



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

---

# Making a Global Impact

Draft vision and  
strategy 2020-30



---

## Executive Summary

- This document presents a draft vision and strategy for the University of Leeds and includes some information on the process used in its development. It will be used as background for an extensive consultation planned with staff, students and other important stakeholders as we refine our thinking and develop a full strategic plan for 2020-25.
- Our current strategy, Investing in Knowledge and Opportunity, has laid a strong foundation for the future and the significant investments agreed in recent years will provide an important bridge into the 2020s.
- Our draft vision and strategy has been developed by drawing on our values, current strengths, and the progress we are making in our core purpose of delivering high-quality student education, research and innovation, and building a strong international character and outlook. It also takes on board the findings of a thorough analysis of the environment facing higher education characterised by significant complexity, rapid change in policy and practice and the importance of international competitiveness.
- The document recognises the importance of strategy as a continuum that positions us for further success in challenge-led, interdisciplinary research, advanced pedagogy and high quality student education, increasing our international presence and beginning the process of digitising the University.
- Our new strategy focuses on three broad areas that are inextricably linked: strategic foundations; core activities (student education, research and innovation, and international activity); and enabling strategies (aligning the resources of the University to best deliver the core academic activities).
- Our strategic foundations are guiding principles (rather than strategic choices) that speak to the ethos and character of the University:
  - **Holding fast to our values as we evolve our culture and achieve success through continuous improvement.**
  - **Ensuring that all staff have a common understanding of the institution's purpose and the importance of their role in it.**
  - **Committing to equality and inclusion.**
  - **Widening participation by recruiting and retaining students from diverse backgrounds by providing affordable access for all who can benefit.**
  - **Delivering on our principles of sustainability and targets for tackling the climate crisis.**
  - **Supporting and promoting good physical and mental health across the University community.**
  - **Embracing strategy-led ambition whilst ensuring all of our activities are academically, environmentally and financially sustainable.**
- Our core academic activities will focus on maintaining and improving our position in the top 10 UK universities and top 100 global universities by:
  - **Delivering an integrated, student-centred, research-led and inter-disciplinary education with students engaged as partners, supported by leading digital technology.**
  - **Building on our disciplinary strength to further improve our reputation for world-class, challenge-led research whilst being at the forefront of collaborative working across disciplines, institutions, sectors and continents.**
  - **Delivering world-class education and research with a truly international outlook that is effectively connected to our global alumni.**
- Our enabling strategies will align the resources of the University to deliver our core academic activities and increase the effectiveness of our professional and support services:
  - **Evolving our structures, processes and partnerships to promote interdisciplinary working, active student-centred learning and a clear international outlook, and to speed-up decision-making in a way that makes us more agile in identifying and adopting good practice and opportunities for improvement.**
  - **Working in partnership with all staff to prepare for the changes in the nature of work in higher education and the wider economy.**
  - **Using our University assets to identify new sources of income that can enhance the academic core or improve operational effectiveness.**
  - **Strengthening our engagement with the city of Leeds and the Yorkshire region for mutual benefit in ways that serve the public good and enhance the reputation of the University and its partners nationally and internationally.**
- Our draft strategy will inform the development of a strategic plan that will articulate a clear set of priorities for 2020-25. This plan will also take full account of decisions on the future size and shape of the University as it aligns with our national and international ambitions. An evolving strategic investment profile will enable recruitment and development of staff, digitisation and capital developments providing new and refurbished academic facilities, with a roughly even distribution of resources in these three areas.



---

## Table of contents

A vision and strategy for the University of Leeds 2020-2030 – Making a Global Impact	4
Developing the vision and strategy for the University of Leeds	5
Starting from strong foundations	5
Dealing with new challenges and opportunities	6
Strategy as a continuum	7
Linking current and future strategy	9
Strategic foundations	10
The Core Strategy	12
The Enabling Strategy	15
Next steps	17

---

## A vision and strategy for the University of Leeds 2020-2030 – Making a Global Impact

Development of our new strategy for the 2020-2030 period has been informed by a careful analysis of the evolving national and international environment for higher education and our current strengths and ambition as a University. This process, and the themes emerging from it, have been framed against our agreed purpose as a Russell Group University with strong civic roots (Box 1 – Our purpose), and our values (Box 2 – Our values) that provide guiding principles as we develop our vision for the next five to ten years.

Our current strategy, “Investing in Knowledge and Opportunity” has involved substantial investments in capital projects to advance high-quality teaching and pedagogy, interdisciplinary research, strengthening our international profile and activity, and beginning the process of digitising the University. We have aligned this activity with large-scale investments in our people to enhance our commitment to academic excellence, and in the development of major enabling technology platforms. This investment in knowledge and opportunity has laid a firm foundation for our new vision - Making a Global Impact (Box 3 – Our vision).

Achieving this vision, will require us to intensify our focus on our core academic activities and, in doing so, align the resources of the University in the best way possible. We will:

- Advance our reputation for leadership in pedagogy and its application to provide a world-class education that is underpinned by digital technology.
- Use the breadth of expertise at Leeds to power interdisciplinary, challenge-led research addressing global questions. In doing so, we will enhance our position in national and international league tables as a research-intensive University.
- Become globally-recognised as an institution with an international outlook and character through the activities of staff, students and alumni, the student opportunities we offer and our research collaborations.
- Apply our University values to engage with our community, city and region for mutual benefit, to increase opportunity for under-represented groups and, in doing so, demonstrate a leadership position on sustainability.
- Engage all staff in this vision so that everyone understands the purpose of the University and their role in it. We will move from a shared sense of place to an enhanced sense of purpose which fosters cross-institution working. This will require us to evolve our culture to effective partnership working within our University and with external partners.
- Support the development of staff to help them achieve their career aspirations and contribute to the success of the institution.

