



CORPORATE PLANNING STATEMENT, 2008/2009

Introduction

1. The University adopted its current 5-year Strategic Plan in January 2007. The Plan envisages an exciting future for the University and includes a clear statement of the University's values and ambitions. The Plan seeks to build on strengths and extend further the University's reputation for providing excellent, inclusive higher education.
2. The University has adopted a set of values to inform its future vision – to develop, promote and protect values of intellectual openness, honesty and love of learning, and a deep commitment to human equality and dignity. The University's values and ambitions are encapsulated in the final section of the Plan: to inspire, to include and to innovate.
3. The Strategic Plan commits the University to significant growth, both in size and in impact on the region it serves. The University will, by the end of the life of the Plan, provide substantially more higher education opportunities and, through the construction of its new city centre campus, will have contributed to the regeneration of the City of Worcester, and the development of a new cultural and learning quarter. In order to achieve these ambitions, the Strategic Plan identifies aims, objectives, success criteria and key strategic risks within five areas:-
 - An outstanding student experience
 - Generating knowledge and promoting enterprise
 - A first class university for the region
 - High achieving staff in a well led university
 - Sustainable development, excellent facilities
4. In its annual corporate planning statement, the University seeks to set key strategic priorities for the following 12 month period, which will ensure that progress is made towards the fulfilment of the aims and objectives in the Strategic Plan, 2007-2012. In turn, individual academic and support departments compile planning statements on a two-year rolling cycle; these are intended to reflect the objectives in the Strategic Plan, and the priorities set out in the annual corporate planning statement.

5. The remainder of this statement reviews progress against the key strategic and specific priorities and targets identified in the Corporate Planning Statement 2007/2008 and identifies priorities for 2008/2009.

Strategic Priorities, 2007/2008

6. The 2007/2008 Corporate Planning Statement identified 13 key strategic priorities:-

- *To prepare and submit an application for Research Degree Awarding Powers (Spring 2008)*

The University has prepared an application and had intended submitting it in time for consideration by the QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers in June 2008. However, the University has been made aware that ACDAP is considering further the interpretation of the published criteria, in the context of three current applications from other institutions. It is the University's understanding that the outcome of these deliberations will not be known until later in 2008. The University's Academic Board and Board of Governors have therefore decided to postpone the University's application until the current position is clarified. The University will agree a new timescale for its submission but current indications are that this will not now be until January 2009.

- *To submit an application to the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund for a capital grant towards the construction of the city campus.*

An application was submitted and a £5m grant was secured.

- *To deliver a 4% (£2m) surplus on the 2007/2008 budget.*

This will not be achieved. The University did not achieve in full its target ASNs for 2007/2008 and this resulted in a £632k adjustment to its HEFCE grant. The Board of Governors also agreed that a £0.5m sum from the revenue budget should be used to improve campus facilities; this included an amount required to undertake essential improvements in fire safety in Halls of residence on the St John's site. A provision for a higher than previously forecast pension provision has also affected the expected surplus. Current forecasts anticipate a £0.5m (1%) surplus, before the release from revaluation reserves.

- *To secure the funding package required to support the University's physical expansion, which will be a mixture of loan and grant.*

Reference has already been made to the HEFCE SDF grant. Applications to other funding bodies have either been submitted or are in preparation. A loan facility with Barclays Bank has been secured, which together with funding already secured, will enable the

completion of Phase A of the city campus and the construction of new facilities at St John's.

- *To secure levels of recruitment and retention to achieve the ASNs for the 2007/2008 session, and to provide a sound basis on which to achieve the ASNs for 2008/2009.*

After the application of wastage, the University failed to achieve its baseline plus ASN target for 2007/2008 by 200 fte (Note: the ASN target for this year was 636). Applications for 2008/2009 are buoyant: applications are 12.65% up on 2007 and UF and CF acceptances are 40% up on 2007. Our current modelling suggests that in 2008/2009 the University will recruit the balance it did not recruit in 2007/2008 (200) and recruit a substantial proportion of the additional ASNs for 2008/2009 (around 475 of the 735 ASNS awarded). The University will recruit the balance in 2009/2010. The latest PIs for retention are encouraging and we will continue to give equal attention to recruitment and retention in order to achieve the projected growth.

- *To continue to develop the academic provision of the University to ensure that the course offer remains attractive, meets the needs and demands of the region, and responds to changing demographics.*

The University, in many cases working with its extensive network of partners, has continued to refresh and enhance its undergraduate and postgraduate offer. Many of these developments are in areas where the University already has recognised strengths (in Education, Health and Sports) but the further development of the Business School as a key regional provider at UG and postgraduate CPD levels has continued. Thus in 2008, new courses include: a suite of UG programmes in International Business; new combinations of Sport and Psychology and Sport and Business; new courses in Health Management, Health Psychology and Youth and Community; a revised offer in Digital Arts including new programmes in Animation and Illustration, Graphic Design and Multimedia. Through partnership, new programmes to be launched for the start of, or during, 2008/2009 include: a range of Masters' level courses in Leadership and Management in partnership with the Leadership Trust; a foundation degree in Urban and Electronic Music with Kidderminster College; a top-up degree in Payroll Management in partnership with Worcester College of Technology and the Institute of Payroll Professionals.

