SHAPING OUR FUTURE: BIRMINGHAM 2015

‘Our challenge is to become a leading global university.’
Professor David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor
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1. Our internationally-renowned Shakespeare Institute
2. Marking our centenary in 2000, the Faraday Bronze by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi
3. Winterbourne House and Garden, a unique heritage attraction
4. Birmingham is a top UK sporting university
5. Barber Institute, one of the finest small art galleries in Europe
6. Our Ironbridge Institute, a dedicated research and teaching facility located at the Ironbridge Gorge
Our challenge is to become a leading global university. We will achieve this through enhanced research power and reach; the distinctiveness of our exceptional student experience; the breadth and depth of our academic portfolio; our size; and the extent of our global networks. We will complement performance in selected league tables with benchmarking against a group of prominent global institutions of our choosing, enabling us to measure our progress as a university with civic roots, national eminence and global impact.

In the next five years, to 2015, each of the University’s five Colleges will increase postgraduate and international student numbers; build sustainable international collaborations with leading universities around the world; measurably enhance the quality of teaching and learning; expand partnerships with business, policy makers, and key stakeholders; and promote research that has originality and impact. The University’s senior management team will drive these efforts, ensuring a unified direction of travel, and periodically assessing strategic fit. We can only achieve this through the leadership and continued commitment of our 6,000 staff and the engagement and participation of our students and alumni. It is, therefore, key to delivering this strategy that we continue to attract the very best students and staff, and invest in a sustainable environment in which they can flourish and excel.

We are producing an environmental strategy which sets out our core ambition to reduce our carbon footprint and evaluate the environmental impact of all our activities. This will encompass imaginative projects to ensure that our historic estate can be managed sustainably, preserving the legacy of our founders while updating it to meet the challenges of the future.

The future of HE funding is in flux and it is clear that the stable public funding environment of the past decade is over. The University of Birmingham recognised the challenges posed by these changes early and, through our Sustainable Excellence programme, developed a robust academic vision that ensured our financial strength was protected.

The Strategic Framework builds on this early work and provides the impetus for a step change in performance throughout the University. It will chart the future direction of the University through turbulent times. It is sufficiently flexible to accommodate further changes in our external environment and allow the University to respond to them. Sustainable Excellence and this Strategic Framework set the context for purposeful investment and significant cultural change that will together transform the University’s performance. The Strategic Framework develops the academic and financial themes of Sustainable Excellence, encompasses our mission and vision, and is shaped by our ambition. It was developed, and will be implemented, through the perspectives offered by the three lenses of our position as a civic, national, and global university. Taken together, these elements give Birmingham one of the most exciting narratives of any UK university.

Professor David Eastwood
Vice-Chancellor
Mission, vision and values

WE HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO RIGOROUS ACADEMIC CURIOSITY, FORMING IDEAS THROUGH THE CRUCIBLE OF DEBATE AND OPENING THEM TO CHALLENGE.
Mission

Our mission derives from our foundation as the first English civic university, established in England’s second city. We are a university of national eminence and global reach, and we cherish our civic roots. We have a fundamental commitment to rigorous academic curiosity, forming ideas through the crucible of debate and opening them to challenge. This ensures that we produce exceptional graduates and impactful research, thereby making a significant contribution to society and the global economy.

Vision

In this framework, we set out our vision to become a leading global university, recognised by our peers as being both a dominant intellectual force and the destination of choice nationally and internationally.

Values

We have identified five core values which inform and pervade the way we work to make the University of Birmingham a leading global university:

- **Excellence** – we are committed to excellence at the heart of everything we do
- **Distinctiveness** – we are clear about what makes us stand out amongst our national and international peers
- **Impact** – we make a difference in Birmingham and the region, across the country and around the world
- **Confidence** – we are confident in ourselves, in our direction and in our common purpose
- **Pride** – we celebrate the quality of our staff and our students, the prestige of our heritage and our location, and being an elite University. Our global community takes pride in us
The challenges ahead

Higher Education is changing rapidly. The deficit in public finances will require stringent cuts in public funding and the government has already made it clear that HE will not be immune. It is clear that, over the life of this Strategic Framework, the balance between student and state contributions to the cost of teaching will alter significantly.

