



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean

University of the Highlands and Islands

Strategic Vision and Plan
2015-20



Strategic vision

The University of the Highlands and Islands is the United Kingdom's leading integrated university, encompassing further and higher education.

We will be recognised for the quality of our students' experience and for their achievement. Our worldwide reputation will be built upon our innovative approach to learning and our distinctive research and curriculum, enriched by the people, natural environment, economy, culture and heritage of our region and its communities.

We will be locally based, regional in structure and have national and international reach.

Mission

To have a transformational impact on the prospects of our region, its economy, its people and its communities.

Values

Collaboration | Openness | Respect | Excellence



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Introduction from the principal and vice-chancellor



I am pleased to present the University of the Highlands and Islands' strategic vision and plan 2015 to 2020.

This is our second plan. It builds on our strengths and sets out our ambitions. It also acknowledges how far we have progressed since our first plan in 2011 and embraces our new responsibilities for further as well as higher education in our region.

We have consulted widely in the course of producing the vision and plan, both within the university partnership and amongst the wider community. Our vision of securing a distinctive positioning for the university amongst an increasingly diverse post-school education sector is widely supported.

Our plan is simple and has three themes which underpin it: 'our students', 'focused research' and 'the university for all of our region'.

Our students are at the heart of our plan. We should be measured by their success. So we will continue to support them to achieve as much as they can.

Our second theme is focused research. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework exercise our world-leading results put us firmly on the university research map, not just in Scotland but across the UK. Over 69% of the research we submitted for review achieved the two top grades: internationally excellent and world-leading.

The result shows strong evidence of developing research capacity across a broad range of subjects and underpins current and future economic activity in the Highlands and Islands, making a real difference to the environment, to the business community and to people's lives.

We are not a traditional university. We are different. We are part of a new breed of tertiary institutions, the only one in Scotland and one of only a few in Europe. Tertiary universities are developing rapidly in Canada and Australia. In Australia in particular, there are now six tertiary universities. We have already established links with some of these 'new generation' universities and foresee future opportunities for collaboration and mutual learning within this community.

Our third theme outlines how we can be the university for all our region by acting as a force for economic, social and cultural change across our region by connecting and collaborating with businesses, public and third sector partners and communities.

This is underpinned by our participation as an active partner in community planning, contributing to reduced inequality, improved services, enhanced training and skills development and the promotion of sustainable economic growth.

We can also achieve this by providing a professional and consistent approach to employer and community engagement which underpins the relevance of our curriculum and research.

Finally, our success depends on our ability to harness the resources available to us effectively and efficiently. We need to recruit, motivate and retain our staff. And we must maintain our collective financial sustainability in order to be able to innovate and invest for all our futures.

PROFESSOR CLIVE MULHOLLAND
BSc PHD CSci FIBMS SFHEA FRSA

Principal and vice-chancellor

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Strategic vision

The University of the Highlands and Islands is the United Kingdom’s leading integrated university, encompassing further and higher education.

We will be recognised for the quality of our students’ experience and for their achievement.

Our worldwide reputation will be built upon our innovative approach to learning and our distinctive research and curriculum, enriched by the people, natural environment, economy, culture and heritage of our region and its communities.

We will be locally based, regional in structure and have national and international reach.

Strategic themes

THE UNIVERSITY FOR ALL OF OUR REGION

The university will act as a force for economic, social and cultural change across the region by connecting and collaborating with businesses, public and third sector partners and communities.

We will:

- » Be active partners in community planning within our region and contribute to reduced inequality, improved services, enhanced training and skills development and the promotion of sustainable economic growth.
- » Provide a professional and consistent approach to employer and community engagement that underpins the relevance of our curriculum and research.
- » Ensure our academic structures and work practices respond effectively to the development needs of communities and key economic sectors.
- » Work with schools within our region to raise ambition, achievement and progression to higher levels of post-school study.

OUR STUDENTS

The university will continue to meet the needs of learners within the region, while targeting growth in our share of young entrants and students from beyond the region.

We will:

- » Ensure our further and higher education curriculum better meets current and future local and regional needs while also including elements of national and international relevance.
- » Use our expertise in blended delivery, supported by pedagogical research, to meet the learning, teaching and support needs and expectations of our diverse student body, studying in a wide variety of locations and contexts.
- » Pursue greater flexibility and responsiveness in our further and higher education curriculum design and delivery, so we can fully deliver and promote the tertiary basis of our offering to learners and the opportunities this presents for them.
- » Enhance connections between our curriculum and employers and the workplace.
- » Establish a culture of student engagement by working in partnership with students to ensure their voices drive improvement and change.
- » Recognise and respond to the diversity of our student population by creating opportunities where inclusive practice can be enhanced and mainstreamed.
- » Ensure all students have appropriate opportunities to network with other students and staff to ensure they feel connected to the university.

FOCUSED RESEARCH

The university’s research will be recognised internationally, nationally and regionally for its quality and for its contribution to our remit of transforming and enhancing lives, the environment and the economy.