- *Through the Lifelong Learning Network, extend and consolidate the University's partnership work with other FE and HE providers in the region.*

The LLN is now fully operational and has funded a variety of initiatives which are now leading to new provision and better

articulation of progression routes between school and college and HE. The Network's role in bringing together representatives of a large number of FE Colleges with the three HE partners (Worcester, the Open University and the University of Birmingham) has increased levels of mutual understanding and co-operation. The Network has been especially helpful in addressing issues relating to HE in Herefordshire and this aspect of its role is likely to develop further in 2008/2009.

- *To ensure that the new committee structure contributes to the achievement of the core objectives in the new strategic plan, in particular an outstanding student experience.*

The (new) Academic Governance Committee will be undertaking an initial review of the effectiveness of the new arrangements now that they have been in place for one year. However, initial indications are that they are working well, especially in relation to the bringing together of learning and teaching with other aspects of the student experience through the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, and of the research and knowledge transfer agendas through the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee.

- *To continue to review quality assurance processes to ensure that they are risk-based and enhancement led, and conform with the principles of better regulation.*

This work has been taken forward through the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee. Academic Board has approved the principles of a revised process for the validation and re-validation of courses, which has been streamlined to focus more clearly on the quality of the student experience; the new system is currently being piloted but early indications are that it is being well-received. Work has also been undertaken to further concentrate annual monitoring on risk and quality enhancement. These developments will be implemented and evaluated next year.

- *To implement and embed the outcomes of the work on Achievement through Excellence, including the implementation of a CPD framework for all categories of staff, and a transformational leadership programme for all leaders and managers in the University.*

A new appraisal scheme has been introduced, which seeks to emphasise the relationship between achievement and performance, and personal and professional development. The CPD framework (now referred to as the Staff Professional Development framework) remains in draft and we now expect to implement it early in 2008/2009. The Leadership programme has commenced, and plans are now in place to deliver to a large number of managers, a Coaching for Leadership programme, training for newly appointed managers, and other workshops.

- *To begin construction on the St John's campus of the National Pollen and Aerobiology Unit, and new Halls of residence, and some further improvements to the learning and teaching facilities.*

Further improvements to a number of teaching facilities and to the Pierson Library were completed in August/September 2007 and have been well-received, especially the improvements to the Library which have greatly increased use of the facility. Construction of the new Pollen and Aerobiology Unit and the new residences commenced in June 2008, and both facilities will be completed by the summer for 2009. A further programme of refurbishments, including improvements to laboratory, IT and conventional classrooms, will take place over the summer period, for completion by 1st September 2008 in time for the new session.

- *To begin construction of Phase 1 of the development of the second campus, new student residences and refurbishment of the listed buildings to provide learning and social space.*

Demolition of all but those buildings that are listed is complete and construction of the new Halls of Residence will commence in June 2008, followed closely by refurbishment of the original Georgian Infirmary building. Completion of this Phase will be summer 2009.

- *To achieve excellent results in the National Student Survey and to achieve and where possible exceed performance indicators in student retention and recruitment of students from non-traditional backgrounds.*

The University continues to perform well in the National Student Survey and scores well in overall levels of satisfaction and on student feedback. In the Guardian and Independent League Tables for 2008, the University's position for NSS Teaching is 23rd and for student satisfaction 28th respectively. The latest HEFCE PIs (published on 5th June 2008) show that the University's performance on retention has improved for all groups of students and the percentage of students not in HE following the year of entry are now ahead of or equivalent to the benchmark figures. Although the position on access to the University by students from non-traditional backgrounds is mixed, the University is at or ahead of its benchmark in all categories except the number of students from low socio-economic classes and low participation neighbourhoods at sub-degree level. This current position will be evaluated in the context of the milestones in the University's Access Agreement.

7. Progress against the targets in the six areas included in the 2007/2008 statement is summarised at [Appendix 1](#).

Strategic Priorities, 2008/2009

8. In 2008/2009 the University's key strategic priorities will be:-
 - To improve further the University's performance on the achievement and retention of students, through enhancement of the student experience; this will include a review of the first year experience of undergraduate students.
 - To pursue initiatives to ensure that the University at least maintains application levels achieved in 2007/2008, and to develop provision at UG and PG levels to prepare the University to face the demographic challenges ahead and to meet its growth targets.
 - To build further on the quality and excellence of the University's academic provision, and ensure that there is sufficient investment to, support the further development in a number of key subject areas and to build on innovative practice in others (e.g. Education)
 - To prepare and submit an application for Research Degree Awarding Powers.
 - To maintain a surplus budget, within the limits in HEFCE guidance, in order to retain the confidence of funders in the University's ability to manage the capital development programme, and its ability to service an increased level of debt, ensuring that there is sufficient flexibility to respond to new opportunities and changing circumstances.
 - To utilise fully the functionality in recently acquired software better to inform the University's schools and colleges liaison and widening participation strategies.
 - To develop further a culture of excellent achievement, building on recent developments, especially through the transformational leadership programme.
 - To complete in large part Phase A of the construction of the city centre campus, and to complete an interim re-evaluation of the plans for Phase B of the development, in the context of changing economic circumstances.
 - To complete the construction of the National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit and new halls of residence at the St John's Campus.
9. Within the areas highlighted by HEFCE, the following priorities have been identified:-

