University of Bath Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011/12-2013/14

Strategic Vision

Informed by the student body, we will provide a distinctive international learning environment which recognises the prominence of our research, is intellectually challenging and strongly applied, focusing on the employability of our students.

Strategic Aims

- To promote critical intellectual enquiry and independent, academically rigorous learning in a supportive educational environment.
- To sustain and advance the strong national and international reputation of the University for the quality of our teaching.
- To provide our students with direct experience of leading edge research in their discipline or field, and to develop their research and technical skills.
- To promote the application of knowledge and skills such that our students are capable of making significant contributions as employees and citizens.
- To provide our students with opportunities to learn through placements and projects in a wide variety of different settings in the UK and internationally.
- To promote inclusive and flexible learning provision in order to respond to student diversity and, at postgraduate level, to the needs of practising professionals.
- To broaden the profile of student intake across our provision, and challenge and support our students in helping them achieve their full potential.
- To develop teaching strategies that recognise the benefits of a diverse student body to enhance the learning experience.
- To work with our students in building and developing our learning environment to make it as stimulating, relevant and satisfying as possible.
- To enable our graduates to make meaningful contributions in a global intellectual and economic environment.
- To support and reward excellence in teaching in order to build the reputation of the University and its staff.
- To work with national and international partners to enable a wide range of learners to benefit from a University of Bath education.
- To develop a portfolio of continuing professional education supported by research to meet the needs of employers and individuals.

Operational Plan

The operational plan is in two parts. The first part specifies some indicators of performance that should be regularly monitored by the relevant University Committee, normally the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. The second part establishes a set of strategic priorities which should guide annual planning for the relevant professional support services and academic departments.

University Council has established a set of Key Performance Indicators for Learning and Teaching:

- Average tariff scores of undergraduate entrants
- Continuation rates of undergraduate students
- National Student Survey

The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee needs to have a more extensive list of indicators to monitor the performance of the plan:
Students

- Undergraduate and postgraduate application and conversion rates.
- Student profile data (e.g. socio-economic class, ethnicity, etc.).
- Numbers of students considered and accepted as a result of further contextual data.
- Student complaints and academic appeals.
- External prizes for students.
- Enrolments and Awards through the Bath Award Scheme.
- Numbers and proportions of students on placements.
- Student employability data.
- Number of scholarships offered to Bath students.

Staff

- Number of staff considered for University teaching awards.
- Number of departments offering teaching awards.
- Number of staff achieving external recognition of teaching excellence e.g. Professional Body awards, national Teaching Fellowships, HE Academy Fellowships (HESA data).
- Number of staff engaged with learning and teaching development events.

Organisation

- Quality and timeliness of Degree Scheme Reviews.
- Rate of major curriculum changes and developments.
- Number and quality of international partnerships.
- Extent of take up of English and Mathematics support.
- Student support statistics.
- Development and uptake of e-learning.

Strategic Priorities

General:
Encourage students to engage fully with the outstanding student experience on offer at Bath:
- Studying within an active, ambitious and diverse community;
- Enjoying the benefits of an outstanding intellectual environment;
- Benefiting from working with a diverse staff and student body;
- Leading to excellent, graduate destination opportunities.

Learning and Teaching Enhancement

- Maintain engagement between staff and students in relation to learning and teaching, and promote a culture of enhancement throughout the institution.
- Improve and develop staff teaching and assessment practices.
- Seek to establish professional accreditation routes for staff and students who teach, against the National Professional Standards for Teaching in Higher Education.
- Revise Quality-related policy and practice in light of external requirements and internal needs (UK Code of Practice, Information Provision for students).
Curriculum Development

- Continue regular review of the Bath curriculum portfolio, taking into account our reputation, learner profiles, student markets, employer needs and resource opportunities and constraints within the context of a changing student intake, growing student numbers and a more competitive higher education sector.
- Encourage flexible provision and modes of delivery where appropriate.
- Broaden our portfolio-of collaborative programmes particularly in the international context.

E-Learning

- Upgrade the University’s virtual learning environment (Moodle) and continue to encourage its most effective use by both staff and students.
- Explore means to enhance the digital environment within the organisation, specifically with regards to student-facing infrastructure, in collaboration with Web Services and Bath University Computing Services.
- Continue to develop additional e-learning tools that meet both staff and student needs, building upon new technological and pedagogical opportunities.
- Seek innovative ways to use e-learning in the support of assessment and feedback.
- Utilise Moodle to broaden pre-entry and on-course learning opportunities for a diverse range of students.