We will:

- » Continue to develop research excellence performance in targeted areas.
- » Enhance the experience of research students.
- » Ensure effective public engagement and dissemination of research outputs.
- » Promote knowledge exchange as an integral part of our wider employer and community engagement plans.
- » Achieve sustainable funding for research and knowledge exchange activities.

Cross-cutting themes

Enterprise



Internationalisation



Recognition, reputation and brand

Enabling strategies

People



Infrastructure



Financial sustainability

(estates, information technology, shared services)

Strategic theme

Our students

The university will continue to meet the needs of learners within the region, while targeting growth in our share of young entrants and students from beyond the region.

We will:

- » Ensure our further and higher education curriculum better meets current and future local and regional needs while also including areas of national and international relevance.
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- » Recognise and respond to the diversity of our student population by creating opportunities where inclusive practice can be enhanced and mainstreamed.
- » Ensure all students have appropriate opportunities to network with other students and staff to ensure they feel connected to the university.

Students must be at the centre of our university. This means meeting the needs and expectations of a diverse and geographically dispersed student body.

We will continue to bring about greater access to relevant curriculum at all levels of further and higher education, with a particular focus on key local and regional employment sectors. This will include the development of new work-based learning opportunities and awards, and other opportunities for learners to enhance their skills for work. We will also continue to increase access to our curriculum for those communities and groups where choice is currently limited or where routes from secondary school into further or higher education require additional support.

This strategy embeds the six features of the nationally established 'A Student Engagement Framework for Scotland' within our strategic plan, ie: a culture of engagement; students as partners; responding to diversity; valuing the student contribution; focus on enhancement and change; and appropriate resources and support. Responsibility for this strategy is shared by both staff and students.

Student engagement is key to academic success and all of its aspects are positively related to students' overall satisfaction with university study. More engaged learners are more satisfied, and vice versa. The university must ensure students feel part of a supportive institution, are able to engage in their own learning, can work with us in shaping the direction of learning, and can work through effective formal representative mechanisms. In summary, if we effectively engage our students in the life and work of the university, we will have more satisfied and higher-attaining students.



Critical Performance Indicators (CPI) / Our students

Student numbers	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 1a Total students (all higher education)	5636 FTEs	7700 FTEs
CPI 1b Total further education activity level	110,370 credits	+7% (118,096)
CPI 2 Share of entrants to higher education from within our region	30%	35%

Student partnership

We were the first institution in Scotland to adopt the new Student Partnership Agreement. This sets out how students and staff can work together to improve the student experience. We are always looking for innovative ways in which our students can shape and influence our work:

Better communication

We want student feedback on some of the challenges we face when building a strong community of students in a geographically dispersed network. We are working with the students' association to open up clear channels for two-way communications. We hope this project will result in higher visibility, awareness and engagement with the students' association and a greater sense of belonging for all students.

We also innovate in the methods we use to seek student feedback. The 'red button' is an informal feedback and problem resolution system, highly regarded by students. All comments are read and followed up by the dean of students.

"It is a direct connection to someone who may be able to help and is therefore an invaluable resource" and "you feel that there is someone there that can help you when you don't know what to do. I know that if I have a problem someone will listen..." are typical of the feedback we receive on the red button service.

Improve formal student representation

Student surveys showed a desire for improved student representation. The work we've been doing to address this links closely with our quality structures and includes improved training for student representatives, developing a co-ordinated approach to representative briefings, and ensuring that all students are encouraged to take part. Our subject network student officers have been invaluable departmental-level representatives helping us to enhance opportunities for students that cut across our programmes and locations.

Critical Performance Indicators (CPI) / Our students

Student satisfaction	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 3a National Student Survey (UK higher education)	3% below Scottish average overall satisfaction (84%/87%)	2% above Scottish average overall satisfaction
CPI 3b National College Satisfaction and Engagement Student Survey (Scotland)		2% above Scottish average overall satisfaction
Employability	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 4a Destination of full-time leavers from higher education	First degree graduates 91.9% (benchmark 91.1%) Other undergraduates 95.8% (benchmark 95.4%)	At least achieve or maintain benchmark
CPI 4b Destination of leavers from further education		At least achieve or maintain benchmark
Student attainment	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 5a Attainment of higher education students	2669 awards	10% increase in awards
CPI 5b Percentage of full-time further education students successfully completing their course	66.1% (compared to 66% nationally)	At least maintain at sector average

Strategic theme

Focused research

The university's research will be recognised internationally, nationally and regionally for its quality and for its contribution to our remit of transforming and enhancing lives, the environment and the economy.

We will:

- » Continue to develop research excellence performance in targeted areas.
- » Enhance the experience of research students.
- » Ensure effective public engagement and dissemination of research outputs.
- » Promote knowledge exchange as an integral part of our wider employer and community engagement plans.
- » Achieve sustainable funding for research and knowledge exchange activities.

Research is a process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared and is central to the purpose of any university. Students have the right to be taught by acknowledged experts in their field, which requires that staff members operate at the most advanced level appropriate to their discipline and level. Research is, therefore, crucial to a positive student experience from further education to doctoral development.

