in the issues universities are engaged with. This includes businesses, public service organisations and the third sector that benefit from education, research and knowledge.



### KEY INDICATORS:

- Influencer survey of key individuals in the government, media and partner organisations.
- Government, parliamentary and stakeholder engagement.
- Impact of media, social media, events and campaign activities.



## RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE

- › We will support our members involved in our governance to effectively lead the organisation with clear financial oversight, identification and proportionate management of risk and clear information on which they can base decisions.
- › We will review our governance structures, seeking to modernise our approach to ensure they have the trust and confidence of the membership and are aligned with current best practice for charities.
- › We will target our resource towards the areas of highest impact. We will maximise the contribution from our revenue-generating activities in a sustainable way.



### KEY INDICATORS:

- Compliance with relevant Charity Commission and Companies House requirements.
- Trust and confidence of the membership in representative and governance structures and diversity of participation.
- Financial performance in terms of maintaining appropriate reserves, balancing annual budgets and achieving demonstrable impact from strategic investments.

## HOW WE WORK

- › We will adopt a campaigning approach underpinned by a theory of change in our programmes of work. Our campaign models will be supported by robust evidence which will form the basis of powerful and accessible messaging to challenge attitudes, influence decisions and win arguments.
- › We will clearly articulate the desired change or impact in all our activity and monitor progress against defined objectives. We will invest in evaluating our impact, to learn lessons for future campaign planning and develop our organisational effectiveness.
- › We will prioritise activities and allocate resources effectively and efficiently through an annual operational planning process. There will be flexibility in the operational plan to respond effectively to changing contexts and emerging external opportunities and challenges. We will facilitate stronger collaborative working across internal groups, our partner organisations in the devolved nations and with strategic partners.
- › Where our work is not having the desired impact or is not in alignment with our defined priorities we will adopt an exit or change strategy to enable staff to focus on priority areas of work.

### KEY INDICATORS:

- Achievement of campaign outcomes against objectives.
- Feedback on impact of work from Board and members.
- Staff survey responses on organisational leadership and sense of priorities.
- Percentage of resources allocated to priority issues.





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