In this way, even in the rapidly evolving environment for higher education, we will make a positive global impact.

### Box 1 – Our purpose

Our purpose is to provide an intellectually stimulating environment open to the brightest minds, regardless of nationality or background and which benefits the economy, society, the environment and culture locally, nationally and internationally. We promote world-leading research to address global challenges that enriches our high quality student education, preparing graduates as critical thinkers and problem solvers who will make a positive difference to the world. We champion innovation by collaborating with industry, public services, NGOs and governments in the UK and internationally to drive responsible economic growth, employment and productivity.

### Box 2 – Our values

We are committed to academic excellence that is achieved through integrity, inclusiveness, professionalism and community. We seek to maintain the highest standards of equality and inclusion and care about the physical and mental well-being of students and staff. As our strategy evolves, we will become increasingly inclusive, interpreting our values sensitively for students and staff from all backgrounds and different nations, respecting different cultural norms and aspirations whilst drawing on their insight and expertise to enrich our University community.

### Box 3 – Our vision

We aspire to be a world-leading University which has strong local roots and is truly international in character and outlook; our success as a University comes from inspiring students and staff to be the best they can be through excellence in education and research, which is pedagogically and scientifically robust, culturally and socially inclusive, and globally connected.

---

## Developing the vision and strategy for the University of Leeds

The development of the University of Leeds strategy for 2020-2030 began in late summer 2018 with a careful analysis of the environment for higher education<sup>5</sup>. This research, aligned with our current strengths and ambitions, led to a number of strategic themes that have been developed and enhanced in consultation with students and staff.

Strategy development and implementation is a continuum; the outline strategy should therefore be viewed in the context of the success of the current strategy period which will flow naturally into the 2020s.

## Starting from strong foundations

In the period 2015-2020 the University has made great progress in each of its core activities. We achieved a gold ranking in the first Teaching Excellence Framework, national measures of student satisfaction consistently place us at the forefront of peers in the Russell Group, and our staff have been awarded 25 National Teaching Fellowships, the highest of any university in the country. We launched the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence in 2016 to deliver on our institutional commitment to continuous improvement in education, and this remains a focal point for our research-led approach to education. Planned investments in the Business School will set the template for new approaches to pedagogy and will maintain the University's reputation for innovative, high-quality student education.

We have also grown our research income year-on-year in real terms, with particular successes in interdisciplinary, challenge-led research funding aimed at tackling global issues such as climate change and health and supporting the UK industrial strategy. Our enhanced research performance has been recognised through our membership of prestigious national research institutes such as Henry Royce<sup>6</sup>, Rosalind Franklin<sup>7</sup> and Alan Turing<sup>8</sup>. Substantial investments are being made by the University in Advanced Materials Science, Smart Agriculture, Discovery Medicine, Climate Change research, Data Sciences and High Speed Rail, ensuring that we are well positioned over the next ten years. We have also made a major investment in the Nexus initiative that will be vital in how we work with business and entrepreneurs, and will also support the UK industrial strategy. Finally, we are becoming a much more international University, both in the staff and student body, and in our research activities. We are ranked in the top 100 universities in the world, we have a successful undergraduate programme with South West Jiaotong University in China and we are increasingly international in our research collaborations and relationships which greatly improves research citations and impact.

---

<sup>5</sup> [www.leeds.ac.uk/highereducationtrends](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/highereducationtrends)

<sup>6</sup> [www.royce.ac.uk](http://www.royce.ac.uk)

<sup>7</sup> [www.rfi.ac.uk](http://www.rfi.ac.uk)

<sup>8</sup> [www.turing.ac.uk](http://www.turing.ac.uk)

## Dealing with new challenges and opportunities

The research carried out to develop our thought pieces, highlighted an environment for higher education that is characterised by greater uncertainty, complexity, and challenge than previously seen (Figure 1). These multiple challenges are compounding in their effects and are more likely to occur than not.