The developing economy of the Highlands and Islands is dynamic and knowledge-based. It needs to be supported by locally-based research and knowledge exchange activities. This research must also provide a platform for engagement with partners and stakeholders both nationally and internationally where appropriate.

Our research is grounded in our region's natural, cultural, social and economic assets, serves our economy and also has global relevance. Our Research Excellence Framework submissions reflect research strength under four broad themes:

- » Marine and environmental science
- » Culture, heritage, language and history
- » Health
- » Landscape, economy and society

To complement our existing research strengths, the university is looking to increase our involvement in strategic and developing areas such as fine art, pedagogy, renewable energy, theology and aeronautical engineering. Each of these represents an area of overall opportunity, which was not explicitly represented in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework.

The existing and developing research strengths are, and will be reflected in the university's curriculum.

As well as assessing areas of internal strength, the university is engaging with stakeholders to assess opportunities associated with external economic, social and industrial drivers.

While increasing our non-recurrent research income we will also aim to achieve a balance in funding sources in order to optimise cost recovery.

Our research is conducted in an environment which is progressive and supportive of all of our staff and students, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or creed. In line with this philosophy, we are aiming to achieve bronze institutional Athena Swan accreditation and silver accreditation within our key research thematic areas.



Critical Performance Indicators (CPI) / Focused research

Research income	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 6 Non-recurrent research income	£15.2 million	£24 million

Research Excellence Framework 2014

Over 69% of our research was classified as “world leading (4)” or “internationally excellent (3*)” in the Research Excellence Framework 2014. This expert review is undertaken to assess the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. During the review we refined our understanding of the areas where we already have significant research strength.*

We submitted research under the following units of assessment:

- *Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy (submitted jointly with the Robert Gordon University) - 17% at 4* and 53% at 3**
- *Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences – 14% at 4* and 66% at 3**
- *Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology – 3% at 4* and 41% at 3**
- *Area Studies – 17% at 4* and 55% at 3*.*
- *Modern Languages – 16% at 4* and 45% at 3**
- *History – 17% at 4* and 50% at 3*.*

Overall, our ratings in the national league table published by the *Times Higher Education* showed us rising by 33 places in the UK to finish in the top half of the table and as the best-performing young Scottish university. Our “research impact”, in particular, gave us a combined 3* and 4* rating of 87%.

The result shows strong evidence of developing research capacity across a broad range of subjects and underpins current and future economic activity in the Highlands and Islands, making a real difference to the environment, to the business community and to people’s lives.



Strategic theme

The university for all of our region

The university will act as a force for economic, social and cultural change across the region by connecting and collaborating with businesses, public and third sector partners and communities.

We will:

- » Be active partners in community planning within our region and contribute to tackling inequality, improving services, enhancing training and skills development and the promotion of sustainable economic growth.
- » Provide a professional and consistent approach to employer and community engagement that underpins the relevance of our curriculum and research.
- » Work with public and private sector partners to identify and address local and regional skills needs.
- » Work with local authorities and schools within our region to raise ambition, achievement and progression to higher levels of post-school study.

The development of the University of the Highlands and Islands was an initiative underpinned by the communities of the region and their representative bodies and agencies, both public and private sector. These communities of interest continue to be represented, along with the alumni of the university, on our Foundation. Foundation has a constitutional responsibility for the guardianship of the university's mission. We will continue

to support Foundation to undertake its role of providing a connection with our communities and also as a means of increasing engagement with our alumni.

Through our constituent partner institutions, the university has a long and successful history of engagement with our communities. The regionalisation of further education provides an opportunity to build on this tradition and to organise all of the resources of the university partnership, both further and higher education, to better meet the needs of our communities and of employers within our region.

We will work with local, regional and national partners to achieve sustainable economic growth for our region and contribute to 'Scotland's Economic Strategy', the Scottish Government's overarching framework for a more competitive and a fairer Scotland. This will be achieved by supporting existing businesses and social enterprises, new business start-ups and encouraging inward investment.

We will continue to seek to increase participation in further and higher education from those in areas of multiple deprivation, based on national measures. However, given the acknowledged limitations of such measures when applied to sparsely populated areas, we will develop our own measures of rurality and rural deprivation and establish targets for increased recruitment based on these measures.



Critical Performance Indicators (CPI) / The university for all of our region

Business/employer engagement	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 7 Active strategic employer partnerships	4	10
Widening access	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 8a Higher education entrants from targeted areas of rurality and rural deprivation	14%	Achieve the same proportion as the working age population in these areas (5% increase)
CPI 8b Further education entrants from targeted areas of rurality and rural deprivation	21%	5% increase
CPI 9 Progression from further to higher education	34%	40%

Employer engagement across further and higher education

For over 50 years, the partnership between North Highland College UHI and the Dounreay site has been a key economic driver in the north Highlands featuring innovative and enduring skills and professional development programmes of regional, national and international reputation.

