

Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2010/11 – 2015/16

1 Preamble

1.1 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy relates directly to the University strategic objective of providing (1) an outstanding student experience. It also relates to the other key strategic objectives: (2) generating knowledge and promoting enterprise; (3) ensuring a first class University for the region; (4) high achieving staff in a well led University; (5) sustainable development, excellent facilities.

1.2 The Strategy also relates to the key institutional risks of: (2) failure to provide an outstanding experience, leading to decline in levels of recruitment, retention and achievement, and student satisfaction; (3) failure to achieve (and meet the needs of) a diverse student population; (8) poor quality assessments; (9) failure to be a well-led and high-achieving University to which good staff are recruited and retained.

1.3 The intended audience for the Strategy is all University staff (full and part-time) employed by the University who are engaged in supporting student learning, and also staff of partner organisations involved in teaching and supporting University approved programmes of study. It also includes all students registered for University awards, and external agencies and organisations concerned with our approaches to learning teaching and assessment.

2 Introduction

2.1 The intended audience for the Strategy is all University staff (full and part-time) employed by the University who are engaged in supporting student learning, and also staff of partner organisations involved in teaching and supporting University approved programmes of study. It also includes all students registered for University awards, and external agencies and organisations concerned with our approaches to learning teaching and assessment.

2.2 The aim of this Strategy is to achieve the University's over-arching goals for its students; these goals are expressed in terms of the qualities and capabilities of graduating students. This Strategy has been informed by the consideration of research into 'graduateness', particularly the work of Ron Barnett and Norman Jackson, as well as national policy documents such as *Higher Ambitions*. The Strategy describes the approaches to learning, teaching and assessment through which these will be achieved. Aspects of learning, teaching and assessment practice described in this Strategy will become the priority areas that the University will seek to develop and enhance over the next five years.

2.3 The University of Worcester (UW) seeks to develop graduates who are equipped to be high achieving citizens throughout their lives. These graduates are self-aware, resilient, self-disciplined and able to work for, and within, teams. They are innovative, creative, enterprising, have a world view and a deep appreciation of education. Our graduates are able to use and evaluate information sources, produce knowledge and artefacts to meet their own needs and those of their communities. These graduates can take responsibility for their own learning and development, plan, and make critically informed decisions.

2.4 This Strategy seeks to ensure that, through our approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, graduates have the best opportunities possible to achieve these attributes and capabilities. In doing so, it re-asserts the University's commitment to providing excellent inclusive higher education, defined not only by what we do, but what our graduates become.

2.5 This success of the new Strategy implicitly and explicitly relies on the recognition of students as partners both in the formation of experiences and in the process of learning itself. Thus supporting and promoting active participation is an essential theme of this Strategy. The implementation of the Strategy will be supported through the provision of staff development opportunities as well as the University's continuing commitment to reward excellence in academic practice.

2.6 This Strategy is divided into five over-arching sets of goals. These sets of goals reflect the vision for our students. None of the sets of goals are mutually exclusive and they should not be read in isolation. Throughout this document the term graduate has been used to encompass all students leaving with a significant award of the University.¹

2.7 This Strategy has been written to be in concordance with the University's Strategic Plan, and associated key strategies and embraces the key values of inclusion, innovation and inspiration. The Strategy has been developed using the model outlined in Appendix 1.

¹ For the purposes of this document a significant award is defined as an award that carries 120 credits or more. For students studying for awards with less credit, the University will provide opportunities consistent with the goals that underpin this Strategy.

3 Strategic goals for learning, teaching and assessment

Goal 1 Engaged, resilient and lifelong learners

Goal: For University of Worcester graduates to be independent or autonomous learners, able to formulate effective strategies for high level learning such that they can succeed at their studies and manage their own continuing development. Our graduates will be engaged² with their areas of study, but also understanding of successful learning strategies. As such, they will be critically aware of their own skills, understanding and attributes, and be able to evaluate their own effectiveness as learners.

Approaches:

- 1.1 Through structured curricula and the promotion of the values of higher education, we will encourage students to participate and engage, such that they have the opportunity to progress to become independent, creative, self-aware and lifelong learners equipped with the skills that will help them to adapt to a changing world.
- 1.2 Student learning, the student experience and student engagement will be the focus of all planning, teaching and review, such that with students we will produce learning experiences that are current, motivating and inspiring.
- 1.3 We will provide supportive transition and academic support processes for students as they progress through their experience at University.
- 1.4 Working with students as partners, we will actively support the formation of student learning communities.³
- 1.5 We will focus on the importance of promoting opportunities and learning resources for active and reflective learning, recognising the importance of partnership between students and tutors in successful higher level learning.
- 1.6 Stimulating, inclusive, formal formative and summative assessment that incorporates timely, learner centred feedback will be at the heart of our Assessment Strategy.