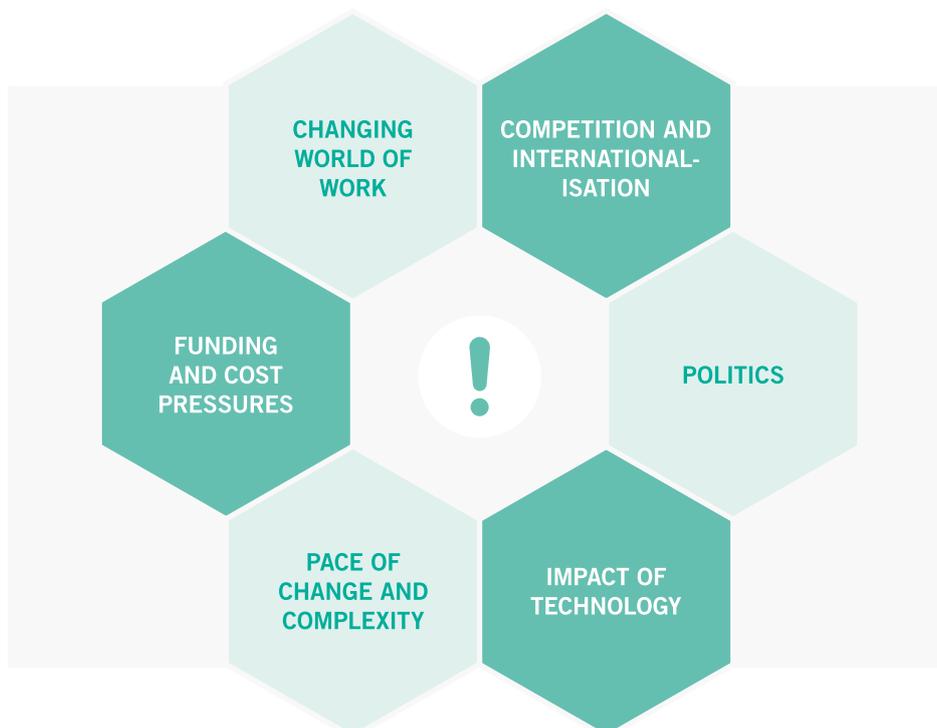
The higher education sector in England faces uncertainty over the next few years from availability of government funding, increases in pension contributions and possible adverse economic impacts of Brexit. In the Russell Group of universities, high-quality research does not recover its full cost, meaning that our ambition to grow research creates challenges for sustainability at a time when the UK's access to EU research funding will be in question.

The last two years have also seen rapid change in the regulatory environment for universities with the creation of the Office for Students as the national regulator for the sector. Government funding for research is managed by the recently-formed UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), with a trend towards larger grants focused on challenge-led research that are concentrated in fewer institutions and are more clearly linked to government policy on improving economic output.

Universities are also responding to changes in demographics, societal attitudes and the impact of automation that will dramatically impact the nature of the world of work. These changes are being reflected in the structure and expectations of university staff, and how and where work is done.

As the higher education sector takes on more of the characteristics of a market, there is increased competition for the best staff and students. Universities in the UK have increased their student numbers generally, particularly international students enrolled on full-time courses. This positive trend could be impacted by changes to immigration rules and geo-political changes that may deter prospective students and staff at a time when international collaboration is required to tackle some of the major global challenges.

As in every other aspect of life, technology is having a major impact on the way that universities operate. New opportunities in student education and research and innovation will be underpinned by technology, often in collaboration with other partners, and offer scope to enhance our international activity and to transform our operations. Complexity is increasing in education where new forms of pedagogy and increasingly sophisticated technology provide content, enable communication, assessment and feedback and promote learning in different settings. In the research environment, the use of big data is ubiquitous. For our University to prosper, carefully planned investment in technology will be required, led by our academic strategy and organisational needs.



**Figure 1:** Summary of current issues affecting higher education in England.

---

## Strategy as a continuum

As we look into the 2020s and plan how we will respond to this changing environment, it is important that we continue to deliver on a number of significant programmes and initiatives developed during the current strategy. These initiatives will generate major improvements in the performance of the University and bridge into the new strategy, contributing strongly to our new vision. Substantial investment in the current period has enabled major capital projects that will complete in the next three years. These investments are being supported by large-scale systems projects to greatly enhance our administration and operations and make a major contribution to transforming the way the University interacts with students. They should be seen not just as new buildings or IT projects, but as investments in strategically important areas that will position the University as a major force in sector-leading approaches to pedagogy and challenge-led research, supporting the emphasis on internationalisation and in our contributions to the city and the region.

They are important vanguard projects, which will support the wider purpose of the University. This investment profile increasingly highlights the close inter-connectedness of our core academic and supporting activities, a feature which will become more important in our new strategy. As we complete and commission these projects, we will learn a great deal that will help us in the implementation of the new strategy.

Looking forward, the new strategy will strengthen the University as a research-intensive institution, providing high-quality student education informed by our research activity, and with an increasingly international outlook and an improved position in the Russell Group. Global and national trends in higher education will influence how we progress and are characterised by:

- An evolving and engaged student cohort with active, student-centred learning facilitated by technology.
- A research agenda focused on interdisciplinary, challenge-led research in fewer centres, but with much greater national and international collaboration and off-campus working.
- Institutions with an international outlook from staff, students and research and education collaborations.
- Rapid adoption of standardised, integrated information and digital technologies across the entire University.

Many of our current large-scale investments, developed around these themes, will mature over the next three years and, as important bridging projects, they will position us strongly for the future (Table 1).