The college was established primarily to meet the scientific, engineering and administrative training needs of the site. Over the years, hundreds of young people successfully completed the various training schemes run in partnership by the two organisations. The Dounreay apprentice training scheme secured industry recognition as one of the best of its kind in the country. In recent times, the college has taken full advantage of its role as a partner in the University of the Highlands and Islands to design higher education programmes to meet new requirements as the site moved from an operational to a decommissioning phase.

Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd (DSRL) has developed world-class expertise in nuclear decommissioning, waste management and environmental restoration. Taking the initiative to ensure that work progressed in line with established plans, DSRL and the college established an industry sponsored graduate

scheme, creating opportunities for trainees to complete advanced level engineering courses at North Highland College UHI whilst being actively involved in cutting edge on-site restoration projects. The scheme has helped ensure the ongoing availability of engineering skills in various disciplines, has prevented local skills shortages at a time of great need, and received national recognition through the Colleges Scotland awards.

The strength of our partnership working is also evident in the operation of the college's Engineering Technology & Energy Centre (ETEC), where students develop their engineering skills in a learning environment regulated through the implementation of Dounreay health and safety systems. They are supported in their learning by DSRL staff based in the centre itself, ensuring knowledge and skills are acquired in the context of the workplace. This has been recognised as an example of excellent practice in employer engagement by Education Scotland.

Looking ahead, the partnership continues to create new opportunities in various disciplines, in advanced engineering in particular. This has now been formally underpinned through the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between DSRL, North Highland College UHI and the University of the Highlands and Islands.



Cross-cutting theme

Enterprise and innovation

We intend to continue to embed a culture of enterprise and an entrepreneurial approach within the university.

This will manifest itself in our curriculum, in our approach to learning and teaching and to research and knowledge exchange, in how we deliver our support services and functions, and in our external engagement.

It will require us to look both internally and externally for new ways to go about our business, including beyond our sectors.

It will require a structured approach to horizon-scanning to ensure that we can anticipate opportunities and threats.

A culture of enterprise and innovation requires a working and learning environment which encourages and facilitates

all of our staff and students to be more productive and in the identification and realisation of new opportunities. An enterprising mindset amongst staff and students which fosters innovation and entrepreneurial behaviour will build on and constantly enrich our connections to communities and employers, facilitating personal and institutional growth.

There is a shift towards a competitive national and international consumerism of education through private providers, globalisation, online delivery, massive open online courses and awarded equivalents. This makes better and quicker growth and investment decisions an urgent issue for us where our business model remains strongly local but with international markets clearly in view.



CREATE: an entrepreneurial approach in action

CREATE, an innovative entrepreneurial learning centre, was established in 2009 at Inverness College UHI with a vision to inspire, encourage and enable our students, our people and our regional businesses to 'CREATE their own future' and develop an entrepreneurial approach to all aspects of their lives.

CREATE works collaboratively with partners throughout our university to embed enterprise skills in our curriculum portfolio.

CREATE has developed a wide portfolio of entrepreneurial education, training and collaborative initiatives and engaged with over 5,000 students and the wider academic and business community.

CREATE plays a critical role by providing a platform for students and regional businesses to engage in entrepreneurial initiatives throughout the year, including an Innovation Festival each March which brings innovative organisations and students together, and a Business Idea Competition each November. Launched in 2006, this competition has attracted over 750 business ideas and seeded the start-up of significant numbers of businesses through our partnership with Business Gateway Highland and Moray.

In 2010, CREATE identified a significant requirement to equip educators to support the increasing demand for more entrepreneurial graduates and launched the Scottish Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Educators' programme. Now internationally recognised, independent evaluation of the programme has reported it leads to noticeable change in an educators' mind set, confidence and skills. This programme reinforces our commitment to developing a working and learning environment which fosters innovation and entrepreneurial behaviour.

In 2014, CREATE became our hub for a new national project called 'Bridge 2 Business' established to inspire students to be more enterprising and realistic about the world of work and develop the skills and networks to help with self-employment. In 2015 this project will see our first student entrepreneurship conference showcasing entrepreneurial role models from key industry sectors.

CREATE aims to grow ambitiously to be the UK's leading entrepreneurial learning centre encompassing further and higher education through researching, developing and delivering distinctive and innovative entrepreneurial education for our academic and business community.



Cross-cutting theme

Internationalisation

We want our students to be global citizens. We believe that this enhances their employability and enriches their lives. It is also important to us that the horizons of our staff encompass innovation in their areas of specialism from across the world.

There are already many international dimensions to the university, in research, in learning and teaching and in knowledge exchange. These include the university's membership of bodies such as the University of the Arctic and links with universities such as Federation University in Victoria, Australia.

We want to build on these, to embed internationalism more generally across the university partnership, and specifically by:

- » Providing enhanced opportunities for international mobility for staff and students.
- » Developing increased opportunities for international student recruitment, both into Scotland and in the students' home country.

This will be done through existing networks and by selectively developing new, sustainable, relationships.

We have particularly strong links in North America, China and the Indian sub-continent. We also have well-established and long-standing networks in Europe, both through erasmus mobility programmes and through projects supported by European funding.

We have the opportunity to utilise established expertise in the application of information technology to learning and teaching to further develop our distance learning provision, especially at post-experience and post-graduate levels. This will be a priority for the period of this plan.