Governance & Management

- To ensure that the changes to the executive management of the University, in particular the establishment of the Executive Management Board, are monitored for their effectiveness.
- To guarantee the proper governance and conduct of the University's subsidiary companies, including maintaining effective reporting structures between the companies, the University and the governing body.
- To assess the impact of the Leadership Development Programme on the University's capacity for effective leadership.
- To implement the Staff Professional Development Framework
- To ensure that the newly established Data Management Unit provides a service consistent with the University's requirements for effective data and information management
- To prepare an appropriate response to developments relating to national bargaining, including a decision on whether to opt out of the national arrangements, and to manage effectively any industrial action which may be taken arising out of a national or local dispute.
- To implement and monitor the impact of the Alumni Relations and Development strategies.
- To implement new arrangements for dealing with emergencies
- To implement recommendations arising out of the COBIT review of the University's management and governance of IT systems
- To review the University's arrangements for TRAC, both in the context of the TRAC returns and the use internally of TRAC data
- To ensure that the University meets the requirements of the 'single conversation'
- To further develop mechanisms for obtaining student feedback and involving students in quality management.

New Academic Developments

- To undertake a review of the University's postgraduate provision in order to identify possible new opportunities for extending the course offer.

- To monitor and evaluate the impact of the new procedures for the validation and re-validation of courses, and the more focussed and risk-based approach to annual monitoring
- To complete a review of the first year experience of students taking BA/BSc courses in the Undergraduate Modular Scheme, to enhance the student experience and to improve rates of retention.
- To continue to develop new course provision that is delivered flexibly and incorporates work based learning.
- To continue to develop collaborative working with partners, ensuring that the revised strategy on collaborative provision, is widely disseminated and understood, and that revised procedures for partner approval and review are effectively implemented.
- To review and update the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and implement the recently adopted Curriculum Design Policy particularly with respect to inclusion, student employability and community engagement and internationalisation.
- To implement a system for the electronic receipting of assignments and to agree a suitable mechanism for electronic feedback on assignments.
- To identify and address issues in the assessment process which may limit student achievement (e.g. clustering of assessment deadlines, methods of assessment etc).
- To review policy and procedures on assessment for disabled students
- To implement the recently adopted Schools Liaison Strategy, to develop and adopt a College Liaison Strategy and a revised Widening Participation Strategy.

Research and Knowledge Transfer

- To monitor the impact of the newly established Research and Business Development Unit; especially in the context of HEIF4 and the support provided to Research Centres.
- To review, through the Graduate Research School, the training of postgraduate research students in Research Methods and the training of supervisors, and to develop further the arrangements to support researchers, particularly in applying for research funding and publications

- To adopt a revised Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy, which will take into account the outcomes of the RAE, the review of the role of the Research Centres, and the requirements for the system which will eventually replace the RAE.
- To maximise the potential of new academic departments, particularly at Head of Institute level, to enhance the University's research capability.

Estates and Facilities

- To complete the construction of NPARU and the new halls of residence on the St John's site, and Phase A of the city centre campus.
- With Worcestershire County Council, to appoint a contractor for the JHLC, and to ensure that the contract and supporting back-to-back legal agreements, are fit for purpose, and represent the University's interests.
- To evaluate, and adjust as appropriate, the plan for Phase B of the city campus.
- To achieve the University's environmental targets for 2008/2009, including the milestones in the Carbon Management Action Plan.
- To monitor the impact of the new management structure in the Estates and Facilities function
- To complete on time the summer refurbishment programme in readiness for the start of the 2008/2009 session and prepare in advance and in good time the programme for summer 2009.
- To monitor changes to timetabling arrangements, and their impact on effective space utilisation and on the student experience, and to identify further adjustments for implementation in 2009/2010.

Regional Activities

- To achieve the milestones in the Business Plan for the Lifelong Learning Network
- To ensure that the University makes a full contribution to the development of HE in Herefordshire, and in particular, to lead on the application for an HE centre in the City of Hereford
- To extend and enhance the University's network of contacts with employers, including through the University's engagement with

employer representative groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

- To co-operate with, and respond to, the City of Worcester's Scrutiny of the impact of the University on the city.
- Through the University's new strategy on collaborative provision, to work with partner colleges and other organisations to ensure that HE provision meets the needs of the population of the University's region, including the higher level skills agenda.

International Activities

- To achieve the target for recruitment of students from non-EU countries
- To implement, and monitor the impact of, the University's internationalisation strategy.
- To review and evaluate the University's International Recruitment Strategy, including an assessment of the impact of the strategy on recruitment from individual countries.