BRIDGING PROJECT	DESCRIPTION
<b>1. Active initiatives</b>	
<b>Nexus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting business growth and productivity by fostering start-ups and business collaboration by providing access to world-leading research, technology and facilities with a particular emphasis on health, data, environment and engineering.</li> </ul>
<b>Leeds Institute of Data Analytics (LIDA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application of advanced analytical methodologies and artificial intelligence to complex data sets to derive novel inferences – the project is developing phase 2 for the institute based on the success of the initial grants that established the centre. The aim is to foster very broad inter-disciplinary working.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Institute</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established to stimulate research collaborations in the cultural industries, enhance student education and widen our cultural contribution to the city and region.</li> </ul>
<b>Priestley International Centre for Climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing new interdisciplinary research partnerships that link physical, technological, economic and social understanding of climate change, providing international solutions to the impact of climate on society and ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Developing initiatives</b>	
<b>Sir William Henry Bragg Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-location of the schools of Physics and Computing as part of an integrated campus for engineering and physical sciences (linking to the other engineering schools and chemistry) to foster collaborative and inter-disciplinary working on challenge-led research questions. The initiative will incorporate activity associated with the Royce Institute and the Bragg Centre for Advanced Materials Research.</li> </ul>
<b>Global Food and Environment Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource for research into “Smart Agriculture” and “Agritech” based at our Spens Farm facility. Brings an inter-disciplinary approach to tackling major challenge-led questions in sustainable food production. This will be co-ordinated with the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Livestock, a European Centre of Excellence in many aspects of pig research.</li> </ul>
<b>Discovery Medicine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration between the faculties of Medicine and Health and Biological Sciences to link basic biology and clinical science through predictive models of disease to patient benefit. Will increasingly include other disciplines such as engineering and physics as it develops.</li> </ul>
<b>Virtuocity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centre for the development and real-world application of Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality to a wide range of challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>Institute of High Speed Rail and Systems Integration and Centre for Innovation in Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major strategic initiative to establish an off-campus site for research excellence in high speed rail, infrastructure and novel materials. Additional technology disciplines will be added in later phases to establish a centre for advanced engineering.</li> </ul>
<b>Western Campus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of buildings and infrastructure on the Western campus focused on the Leeds University Business School and the School of Law. These will be the lead initiative and testing ground for many of the advances in pedagogy outlined in our strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Student Life Cycle Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and implementation of an integrated processes and organisation to support the student lifecycle. Underpinned by a major programmes of IT development and culture change.</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Processes and Systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of systems to integrate and enhance processes in HR, finance and procurement using off-the-shelf technology. Will also produce robust, up to date data for reporting and management across the University.</li> </ul>
<b>Data Centre Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification and provision of harmonised secure, reliable, resilient data and software services for students, academic and service staff housed offsite with a third party partner.</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Summary of exemplar bridging projects. Section 1 highlights investments that have completed the project phase and are now in operation. Section 2 highlights projects that are still under development – note that those primarily focused on research will have associated benefits for student education and enhancing international collaborations.

These initiatives respond to changes in higher education and can be seen as bridging projects for the new strategy. They reinforce the need for us to adopt a University-wide, whole systems approach to the way we operate. They also emphasise the need to adopt new ways of working across different parts of the University, based on the principle of partnership. This will be a pre-requisite for success in the next strategy period and must gradually become the norm.



---

## Strategic foundations

The emergent strategy reflects a series of choices based on thorough research and careful options development and appraisal that describe what we will do and, equally important, what we will not do in our core academic and enabling strategies. These choices have been made from a thorough understanding of the environment for higher education, our strengths as an institution and current major projects. Critically we have also reflected on our purpose and values and how we operate as a University. These aspects are not choices – they are things we believe should be the foundations for the 2020-2025 strategic plan. They are: Holding fast to our values as we evolve our culture; health and wellbeing of the University community; academic and financial sustainability; and sustainability and our principles to tackle the climate crisis.

### Summary of strategic foundations

- We will maintain our total commitment to academic freedom and protecting lawful freedom of expression.
- Our University values have served us well and will continue to do so. How we maintain these values in the future and ensure success in the emerging environment for higher education will require us to evolve our culture and the way we work.
- The health of staff and students is of paramount importance. We will actively support physical and mental well-being in our University community.
- The environment for higher education presents challenges for research-intensive universities. The recommendations in our new strategy must be academically and financially sustainable.
- Universities are uniquely placed to contribute to sustainability and dealing with the climate crisis. Our seven bold principles and two key targets on climate will be referenced in all our core and enabling strategies.

### Holding fast to our values as we evolve our culture

Our University values of **academic excellence, inclusiveness, professionalism, integrity** and **community** inform everything we do as an institution and they will continue to provide a frame of reference for the next strategy period. The University remains totally committed to academic freedom, so that teachers and students have freedom to teach, study and pursue knowledge, and undertake research without unreasonable interference; and to protect lawful freedom of expression on campus.

The new strategy will require us to evolve the way we work to deliver our student education and research activity, our increasingly interdisciplinary working, and our more international activities. The inter-connectedness of the strategies in our core and enabling strategies highlights the need for closer working between faculties, professional services and external organisations based on a partnership of equals that takes a systems-based view of change and considers people as well as processes and institutional structure. The University's agility and responsiveness to opportunities and challenges will be a prevalent feature of the next period and we will need to be more outward looking as we partner with national and international organisations.

This will require us to engage with all staff to develop a workforce that is proactive, responsive, willing to take the initiative and who can position their activity within the overall purpose of the University. We will need to develop and identify leaders who champion these behaviours and support their teams in embedding this way of working as the norm.

We will continue to maintain high standards of equality and inclusion across campus adhering to the public sector equality duty and advancing career development through initiatives design to deliver inclusivity. We will sustain our efforts to address the challenges of widening participation and addressing the attainment gap amongst some students.

### A healthy University community

This will be key to the University achieving its vision for the next strategy period. Increasing environmental complexity and pace of change will place demands on staff and students, and the University will commit to actively supporting their mental and physical health. We will:

- Support campaigns to encourage good physical health (e.g. smoke free campus).
- Foster a culture that recognises the importance of the work-life balance.
- Consider physical and mental health in all aspects of campus development (e.g. green corridors, healthy buildings).
- Continue to promote the importance of mental health and maintain our investment in mental health services for staff and students.
- Maintain the highest standards of health and safety and occupational health provision.