We are fortunate that our financial prudence has consistently generated surpluses and the University is in a better position than most in the sector. However, a healthy balance sheet will not of itself be sufficient, and it is essential that this Strategic Framework equips us to identify our strengths and invest purposefully for growth, resilience and enhanced academic performance in order to ensure continuing positive financial performance. Alongside this, we must continue to disinvest from those activities which do not support our strategic goals.

We will need to offer a student experience that is distinctive and of ever higher quality. This will range from exceptional levels of support for students from lower-income families through the mentoring available on our groundbreaking A2B widening participation scheme; to further engagement with employers, which increases recognition that a University of Birmingham degree equips our graduates well for the world of work.
WE MUST BECOME THE DESTINATION OF CHOICE – FOR STAFF AS WELL AS STUDENTS – BECAUSE OF THE EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY OF EVERYTHING THAT WE DO

We will need to make explicit the value that is added to students’ experience through the cultural, volunteering and sporting opportunities available on our exceptional campus and in the city that is our home. In a more competitive fee environment, we must become the destination of choice – for staff as well as students – because of the exceptional quality of everything that we do. Excellence will inform many of our strategic ambitions, from undergraduate curriculum innovation to increasing our market share of postgraduate and international students.

We remain committed to increasing and improving our research profile, both in terms of grant capture, high quality outputs and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and partners. Our RAE 2008 performance was creditable overall, and outstanding in some areas, but in preparing for the Research Excellence Framework (REF), we need to improve the quality and power of our research. In practice, this will mean achieving a higher proportion of 4* outputs. We will also focus on increasing our research grant capture. This will require us to identify new funding providers and demonstrate our research’s relevance to them. We have already had some successes in this area, but we need to become better yet.

It will be equally important for us to enhance our position globally. This work has begun with the identification of strategic international partnerships in India, Australia, China and the USA. However we also need to remain attractive to international staff, increase our market share of international students, and provide an international experience to all our students. We will achieve this through a coherent international strategy and by carefully targeted projects to extend our global footprint.
In a nutshell

We have identified five key strategic goals, which will enable us to take our place as a leading global university. These goals are mutually supportive; key successes in any of these areas will create a virtuous circle, enhancing the opportunities for success in the other areas.

The five strategic goals are to:
- Enhance our research power
- Provide our students with a distinctive, high quality experience
- Sustain our financial strength and use it purposefully
- Enhance our performance and status as an ‘engaged university’
- Be the destination of choice amongst our peers

SUCCESS IN ALL OF THESE GOALS WILL REQUIRE A STEP CHANGE IN OUR PERFORMANCE, AND THIS WILL BE REFLECTED BY A RISE IN OUR POSITION IN THE NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEAGUE TABLES.

Our intention is to be recognised as one of the world’s leading universities.
The BBC selected Birmingham for the final Prime Ministerial debate before the general election in 2010, bringing our conferencing facilities and beautiful campus to new audiences.
The strategic goals in detail

Enhance our research power

As a research-intensive institution, the University of Birmingham is committed to carrying out research that is world leading in its originality, significance and rigour.

Our research power derives from the breadth and depth of expertise across the disciplines and the opportunities this creates for multi- and inter-disciplinary links and broad thematic topics. By 2015, our research will place our faculty at the global forefront of their disciplines, will foster international connections, and will set international agendas rather than follow them.

We will increase both the proportion of 4* research activity for the Research Excellence Framework, and the number of competitive research grants we apply for and win. This will be coupled with achieving greater diversity of sources of research income. In a global context where knowledge innovation is prioritised by governments, hard-won intellectual property must be properly transformed into benefits for the University, our community and the wider economy, policy and society.