Learning Spaces

- Increase the available teaching stock to allow more flexible time-tabling.
- Develop new teaching spaces in line with changing student and staff expectations.
- Monitor and adapt learning spaces to changing learning needs.

Assessment and Feedback

- Promote a greater variety of assessment modes, including E-assessment.
- Promote more effective feedback to students through formative assessment and a broad range of feedback mechanisms.
- Increase guidance and information on assessment, assessment criteria, and feedback at programme and unit level.
- Reinforce the alignment of assessment and feedback practices with learning outcomes, particularly in the development of innovative teaching and learning practices.

Placements and Employability

- Maintain Bath’s position as a premier University for placement provision in the UK.
- Review and enhance the delivery and support for placements across the University.
- Reinforce the learning context of placement provision.
- Review and enhance the range of opportunities available to students for employability skills development.
- Develop a clear framework for the provision of employability skills development activities across the institution.

Internationalisation
• Promote appropriate and sustainable partnership and exchange agreements with overseas universities for both staff and students, especially in the context of postgraduate research opportunities.
• Seek to increase the proportion of overseas students in the University in selected areas.
• Improve the induction and support arrangements for overseas students.
• Continue to seek ways to promote cultural and educational interaction between students.

First year experience

• Place more emphasis on inducting students into our learning community by preparing students more effectively for the transition from their previous educational environment and by extending the induction period.
• Recognise that international students, and those from currently under-represented groups, require particular support with academic and social transition.
• Promote the use of a student buddy system throughout all departments.

Peer Learning and Peer Mentoring

• Recognise the high quality of our students and capitalise on opportunities for peer learning.
• Encourage the development of communities of practice in discipline areas.
• Expand the number of peer mentoring schemes to include all departments.
• Provide consistent training and reward for peer mentoring.

Student Information

• Achieve full implementation of the requirements on Key Information Sets and Wider Information Sets for Students (public information).
• Increase Bath specific and pre-induction related information for students before their arrival in the first year.
• Continue to support effective, direct and participative communication between staff and students at programme and departmental level.
• Increase and co-ordinate easily accessible and integrated digital presentation of information for students whilst studying at Bath.
• Investigate a variety of alternative channels of delivering information to students.

Student Support

• Financial support is targeted at students most in need.
• Attract more scholarship support for our students in line with strategic aims.
• Enhance the provision of support for employability and skills development by aligning skills support more visibly to student needs.
• Enhance support for particular groups of students through the appointment of student experience officers.

Student Recruitment and Admissions

• Support all applicants effectively with targeted information, advice and guidance.
• Focus on applicant conversion through the co-ordinated efforts of the central admissions team and Faculty/Graduate School teams.
• Enable admissions decisions to be taken on up-to-date and detailed information about the candidate’s qualifications, including contextual data.
• Effectively brief the wider academic community on key UK and international qualifications frameworks.
• Effectively relate admissions strategies to the University’s widening participation and equality and diversity policies.

Widening Participation

• Develop close partnerships with schools and colleges to raise aspirations and attainment of learners with academic potential to enable successful progression and transition to Bath including: tailored IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance); tutoring and mentoring; summer schools; subject enhancement tasters and extended projects.
• Relate outreach and transition activities to the needs of a diverse range of prospective students including: those without a cultural tradition of higher education; those with vocational qualifications; those studying at schools and colleges with a limited curriculum offer; adult learners returning to study.
• Undertake research and development work aimed at better understanding the barriers to progression to Bath for those who currently apply, but are either unsuccessful or choose not to join the University.
• Develop the personal and professional skills of Bath students through their involvement as trained and committed student ambassadors and mentors.

Staff Recognition and Reward

• Seek to have one person in each Department who has specific responsibility for departmental-level teaching.
• Encourage the development of Departmental prizes/recognition for teaching.
• Encourage staff seeking external recognition of teaching excellence, for example through National Teaching Fellowship awards, HE Academy awards, Professional Body awards.
• Review policy and guidance on career progression and promotion for roles related to teaching.

Student Learning Experience

• Maintain the highly successful reciprocal nature of the relationship between staff and students, and between the institution and the Students’ Union.
• Work with the Students’ Union to engage students in all aspects of the life of the University.
• Explore further ways of offering students an international experience, socially and culturally as well as intellectually.
• Grow the Bath Award to recognise formally the achievements of our students outside of the academic curriculum.
• Encourage the development of more engagement with the arts through the provision of improved support and facilities.