Developing our international reach will both require and facilitate an increase in the international relevance and context of our curriculum. In addition, it will be necessary to:

- » Further build our international profile and reputation.
- » Increase the availability of student accommodation, both student residences and home stay programmes.
- » Enhance the support infrastructure for all international students.
- » Ensure that our business and quality processes are able to meet the demands of international operations.
- » Make better use of the collective resources of the university partnership to optimise the opportunities available, both effectively and efficiently.

Significant advances have been made and these developments will continue through the period of this plan. We will, however, continue to take a risk-based approach to determining the scale and pace of future international development.



Scottish Association for Marine Science UHI: oceans and international connections

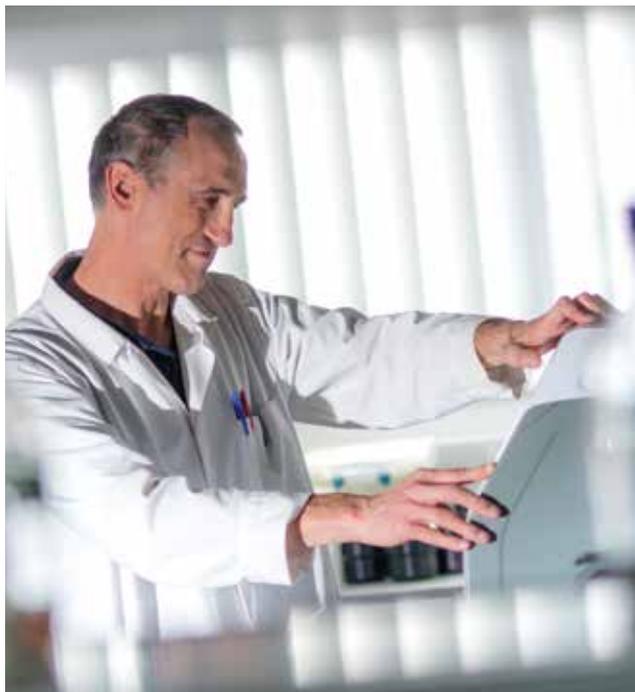
The world's oceans connect all parts of the earth, and marine science is therefore by its very nature international. This is reflected in SAMS UHI's research, staff, education programme and science impact.

Our scientists work with colleagues from the USA, observing the movements of the North Atlantic Ocean in three dimensions. We study the ecology of seamounts in the Indian ocean; and undertake interdisciplinary research exploring all aspects of the Arctic marine environment with partners from across Europe, Korea, Canada and the USA. Three of our scientists have been awarded polar medals by Her Majesty the Queen. Marine scientists from **SAMS UHI** are also involved in major European research consortia studying aquaculture, marine biotechnology, marine policy and marine renewable energy.

Our expertise is used to advise governments worldwide. For example we have been advising New Zealand on aquaculture issues, Papua New Guinea on the deep-water disposal of mining wastes, the Seychelles on developing a blue economy and we have contributed to the United Nations' First World Ocean Assessment.

In education we offer our undergraduates the chance to spend one or two semesters in Svalbard, in the high Arctic, and are running a Masters programme in aquaculture jointly with the Universities of Crete, in Greece, and Nantes in France.

SAMS UHI is the only marine research organisation in the world that is an associate institute of the United Nations University.



Cross-cutting theme

Recognition, reputation and brand

In an increasingly competitive environment it is important for further and higher education providers to make a distinctive and appealing offering to potential staff, students and funders. This offering needs to be built on demonstrable strengths.

In our case, these strengths originate from:

- » The tertiary nature of the institution.
- » The way that we use technology to enable students to learn collaboratively across dispersed geographies.
- » Our distinctive curriculum and research underpinned by our natural environment, culture and heritage, along with the industries and socio-economic fabric of our region.

A further distinctive characteristic of the university is the contribution we make to Gaelic language and culture and to the other linguistic and cultural traditions of our region. Our Gaelic Language Plan contains a curriculum development section, which reflects our central role in the provision of Gaelic education.

The reputation of an organisation is formed from direct experience, word-of-mouth, third-party comment and the physical and virtual manifestations of the organisation itself. In the case of a university or college, teachers, careers advisers, parents, relatives and friends, and employers are particularly important in influencing the choices of potential students. More widely, nationally and internationally published performance measures and third-party league tables play a major role in establishing the reputation of a university.

It is important that we develop a competitive brand positioning for our university partnership that supports the delivery of our vision. This will be built on our distinctive characteristics, along with the excellence of the student experience and our research. It will include the development and promotion of a set of measures and benchmarks that demonstrates our distinctive contribution to further and higher education, including how our university partnership addresses the challenges of rurality and rural poverty.

Our brand will recognise the diversity of our university partnership while raising the profile and awareness of its distinctive contribution within target audiences.



Facts and figures

We are a partnership of 13 colleges and research centres and have over 70 local learning centres.

Our area covers half the land mass of Scotland.

We are the largest user of video conference technology for education in Europe.