### Academic and financial sustainability

This must be at the heart of our strategy:

If we are to achieve our purpose as a research-intensive university, our academic activities viewed as a whole must be sustainable to allow us to focus investment in key areas of the strategy. We will:

- Continually assess the optimum size and mix of the student population.
- Address our complex education portfolio and high cost academic teaching model.
- Address our net research recoveries, to ensure we are recovering as much of the cost of our research activity as possible.
- Review how and where services engage with faculties and how technology can enable this.
- Review the balance of national and international staff and students and how this is supported by the optimal mix of staff with research/teaching and scholarship/teaching as their principal focus.

Delivery of the strategy in the next 5 years and beyond must be financially sustainable. We will be led by our strategy but this will be phased and adjusted to ensure the University remains financially robust. We will identify savings in our current operation to create financial headroom to invest in the next period.

---

## Sustainability and our principles to tackle the climate crisis

Sustainability is at the core of our commitment to social, environmental, cultural and economic contribution. Given our world-leading research on climate change across multiple disciplines, we are particularly well positioned to contribute to addressing the global climate crisis. The work of the Priestley Centre will contribute to putting us at the forefront of research in this area but also contribute to environmental education for all students.

We will also use this foundation to frame all of our activities.

The University has published its approach to tackling the climate crisis<sup>5</sup> and principles for change against which all of our plans and investments will be assessed. We will consider areas such as: our investment activities, our research partners, our policy on travel (and how it relates to our international strategy), our campus strategy (including energy and water use, clean air, traffic), our resource use and our interactions with our community. Taken in the round, these are critical components of delivering our targets of a net zero carbon footprint by 2030 and of no direct carbon emissions by 2050.

---

<sup>5</sup>[www.leeds.ac.uk/climateprinciples](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/climateprinciples)

---

# The Core Strategy: Student Education, Research and Innovation and Internationalisation and their interdependence

## Summary of core strategy

- We will focus on our core academic activities of student education, research and innovation, and international to ensure we remain securely in the top 10 UK research-intensive universities, and top 100 international universities.
- We will build on the progress in our core academic activities achieved during the 2015-2020 period as a solid foundation for our new strategy.
- We recognise the mutual interdependence and benefit of the recommendations in our core activities and will ensure that we always consider strategic initiatives from the perspective of all three.

## 1. Student education

To provide an outstanding, research-based education for high-quality students from diverse backgrounds and nationalities, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to make a difference to society.

To achieve this we will focus on four themes:

### 1. Student-centred, inclusive, research-based education

We will continue to build on our sector-leading education offer that is inclusive, student-centred and research-based in partnership with students and the Students' Union, and with close engagement with staff and our global community of alumni. We will draw on a broad range of disciplines and our leading position on interdisciplinarity to address global challenges. To achieve this we will:

- Continue to place the wider student experience at the heart of our education offer building on the Leeds curriculum, Leeds for Life and our enterprise, work and study abroad programmes to enrich students' time at Leeds.
- Review our curriculum and content to reduce complexity and ensure the portfolio of programmes and modules is actively managed and up-to-date. We will also include elements of sustainability in our curriculum.
- Ensure our graduate outcomes address the needs of students, employers and society as a whole.
- Intensify the focus on active, blended education that integrates interdisciplinary, challenge-led research. Students will be active partners in the design and delivery of their education so that it can be personalised to them.
- Continue to improve our education offer through leading-edge pedagogy and first-rate student support.
- Enhance our commitment to access and widening participation by removing barriers for those who can benefit by coming to the University of Leeds.
- Focus on retention and attainment for all students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a particular focus on BAME students, linking this work closely with our engagement with the city to address the regional skills gaps and social equality initiatives.
- Use our free, open digital resources to encourage all prospective students to consider higher education at the University of Leeds.

### 2. Using digital technology to enhance our education offer

We will incorporate technology across the student life cycle from application to graduation, enhancing the student experience through efficient administrative processes. This will address the provision of content and digital skills; supporting collaboration, assessment and feedback; and student engagement with the University using data to support their time at Leeds. To achieve this we will:

- Invest in the skills development of all staff and students, supporting them to acquire and maintain digital literacy and competencies; and foster a digital culture by working towards a vision of a digitally-enabled University.
- Invest in digital education systems to deliver digital content and tools which enhance the student experience and enrich students' learning.
- Blur the boundaries between campus and virtual education and expand our capacity to develop cost-effective on-line provision.
- Invest in carefully planned and integrated technology to underpin the development of a "smart" campus.

### 3. Foster an engaged and lifelong community of staff, students and alumni

We will build closer ties between the increasingly diverse staff population, our global alumni community, and students to foster an engaged community that will offer life-long learning opportunities. To achieve this we will:

- Actively consult to define, develop and enhance the concept of an engaged community and what this means for each constituency. This will involve a significant overhaul of the ways in which we engage in discussion with our staff, students and alumni.
- Develop our offer to include leadership development for our students whilst they are at Leeds and continue to encourage their lifelong learning needs as alumni.
- Sustain partnerships which recognise and value the global community as friends and advocates for the University, and as links to provide local country knowledge and student opportunity. The development of the partnership approach between staff and students will begin on application and continue after a graduate leaves the University.
- Develop our professional education offer to broaden the continuum of learners on campus and online.

