The University of Derby
Student Success Strategy
We are widely known for our outstanding record in student success, having been recognised as one of only 60 Higher Education Providers awarded the highest ‘Gold’ rating in the government’s recently introduced Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). A high percentage of our undergraduate students achieve ‘Good Honours’ awards (degrees of 2.1 standard and above), and year after year 96% or more of our graduates are in work or study within 6 months of graduation. Students rate highly the University of Derby experience in the NSS, and we are consistently in the top twenty for teaching quality in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide (2016 and 2017). We are regularly shortlisted for national awards, such as the Higher Education Academy’s 2017 Global Teaching Excellence Awards.

We place learning and the success of all our students, whatever their mode of study, at the heart of our mission; recognising higher education as a truly transformational process. We expose our students to new knowledge, and require them to engage with cultural and societal challenges. We recognise that all students learn differently, and so promote inclusive and flexible learning. We stretch and support students equally, and we encourage and enable them to achieve at a level beyond their expectations and estimates of their ability.

We have a determined approach to integrating teaching and learning experiences with our rapidly developing strengths in research, enterprise and innovation. Our focus has been sharp; with recent investments and initiatives furthering our success. The new STEM Centre is designed to support applied, problem driven teaching and industry linked projects in engineering, technology and computing. Peregrine Publishing, our new publishing house, will be run collaboratively by University academics and students. The Chesterfield Campus has been designed to combine teaching and learning with industry networking and innovation. Improving high skilled, graduate level destinations is a strategic priority and has advanced significantly over recent years. In striving for excellence, the University looks beyond the metrics. We have strong relationships with professional bodies and accreditation for a range of programmes. There are many indicators to confirm the University’s educational success story and ultimately the richness of our transformational impact is evidenced by the personal journeys and achievements of Derby students and graduates.

I am delighted to introduce the University’s Strategy for Student Success. It sets out our ambition to achieve at the very highest standard. This is rooted in the culture of the University, and the collective endeavour of all who work in it and everyone who learns here under the University’s guidance. It is about that special range of qualities, vocational drives and dedication that we see every day in our colleagues as they work collaboratively across academic and professional borders. This practice is long established in the University of Derby, and its beneficial effects have perhaps never been greater for our students, and our alumni, whose reputation grows alongside that of the University.

This document synthesises the Learning and Teaching strategy and the plans which have been introduced over the past two years into a concise summary. I look forward to seeing all courses and programmes in the University embracing and leading this success strategy for the 2017-18 academic year.
We listen and work in partnership with our students

We place students at the heart of everything that we do. We value students as partners in our academic endeavour, and not simply as ‘consumers’ of education. We preserve and reinforce this relationship continually: we involve students in decision making at course level; we invite them to participate in the appointment of staff, including senior staff; we engage them in our quality assurance arrangements; we ask them to be co-designers of both the curriculum, and of the student services and systems; we provide students with the opportunity to undertake independent research and work-based learning in all programmes; we build a community of learning which goes beyond academic programmes into extra-curricular activities and opportunities, both regional and global.

We consult with students about all aspects of our provision, including its change and development, and we do this at all levels in the University. Our Student Experience and Learning and Teaching Committee is jointly chaired by the Union of Students and is a key example of our commitment to meaningful partnership.

We support student learning by assuring high standards of teaching and professionalism. We place students at the heart of every decision we make. Our graduate attributes are well-defined and meaningful, designed to ensure our graduates are capable of meeting the demands of employers, society and good citizenship. Every University programme goes beyond academic programmes into extra-curricular activities and opportunities, which optimise learning support and stimulation. Our graduate attributes are well-defined and meaningful, designed to ensure our graduates are capable of meeting the demands of employers, society and good citizenship. Every University programme gives students the opportunity to prepare for relevant practice environments.

We have a clear, determined view of educational success and how it is achieved

We have invested heavily to produce world-class learning environments and facilities for our students, creating customised spaces for different kinds of learning and student preferences. We have also built sector-leading, ‘real-world’ learning environments to prepare students for their future careers in particular disciplines and professions. We work with our community and businesses to innovate and integrate our approach to the application of learning through projects, live briefs and work experience. These ensure that our students are attuned to the latest developments in their field and are well-acquainted with the most recent and highest professional standards.