An independent economic impact assessment estimated that the university partnership contributes £191million to the Scottish economy (*BiGGAR Economics, 2011*).

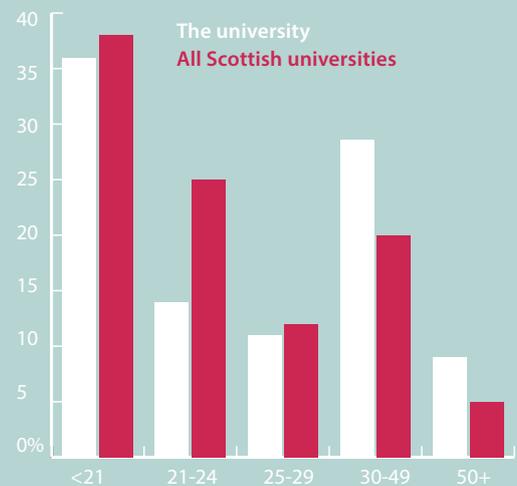
We were the best performing young university in Scotland in the Research Excellence Framework 2014.

Higher education

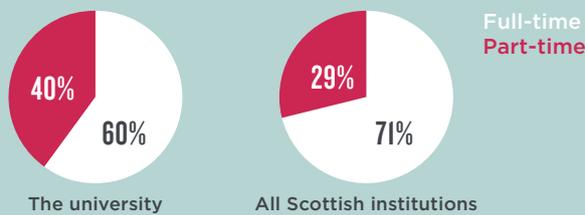
Growth in student numbers



Age of students



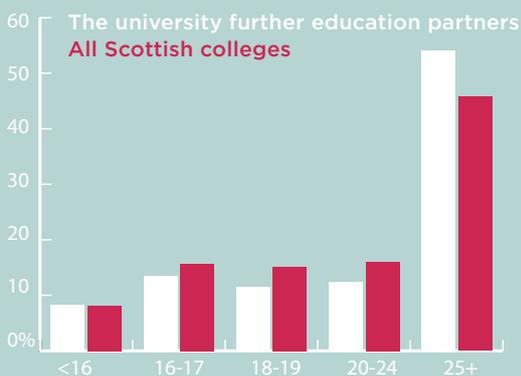
Mode of study



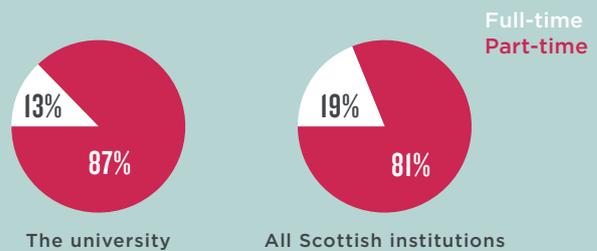
Further education

Across the region there was a total of 32,077 enrolments at the university further education partners in 2013/14.

Age of students



Mode of study



Enabling strategy

People

Our ambitions will be achieved through the efforts and commitment of our staff.

If we are to be an employer of choice, and attract and retain a motivated and effective workforce, staff must be valued, engaged and supported in all aspects of their professional role. They must be appropriately rewarded and provided with opportunities for personal development and advancement.

Our staff are geographically dispersed across multiple campuses and employers. This increases the complexity of achieving our goals, but it should not diminish our ambition.

Our priorities will be:

- » Greater alignment of employee terms and conditions and reward structures across our university partnership, recognising the distinctive and diverse roles within it.
- » A collective approach to managing our human resource, with a partnership-wide approach to staff planning and development, including greater mobility of staff across our structures.
- » Improved opportunities for networking and collaborative working across organisational boundaries and dispersed geographies.
- » Opportunities and incentives for staff to engage in scholarship, including maintaining the currency of their pedagogy and their knowledge of industry practice. This will help to maintain relevance to our evolving student profile and curriculum.

While staff may identify primarily with their own employer or with their subject group, they should also feel a part of the wider university community and benefit from that wider engagement.



We will encourage staff to participate in internal job exchanges, shadowing and similar arrangements. We will also seek to increase the number of staff who have dual roles, performing a function for an academic partner and also for the wider university partnership.

Through our academic partners, we are a part of the communities of our region. Engagement with those communities, whether through employers and industry groups, community organisations or third sector bodies, contributes to the well-being of our communities and to the connectedness of our university.

We want staff to engage with external further and higher education sectoral bodies, subject groups and research communities, both to raise the profile of the university and also to bring a wider perspective to their work within our university partnership.

The university's learning and teaching academy has been established to provide a locus for pedagogic research and to support staff in providing innovation and excellence in learning and teaching.

The university has recently adopted a set of CORE values. These are:

- » Collaboration
- » Openness
- » Respect
- » Excellence

Through the duration of this plan it will be essential to ensure that these values are supported and demonstrated by our staff in their daily work and in their interactions with others. Through these we will build the mutuality and trust required to deliver our ambitions.



Learning and teaching academy

The newly established Learning and Teaching Academy is the hub for a range of activities that will drive pedagogic innovation and excellence in further and higher education, and develop pedagogic research as a significant area of research activity within the university.