---

#### 4. A sustainable approach to education

Despite a changing external environment, we will continue to provide a high-quality research-led education. In a more constrained funding environment we will;

- Re-think our delivery of education in schools and faculties and the role of professional services to give students the best possible support. We will exploit technology to enhance the student experience more efficiently and reinvest savings to the benefit of students. We will ensure the provision of high-quality personal tutoring and support, delivered by staff who are well trained and supported.
- Evolve the mix of students to achieve the best balance of national and international students at undergraduate and postgraduate level, supported by the optimal mix of staff with research/teaching and scholarship/teaching as their main focus. As an institution, we will work at the forefront of developments and trends in international education, and be proactive in addressing value for money issues.

#### 2. Research and Innovation

To enhance our position as a world-leading research-intensive University, delivering high-quality research of national and global distinction and impact

To achieve this we will focus on four themes:

##### 1. Increase our reputation for high quality challenge-led research that is underpinned by disciplinary strengths

Our current success in income generation and impact in interdisciplinary research is based on a solid foundation of excellent discipline-based discovery research. We will now capitalise on this by increasing the internal and external support and promotion of our unique interdisciplinary approach to tackling major global challenges. To achieve this we will:

- Promote a balance of fundamental, disciplinary research with an increasing focus on interdisciplinary, challenge-led research. To support this, we will embed interdisciplinarity in our undergraduate research experience and in our new “Leeds Doctorate” offer.
- Foster new approaches to interdisciplinarity to encourage challenge-led research through flagship, interdisciplinary research platforms (centres and institutes). Where appropriate, we will promote shared infrastructure to enhance interdisciplinary working and reduce costs.
- We will create a Frontiers Institute that will set two new grand challenges each year and provide the time, space, resource and leadership to deliver on them. We will use this to ensure that we are responsive and agile to external opportunities.

##### 2. Leeds as a “University without walls” to support interdisciplinarity and effective external partnerships

We will remove institutional barriers to internal and external partnership working and collaboration by:

- Increasing the number of partnerships with business and the public sector (e.g. NHS) around our key assets and strengths.
- Encouraging in and out flow of staff from campus and promoting joint appointments with external partners.
- Investing in reliable and effective infrastructure and technology to facilitate global collaborations and communications.

##### 3. Enhance research income and impact generation through partnership with business

Building on our Nexus initiative and Business Engagement Framework, we will work increasingly closely with business to increase and diversify income and the impact it generates. We will:

- Implement different commercial models for working with business that are flexible and agile. This may include dedicated staff with specialist skills and a more structured and formal approach to consultancy and contract work.
- Increase research recoveries through a value-based costing model for commercial work.
- Build on the success of ‘Nexus’ brand by partnering with investors to create more start-up and grow-on space.
- Embed innovation and entrepreneurship in our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to boost the creation of innovation-driven start-ups.

##### 4. Support our research staff across their entire career to help them achieve their full potential

To achieve our goals in research and innovation, we will need to increase the capacity of our researchers to generate high-quality applications, outputs and awards, and to undertake innovation/commercialisation activities. To support this we will:

- Create greater flexibility in career structures by celebrating academic excellence across the research/education/scholarship/leadership portfolio and allow more specialisation in academic roles.
- Provide career support through mentoring, networking and leadership training.
- Fully understand the true cost of research (vs peers) and embed practices to ensure we have a sustainable research model for the future.

---

### 3. International

Build a truly global University with world-wide reach and impact via internationally relevant, high-quality education and world-changing research and innovation

To achieve this we will focus on the following three themes through embedding an international mind-set across the university:

#### 1. Build a highly-connected, inclusive global community

Attract, support and engage with a globally-connected, inclusive community of students, staff, alumni, and partners. We will:

- Recruit, support and retain talented international students and staff.
- Expand trans-national education and international pathways and be flexible and responsive in our syllabus and admissions.
- Build a balanced and sustainable home and international student community.
- Deliver an excellent intercultural and inclusive student experience, including providing appropriate training for staff.
- Harness the insights, networks and influences of our global alumni and build on current success to become a fundraising University.

#### 2. Create high-impact global opportunities for students and staff

Provide international learning and research opportunities to develop highly-employable global graduates and world-class researchers to make a positive difference in the world. We will:

- Develop an internationally relevant and inclusive curriculum, including a wider range of study abroad and short-term mobility opportunities.
- Support and mentor staff to develop their academic careers through international collaboration and networking.
- Pump-prime and sustain a number of world-class international research partnerships to address global challenges whilst recognising our commitment to sustainability.
- Promote a culture change and embed, recognise and reward international activity across the University.

#### 3. Enhancing our global reputation

Focus on key academic activities to ensure that we rank firmly as a global top 100 university. We will:

- Encourage and reward staff for achieving high-impact and highly-cited research outputs.
- Empower and support staff to promote our research and education excellence internationally.
- Develop excellent global graduates who will enhance our reputation amongst global employers.
- Raise our international profile through pro-active global engagement.
- Emphasise the importance of our global top 100 university status.

---

# The Enabling Strategy: organising for success, people and place, the civic University and new commercial models

The challenges and opportunities facing the University and the emerging themes in our core academic activities have led us to assess how the resources of the University can be best aligned to deliver our overall strategy. These are identified as a series of enabling strategies and focus on the scope to improve how we currently operate and the approach we will take to deliver the new strategic plan.

