Learning and Teaching Strategy
2016–2020
Introduction:

The University of Derby is committed to providing a ‘best in class’ learning experience for its students with flexible pedagogies designed to meet different learner needs, and curricula that are research-informed and employer-led to enable our students to fulfil their potential and prepare them for the opportunities available to them, regardless of background and previous educational experience. This Learning and Teaching Strategy sets out the priorities for our academic development in the period 2016-2020. It builds on the significant achievements of recent years in which every aspect of the academic offer within the university has become even stronger, with significant uplifts in student satisfaction, in student performance and in student outcomes.

This strategy recognises that some students will come to university with clear longer-term goals in mind, while others may be seeking the opportunity to pursue their academic interests at a higher level. For all students the strategy is based around the principle that the university needs to be transformational, supporting students to achieve at a level that they did not know that they were capable of; opening up new areas of knowledge and understanding; and challenging every student to reflect upon their broader opportunities to engage with the cultural and societal issues within the region, the country and globally.

The strategy identifies three key pillars which reflect the expectations that university education will prepare students for the lives that they will go on to lead, that the academic delivery within the institution will be consistently high quality, and that the university will ensure that its engagement with research and the generation of new knowledge and new practices is fully integrated into our teaching.

The Learning and Teaching Strategy is a key element in delivering the university’s ambitions. It dovetails with the goals set out in the Research Strategy, and the expectations articulated in the Student Charter. It will inform the Student Experience Framework. The strategy is a document that articulates the key areas of endeavour for the university’s academic communities, and seeks to do so by recognising the continuing importance and relevance of the university’s long-standing Mission of being a university which is committed to the transformation of the lives of our students.

The three core strategic pillars

**Pillar 1: Student Employability:**
Every programme will give students the opportunity to engage with content which ensures that the student is fully prepared for relevant practice environments. The range of activities which may satisfy this requirement are wide, covering activities from formal practice placements and real-world learning, through to work-based projects. Each undergraduate programme will offer at least one credit-bearing module which supports this.

**Pillar 2: Teaching Quality:**
The university is committed to consistently high standards of teaching excellence across all of its programmes. Peer-observation schemes will be reviewed to identify and disseminate best practice, and steps taken to ensure that there is a clear capture of student feedback on issues of teaching quality at all levels. Systems for the recognition of excellence in teaching will be reviewed to ensure that they are fully effective.

**Pillar 3: Research in the Curriculum:**
The university is investing significantly in supporting and growing its research base across all areas. The university commits to ensuring that this research activity is visible in programmes at every level, ensuring that students are challenged to engage with the creation of new understandings within their disciplines.
The core elements:

The university will:

1. Provide high quality, inspirational teaching from well-qualified staff who are recognised as experts in their field and accessible to students through a strong and effective, institution-wide personal tutoring system which operates consistently within a supportive educational environment.

2. Promote an environment in which learning and teaching are valued and excellence in teaching is rewarded and celebrated, building the reputation of staff and the institution.

3. Drive the continuous enhancement of pedagogic practice through a systematic approach to professional development for academic staff at all stages in their careers aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework, actively encouraging and supporting the sharing and embedding of effective practice through the establishment of communities of practice.

4. Support academic staff to develop innovative teaching and assessment methods and explore distinctive approaches to curriculum delivery, enabling multiple approaches to learning and teaching and assessment, and identifying opportunities to integrate digital technologies in their practice where appropriate.

5. Provide a sector-leading, dynamic and stimulating learning environment in which there is continuing investment to enhance pedagogy and develop physical and virtual learning spaces which support diverse learning needs and methods, and which encourage creativity and new forms of engagement and dialogue with our students, providing opportunities for innovative practice and embracing the development of digital tools and technologies.

6. Ensure a systematic and continuous review of the academic portfolio in order to provide the highest quality, research-informed, contemporary curricula in which multi-disciplinarity is encouraged and supported, and which meet the needs of the University, employers and region, enabling students to develop their abilities as critical, active and independent learners, capable of succeeding in changing environments and circumstances, building the knowledge, skills, confidence, creativity and adaptability necessary to succeed in their future careers.

7. Ensure that the curriculum and the student experience are fully reflective of the globalised environment and reflect a multitude of cultural approaches, so that students are equipped with the knowledge, skills, global perspective and intercultural awareness necessary to compete and succeed in the global marketplace; building and developing an awareness and understanding of sustainability in their practice.

8. Provide students with the opportunity to undertake independent research and work-based learning, building an understanding of knowledge creation and innovation, and harnessing enterprise and creativity.

9. Engage students proactively in shaping their experience through influencing learning, policy, process and outcomes, to enable a "student as partner" culture which enhances the overall student learning experience.

10. Promote inclusive and flexible learning provision which meets the diverse needs of different learners, and provides an environment in which learners are effectively supported in their transition through the different stages of their higher education journey.

11. Provide a rich, varied and relevant post-graduate taught curriculum, which enables students to take the next steps towards mastery in their disciplines, and which in turn supports a thriving community of scholars who are able to undertake doctoral level study within the university.

12. Ensure that all of our students who are studying higher education programmes at Buxton and Leek College have a parity of experience with students elsewhere in the university, and are able to engage fully with the broader university offer.