² Engagement, although a complex phenomena, is taken here to equate to the willingness to devote time and the effort that students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities.

³ By learning community we mean a group of people who share common values and beliefs, and who are actively engaged in learning together from each other.

Goal 2 Critically aware, problem solving, enquirer and researchers⁴

Goal: Graduates of the University, commensurate with their level of study, will be critical, rational and innovative thinkers, who are confident, adaptable and capable of independent enquiry. They will have significant levels of understanding of an appropriate body of knowledge, key concepts and techniques; they will be capable of transferring their cognitive abilities and skills to new context and work related situations. UW graduates will be capable of conducting effective research and will have the knowledge and skills to apply and disseminate their findings within relevant communities, and to communicate outcomes effectively to a variety of audiences. The Worcester Graduate as 'researcher' is innovative and a rich resource for the community and will carry this value to be life-long discoverers, formers and seekers of knowledge.

Approaches:

- 2.1 The experience of working within a teaching and learning community that values scholarship and enquiry will be at the heart of the UW experience.
- 2.2 Within our curricula, we will ensure that there are opportunities and resources for students to learn about, acquire and practise the skills of enquiry.
- 2.3 We will provide opportunities for students to be introduced to communities of research, scholarship and professional practice and help students to form such communities.
- 2.4 We will provide opportunities for students to develop diverse skills of communication so that they can disseminate the outcomes of their enquiries to a variety of audiences.
- 2.5 Developing critical thinking skills will be at the core of all our curricula and the learning opportunities that we provide.

⁴ Research here is taken to mean the discovery of new knowledge and understanding that is new to the researcher or/and new to the world.

Goal 3 Highly employable, enterprising, creative and professional

Goal: University of Worcester graduates will be equipped with the skills, attributes and knowledge to be able to manage and be effective within their own career and make a significant contribution to society. University graduates will be innovative, creative, and enterprising: able to identify, create, and manage opportunities in varied settings. Confident in their abilities, they will have the capability to adapt to change, to engage in a challenging and changing world, and be fulfilled.

Approaches:

- 3.1 We will embed professional, employability⁵ and career management skills in our curricula, such that students can engage in autonomous personal and professional development.
- 3.2 We will ensure that our curricula support the development of the ability to take initiative and personal responsibility for decisions, and make future plans in complex and unpredictable contexts deploying, where appropriate, innovative and creative approaches.
- 3.3 Opportunities for our students to undertake work related to their study, to develop their entrepreneurial skills and to learn from engagement with local communities, issues and projects, will be increased.
- 3.4 We will encourage students to take up vocational and community based opportunities promoting active reflection on extra-curricula activities that lead to learning and the development of employability and enterprise skills.
- 3.5 We will seek to develop more work-based programmes that are bespoke to the needs of specific employment sectors and employers.

⁵ Employability is taken to be an individual's capability to move self-sufficiently within the 'world of work' and to be able to realise their potential through sustainable employment.

Goal 4 Inclusive in their actions, valuing diversity

Goal: The University's graduates will be aware of self and others within the context of national and globally diverse cultures and peoples. They will be able to act effectively, in a non-discriminatory and inclusive way and, where appropriate, be comfortable seeking and developing opportunities across different contexts, cultures and countries.

Approaches:

- 4.1 Together with students we will create an experience that promotes cross-cultural awareness and the understanding of 'others' provided in an educational context, which supports and includes all students.
- 4.2 We will support the success and progression of all students by promoting a greater awareness of student diversity, encouraging adoption of good practice in relation to inclusive learning, and by removing unnecessary barriers to participation.
- 4.3 We will actively encourage all staff and students to see themselves as part of the learning community of the UW, taking part in scholarly activity and helping the University to enhance itself for all its members.
- 4.4 We will encourage international collaborations that provide opportunities for students to work with, and learn from, different cultures and we will promote curricula and learning resources that provide an international perspective and context.

Goal 5 Ethically and environmentally responsible

Goal: The University's graduates will be aware of ethical issues relating to their activities as scholars and the ways in which they interact with people and the environment. They will recognise how their actions influence the people and environment around them.

Approaches:

- 5.1 Through our curricula we will discuss and promote ethical practices, social responsibility, academic integrity and academic standards.
- 5.2 We will provide opportunities for students to learn and engage with the issue of environmental sustainability.

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Appendix 1: This Strategy follows the model below.

- Set the goals: what you want your actions to achieve.
- Establish approaches: the broad methods you are going to take in order to achieve the goal.
- Define objectives for each approach: objectives are the measurable activities that will be undertaken in order to ensure the success of the approach. They will be described at the level of the academic Institutes and agencies of the University.
- Develop tactics: the tools that will be used in order to achieve the objectives.