## Summary of our enabling strategy

- Our enabling strategies will improve the effectiveness, responsiveness and efficiency of the University and may generate savings that can be re-invested in our academic core or operations.
- We will focus on enhancing our structures, process and decision-making to make us more responsive in identifying and adopting good practice and opportunities for improvement.
- The work of the University will be underpinned by integrated digital technology.
- We will work alongside staff and students to evolve the way we work and ensure new campus developments support collaborative and technology-enabled activity.
- We will use our assets as a University to identify new sources of funding to enhance the academic core and improve operational effectiveness.
- As a Civic University, we will engage with our city and region for mutual benefit and in ways that serve the public good and enhance the reputation of the University and its partners nationally and internationally.

In our enabling strategies, we will focus on four themes:

## 1. Organising for success

Organising the way we deliver our core academic and operational activities. This means:

- Continuing the phased re-alignment of our faculty, school, and research platform structure to achieve appropriate groupings of disciplines where there is a strong academic rationale for change and assessing the optimum balance of local and centralised provision of services.
- Reviewing our deliberative structures to balance proper oversight with more responsive and delegated decision-making. As the strategy emerges, we will consider whether resource allocation approaches need to be amended or improved.
- Reviewing the configuration and location of professional services to identify the best arrangement for service provision on campus. We will identify where delivery of the strategy can be enhanced by strategic partnerships with external organisations or other higher education institutions.

- Develop a workload model to unlock academic resource that will contribute to sustainable student education and research.
- Digitising our academic and operational strategy by:

- o **Building an IT infrastructure based around cloud and commercially available software services that is robust, secure and continuously available on and off campus.**
- o **Delivering the Student Life Cycle and Corporate Processes and Systems Programmes as exemplars of a technology environment across the University that is more standardised and joined up to improve our operational effectiveness, support new ways of working, improve communications and collaboration, enhance our academic core and provide reliable, informative data on our academic and operational activities.**
- o **Providing an IT infrastructure for research that is rapidly scalable, facilitates the use of big data and provides access to High Performance Computing.**
- o **Using the large volumes of data we generate from our daily activity we will develop valuable insights and information that will bolster research capability and income, enhance the provision of student support and education and provide business intelligence.**

## 2. People and place

We will re-think and develop the way we engage with each other and the environment in which we all work:

- Fostering an engaged community of staff, students and alumni who will share a common understanding of the purpose of the University, so that we can benefit more from the collective expertise and commitment of the whole University. We will also recognise the importance of social responsibility in all of our initiatives.
- Building a work environment that supports all staff, that is underpinned by a consistent, ethical and value-driven approach and delivers the key objectives of our strategy. This will reflect the changing employment environment and offer opportunity for students. It will be technology-enabled and encourage interdisciplinary and cross-institution working. Benefits for staff will be more personalised and reflect the multi-generational workforce in the University.
- Developing a smarter campus to support new ways of working, greater and more frequent communication and encourage active learning, interdisciplinarity and partnership working for all staff and students. Technology will enable collaboration and flexibility and encourage greater engagement in well-connected facilities. We will transition to modern, collaborative and technology-rich workplaces that encourage team working. All of our campus development will be informed by our leading position on sustainability.
- Responding to the changing world of work by investing to maintain a skilled and adaptable workforce. This will involve continuing professional development and job enrichment within roles and include development of softer skills and emphasise leadership, engagement and change and performance management. Our approach will be supported with technology to promote effectiveness, efficiency and collaboration.

---

### 3. The civic University

This defines our partnership in the city and the wider community across the region and the mutual benefit from partnership working.

We will enhance the social engagement of the University and its contribution to the city of Leeds and the Yorkshire region by adopting a more proactive approach to civic engagement.

To do this we will:

- Work with our partners in the Leeds Anchors Network, third sector and local communities to better understand the needs of the city and region, how they can benefit from closer engagement and agree priorities for action against this.
- Work in partnership with the city, the NHS and other universities to improve health and social care through structures such as the Leeds Academic Health Partnership.
- Use our economic power to support employment and the local economy.
- Adapt our educational offer to support the regional skills agenda. This will include the development of new courses for local people with flexible provision targeted at adult education and lifelong learning to support people to prepare for the changing world of work.
- Develop a range of routes into employment at the University to ensure greater engagement of a local workforce.
- Continue our programmes (such as Into University) to widen participation for young people from under-represented areas of Leeds such as Harehills and Beeston; and help raise attainment amongst young people through close interaction with schools in specific education activities and partnerships.
- Emphasise the 'act local, think global' principle to benefit the city and the region by extending the high-quality, real-world research we do locally and translating it nationally and internationally; and by drawing insights and practical applications from our international research which might have local benefits.
- Use Nexus as a focal point for inward investment through its sector-leading business engagement framework and support for entrepreneurship. Provide business support for our spinout companies and connect local and international businesses with the University. Use our research strength to support and foster key industries and sectors to build strength in place.
- Engage in the promotion of Leeds as a global city to attract and retain high quality staff and students and to promote a positive image which encourages inward investment.
- Use our Leeds curriculum and the remarkable contributions our students make to the social fabric of the city through large-scale volunteering to foster retention of skilled graduates in the city and region.
- Continue our contribution to cultural development through the Cultural Institute, our libraries and galleries, and involvement in events such as the Leeds International Piano Competition, our partnership with Opera North and our support for local arts organisations.