Our student learning opportunities are the very best

We have a very high standards of teaching and professionalism

We recognise that students place a premium on good teaching, and that achieving and sustaining consistent high standards of teaching is vital. Our academic staff have an established national reputation for teaching. We celebrate, reward and recognise good teaching, and we have a systematic framework of professional development for staff at all stages of their careers. We support, encourage and incentivise innovative teaching and assessment and we integrate digital technologies into teaching where it adds value and opportunity. All academic staff participate in continuous professional development every year to enhance their skills and remain at the cutting-edge of their disciplines and its pedagogies. A high and increasing proportion of our staff are in possession of appropriate teaching qualifications (we are in the top 25 of UK HE providers in this respect) and 77% of our staff have been accredited as Fellows by the Higher Education Academy. Our mechanisms for the sharing of good practice are multiple, accessible and sophisticated, and the culture of teaching excellence and improvement is embedded and vibrant. This plays a crucial role in the enhancement and enrichment of our academic delivery. Our staff are more highly qualified than ever before, and we nurture productive and meaningful links between teaching, research and professional practice.

Our digital resources are mainstreamed, relevant and personalised and, where possible, have been designed with extensive student input. Our online offers are wide-ranging and sophisticated. Across the board we are developing a pervasive digital curriculum, and we have a clear strategy to ensure that we will be a UK exemplar for the effective use of digital resources in our students’ learning in all programmes. We recognise assessment as fundamentally developmental, and a crucial tool for effective and successful learning. Our assessment practice is rigorous and regularly assessed to ensure relevance, fairness and accuracy. We place great importance on feedback for students in all aspects of their assessment, so that they are able to recognise their strengths and weaknesses and use this feedback to enhance their learning and attainment. We invite students in assessment through personalisation and choice, co-design, and increasing opportunities for self- and peer-evaluation. All students have a varied and balanced mix of assessment types throughout their programmes, including relevant professionally orientated assessment.
We provide excellent Student Support

Student support is an integral part of the student experience, with academic and professional service teams operating hand in hand to challenge and support students, and enable them to achieve their potential for both professional and educational success. We offer our students a range of opportunities to enhance their academic, employability, professional, practical and digital skills, recognising the importance of wellbeing in today’s society. Accessibility, clarity of communications, personalisation and encouragement of independent decision-making lie at the heart of student support.

We enrich opportunity through collaboration and synergy

Stimulating the transformational capacity of students requires engagement across our academic community and collaboration with employers, public & professional bodies, schools and colleges, students, charities, and alumni. Our students are given opportunities to think creatively, and to collaborate and co-create through the curriculum as well as in a variety of activities that can be undertaken outside of the classroom. Collaboration and learning are enabled and recognised through our academic programmes, the Futures Award, internships, volunteering and Union of Students’ clubs and societies. Students are encouraged to develop a global mind set and there are opportunities for international exchanges and study trips abroad. We are an outward-looking University in local, national and international contexts, and this is an essential part of our educational mission. Within the University we have strong synergies between our research and our teaching which allows us to design contemporary and forward-looking research-informed curricula; our Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme allows students the opportunity to participate in on-going research projects with members of academic staff and external organisations. We understand research and teaching as activities integrated by the mutual aim of the discovery of new knowledge, and new disciplinary and inter-disciplinary understanding.

Taken altogether, the initiatives and achievements described above provide a strong foundation for the long-term provision of truly transformational higher education for all of our students, whatever their programme and level of study.

We know that we have an extensive and proven record in changing our students’ lives – their life chances and their career opportunities – for the better. We are determined to pursue this ambition further through our pursuit of higher standards, enhanced facilities and excellent teaching.

Transformation is of huge value to each and every one of our students, but it is also the transformational capacity of our students themselves – in the workplace, in society at large, and in the communities where they live – that will testify to the University’s contribution to the wider benefits of social, economic and public improvement.