Key to the work of the academy is teaching staff additional skills and supporting scholarship and development of learning and teaching in ways that exemplify current and emerging best practice and encapsulate the pedagogic vision and values of the strategic plan. Professional recognition of excellence in learning and teaching will be co-ordinated through the academy, with an initial aim of substantially increasing the number of staff who are recognised at an appropriate level of fellowship by the Higher Education Academy.

The academy will have a presence in the university facility at the Inverness Campus. An educational research laboratory will provide a malleable space to conduct and co-ordinate research into pedagogic practice, cognitive aspects of learning, learning space design, learning and teaching in classroom, blended and distributed online contexts, the interface and transitions between further and higher education, and education policy. The laboratory will help position the academy to bid for external educational research funds in a diverse range of areas, and to undertake leading pedagogic research.

Ultimately the academy is focused on ensuring we can immerse our learners in creative and engaging educational experiences, whether they are on campus or online, and to extend our capacity and reputation for innovative educational practice and provision.



Enabling strategy

Infrastructure (estates, information technology and shared services)

Our physical estate and our information technology are fundamental to the delivery of our activities and, in particular, to our learning and teaching and to the student experience.

The current estates priorities are:

- » Provision of residential accommodation.
- » Remodelling and development to reflect the specific needs and ethos of both further and higher education, including research.
- » Increased flexibility of accommodation to meet the changing pedagogy and learning and teaching environments.
- » Provision of student social space and infrastructure.

While we intend to review our strategy in the context of our recently acquired wider responsibilities, it is anticipated that the above priorities will continue to feature.

In relation to information technology, our university partnership has benefited from a relatively high degree of integration. Without this we could not have achieved our progression from higher education institution, through taught degree awarding powers, to university title.

As a modern, widely dispersed organisation, operating in a highly competitive and fast-moving sector, our university partnership depends on communications and other technologies in our day-to-day business. Our users have high expectations when interacting with the services they are consuming. Operational efficiencies need to be maximised and services improved.

Plans are at an advanced stage for the further integration of information technology through a formal shared service structure that puts the partnership in a position where it can

realistically achieve a unified information technology strategy. This will allow us to make informed technology choices that can be implemented in a coherent and efficient manner across the partnership, ensuring an equivalence of experience and quality of service. Implementation of the expanded shared service and realisation of the benefits will be an early goal within the term of this plan.

As with information technology, we have developed a significant portfolio of shared services and business processes and systems throughout our evolution. There is still considerable scope for further integration and standardisation of business processes and systems and the development of further shared services. These will be essential if the necessary service improvements are to be achieved in a financially sustainable manner.

Early priorities will be the roll-out of common customer relationship management, finance and human resources systems. We will make better use of digital technology in all aspects of our work, enhancing the student experience, and providing flexible digital tools to enable us to deliver services in a more efficient manner.

The distributed nature of our university partnership requires innovative and robust approaches to shared services that are efficient and effective. It is unlikely that there will be a single model appropriate to areas of service integration and business process and systems standardisation. A case-by-case approach is required, underpinned by sound business planning and the need to proceed judiciously but also to achieve early gains in effectiveness and efficiency.





Enabling strategy

Financial sustainability

The financial strength of the university and our academic partners is vital if we are to achieve our overarching vision, achieve global reach and become a distinctive, world-class institution.

Financial sustainability requires us to secure a fair share of public funding for both our further and higher education, including for research. Importantly, however, it will require us to further supplement our core public funding through improved grant capture and increased philanthropic and commercial income, the latter including from self and employer-funded students.

It also requires us to further enhance the economy, effectiveness and efficiency of our activities, whilst maintaining a broad range of geographically dispersed activity, including teaching, research and support functions, across our university partnership.

Our approach to risk and how this is managed and applied to the breadth of our research, commercial and teaching activities across our diverse partnership underpins financial sustainability.

This requires an increasingly collective and collaborative approach to the strategic management of our university partnership and activities, but one which is sensitive to the diversity within the partnership and the need to remain responsive to local and sub-regional needs.