### 4. New commercial models

We will use our University assets to identify new sources of income and funding opportunities that can be re-invested in our core academic and operational activities or used to enhance our campus. To do this we will:

- Develop the campus to generate new sources of revenue that may include: a business-facing commercial zone closely linked to the Nexus initiative and the Business Engagement Framework; letting space commercially for retail and industry partners; co-development of a hotel and conferencing facility; identification of high-quality space for Continuing Professional Development and continuing to invest to maintain high quality student residences across a range of price points.
- Develop a new and expanded commercially-focused education and research business that includes: Continuing Professional Education offers for industry partners; creation and provision of flexible content through blended and fully online routes; and engagement at a local level to support flexible learning and skills.
- Leverage the investment made in Nexus and the brand and reputation it has developed to provide an integrated package for partners including dedicated, targeted, sector-facing professional development, consultancy and contract research in areas where the University is recognised as having significant specialist expertise.
- Transition from a University with an excellent fundraising team to a fundraising University by focusing on education and research with the potential to attract professional substantial philanthropic contributions from donors and charities. Students, staff and alumni will be encouraged to act as advocates for the University nationally and internationally, promoting our academic vision and our student education and research priorities which are aligned with charitable foundation and professional fundraising opportunities.

---

## Next steps

This document sets out an ambitious outline strategy for the University of Leeds for the 2020s, information on how it was developed and some context which explains the rationale behind the strategic choices. It provides the basis for consultation with staff, students and other important stakeholders. Based on feedback, we will develop the final strategy and from this, the strategic plan for 2020-25, which will be handled through the normal University governance procedures. The strategic plan, with measures to assess and report progress, will be published in summer 2020. It will be framed to provide a clear sense of direction for the University, but not at a level of detail or focus that constrains or limits our ability to respond to opportunities or new ideas as they arise. The bridging programmes (Table 1) provide a continuum which goes beyond new buildings, to include new approaches to pedagogy, interdisciplinary research, international collaboration and new processes and systems which dovetail well with the main tenets of the new strategy. The operational priorities identified in the 2019 integrated planning exercise (IPE) and subsequently embedded in the University's five year financial forecasts, if implemented systematically, will provide the financial headroom needed to support our strategic priorities for the future.

### 1. Size and shape of the University.

Our vision for the University includes an ambition to be ranked securely in the top 10 universities in the UK and the global top 100. We will be competing with other prestigious institutions and should therefore take great care in balancing our long-term commitments to high-quality education and research; the composition of the student body; home and international students and the mix of undergraduates and postgraduates; and our staffing profile, including the importance of a vibrant PhD and postdoctoral community, and building on the success of our University Academic Fellowship Scheme. We must also ensure that we remain an attractive and welcoming centre for leading academics from around the world.

- To maintain a high-quality experience for our students, in the short term, total student numbers will be maintained at, or below, a 40,000 threshold. As we continue to develop our student education offer and develop the campus, we will put a premium on recruiting high-quality students, reducing the student staff ratio and ensuring that we provide an outstanding student experience which takes our commitment to partnership with the student body to a new level.
- Current plans to increase the proportion of international undergraduate and postgraduate students at Leeds from 24% today to 29% in academic year 2023/24 will be assessed on a year-by-year basis to ensure that we adjust to the needs and aspirations of international students, guaranteeing that they have an excellent student experience. We will also increase the number of international staff in line with the Russell Group average, fostering diversity on campus, international relations and opportunities for a wider range of educational and research partnerships.

### 2. Investment profile

In the 2015-20 strategy period, substantial investment has already been committed to strategically important projects that will ensure a strong position in challenge-led, interdisciplinary research; new approaches to pedagogy and educational engagement; and more recently, the transition to a digital University. This investment has been most obvious in major capital projects – in particular the Sir William Henry Bragg Building, the Western Campus Developments - but significant sums have also been committed to expanding our core academic capabilities.

These cover: the appointment of an additional 420 PhD students; 180 University Academic Fellows; and 23 top performing professors from other major national and international universities. Matched funding investments have also been made to support major research awards, enable the development of prestigious doctoral training centres and secure the University's position at the heart of the UK's major National Research Institutes.

This commitment totals about £750m and has laid strong foundations for the next phase of our strategic development, subject to delivering the income and cost reduction plans agreed through IPE. This should still enable current overall levels of investment but the balance will be more evenly spread between three areas:

- **Recruitment and development of staff and students** – the background research and the strategic priorities set out above clearly highlight the need to support staff and students as they continue to acquire and develop the new skills and support new patterns of work needed for the future. This applies equally to staff in the academic disciplines and professional services. Besides new technical capability, investment will be needed to support interdisciplinary team working, approaches to support greater institutional agility, and the development of leadership skills. Competencies not traditionally found in universities will also be required, particularly as we look to strengthen our links with industry. Investments will also be made to further enhance students' subject knowledge with the critical thinking, problem solving, leadership and communication skills required by employers.
- **IT infrastructure and digitisation** – information technology, and how it is used and configured, will transform higher education over the next five to ten years. Our investment profile will reflect our ambition to digitise our academic core and a wide range of operational activities to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness, and to enable entirely new ways of operating that will differentiate us from our peer group.
- **Capital developments** - providing new and refurbished academic and service facilities - there will still be a significant programme of capital investment in the new planning period, albeit at a lower level than experienced in recent years. Planned investments already include the later stages of the Western Campus development, further enhancements to the Faculty of Biological Sciences, the development of the Leeds Engineering and Technology Campus, improvements to student teaching, laboratory and private study space in the School of Chemistry, and the continued rationalisation and improvement of the student residential estate.



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

University of Leeds  
Leeds, United Kingdom  
LS2 9JT  
Tel: 0113 243 1751  
[www.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.leeds.ac.uk)