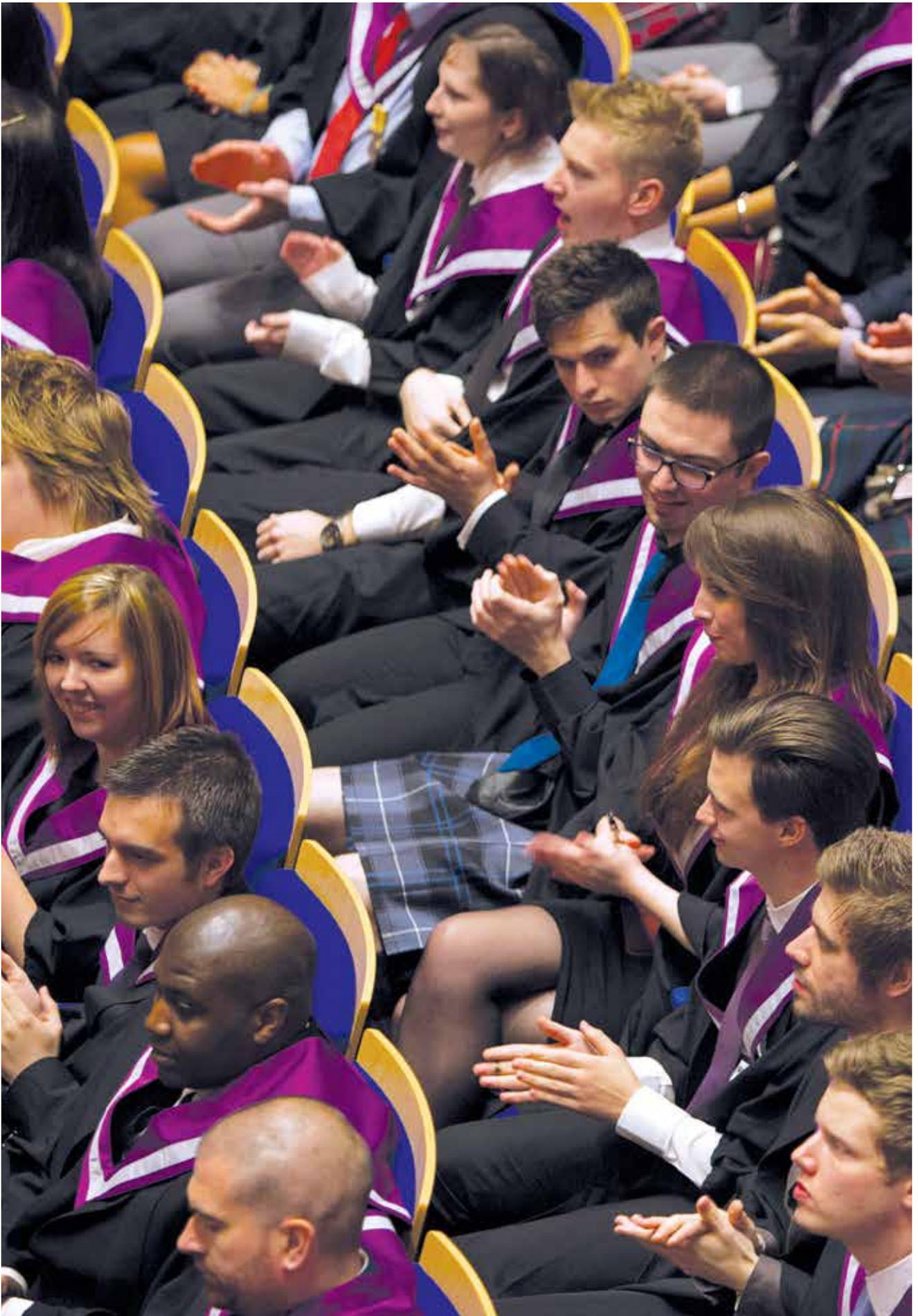
Greater financial independence and sustainability will enhance our institutional confidence and staff morale as well as allowing a longer term strategic view to be taken. This will maximise the use of resources across the university partnership.

Financial sustainability will allow us to grow, make strategic investments, move to the next phase in our development and be agile and responsive to the opportunities which arise.



Critical Performance Indicators (CPI) / Financial sustainability

Seasmhachd ionmhasail	Target (2019/20)
CPI 10 Consolidated partnership annual surplus	3% of turnover (net of internal transfers)



Critical performance indicators

Student numbers	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 1a Total students (all higher education)	5636 FTEs	7700 FTEs
CPI 1b Total further education activity level	110,370 credits	+7% (118,096)
CPI 2 Share of entrants to higher education from within our region	30%	35%
Student satisfaction	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 3a National Student Survey (UK higher education)	3% below Scottish average overall satisfaction (84%/87%)	2% above Scottish average overall satisfaction
CPI 3b National College Satisfaction and Engagement Student Survey (Scotland)		2% above Scottish average overall satisfaction
Employability	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 4a Destination of full-time leavers from higher education	First degree graduates 91.9% (benchmark 91.1%) Other undergraduates 95.8% (benchmark 95.4%)	At least achieve or maintain benchmark
CPI 4b Destination of leavers from further education		At least achieve or maintain benchmark
Student attainment	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 5a Attainment of higher education students	2669 awards	10% increase in awards
CPI 5b Percentage of full-time further education students successfully completing their course	66.1% (compared to 66% nationally)	At least maintain at sector average
Research income	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 6 Non-recurrent research income	£15.2 million	£24 million
Business / Employer engagement	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 7 Active strategic employer partnerships	4	10
Widening access	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 8a Higher education entrants from targeted areas of rurality and rural deprivation	14%	Achieve the same proportion as the working age population in these areas (5% increase)
CPI 8b Further education entrants from targeted areas of rurality and rural deprivation	21%	5% increase
CPI 9 Progression from further to higher education	34%	40%
Financial sustainability	Baseline (2013/14)	Target (2019/20)
CPI 10 Consolidated partnership annual surplus		3% of turnover (net of internal transfers)

Critical Performance Indicators (CPI)