We will identify innovative partnerships with national and international public, commercial and charitable bodies. These will ensure a diversity of income sources that will compensate for the reduction in funding council budgets, and enable us to continue to grow our community of scholars. We will attract the best research students, both nationally and internationally, and we will provide a supportive and dynamic intellectual environment to attract and develop high quality research faculty.

Engagement with business and public partners, such as the Manufacturing Technology Centre, will open new avenues for innovative research and provide opportunities to translate blue sky research, born of our culture of innovation and enquiry, into practical solutions. For example, we will build upon our successes in healthcare (we are a world leader in clinical trials, and in cancer research); industry (such as we see with the Computational Neuroscience and Cognitive Robotics project); cultural projects (we are involved in digitising the Staffordshire Hoard and have launched a Heritage Learning Hub); and in the Third Sector Research Centre (which develops broad, independent and long-term research and analysis to inform third sector policy development and implementation, enabling organisations to achieve the best possible impact).

1. Linking human brain function and robotics through our interdisciplinary research
2. Hydrogen cars – clean fuels developed at Birmingham to ensure there is life after oil
3. Manufacturing Technology Centre – opening in 2012 will power industry by harnessing our research
4. The Staffordshire Hoard – uncovering the cultural treasures of the Midlands
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ACTIONS

- Making world-class academic appointments while developing the potential of our existing staff
- Investing in major new research initiatives building on our quality and disciplinary range
- Establishing an Institute of Advanced Studies
- Preparation for the REF

KPTs

- Market share of competitively awarded research grant income and doctoral research students
- Growth of impact of our academic faculty
The strategic goals in detail

Provide our students with a distinctive, high quality experience

The University of Birmingham Student Experience is grounded in a distinctive combination of academic excellence and outstanding opportunities associated with studying in a major European city.

Teaching and learning, focused upon an approach that challenges and stretches our students, is infused with our research culture of enquiry and investigation, that engages our students within a wider community of scholars. We offer our students: a rare breadth of disciplines, singly or in combination; opportunities to take part in an enormous range of community, social, cultural and leisure interests; an outstanding campus environment, rich in sporting and cultural facilities; and a civic university experience in a vibrant, multicultural city.

We will develop a higher proportion of postgraduate activity, both growing our doctoral research student numbers, and providing high quality taught postgraduate programmes. We will engage with leading employers from all sectors, increasing awareness of our academic quality, working to understand the changing needs of global employment markets, and thereby better preparing our graduates for their chosen careers.

The high quality, distinctive educational and developmental experience we offer our students will not be confined to their academic learning. Students will expect excellent support, cultural, sporting, welfare and accommodation services. We will continue to enhance the quality of services we provide, from student administration to welfare, advice and employability. We will continue to offer accommodation in high quality, modern student residences. We will particularly focus on providing an excellent experience for international students. A feature of our distinctiveness is our achievement in participative sport. We are committed to maintaining our consistently held top 5 position in the British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) table of all UK universities.

Our Guild of Students is committed to widening and improving the opportunities it offers students to influence the development of their learning environment through representation at University fora, and to participate in the vibrant, diverse life of the city, both as consumers, and as significant contributors to voluntary and outreach activities.
ACTIONS

- Curriculum innovation
- Enhancement of the student experience, including student support facilities and services, and employability

KPTs

- A weighted scorecard of measures including intake quality, the National Student Survey, employability and degree classifications
The strategic goals in detail

Sustain our financial strength and use it purposefully

We will use our financial strength to invest in: improved academic performance, both research and teaching; our estate, facilities and infrastructure; and our excellent professional services.

*Sustainable Excellence* outlined concrete proposals to achieve this, and we are making substantial progress on delivering these. We will continue the policy, established through *Sustainable Excellence*, of taking difficult decisions to disinvest from those areas which do not support our strategic ambitions, and take measures to support those areas which do, but which are underperforming.

We will develop new income streams in support of our chosen activities, in the face of reduced public funding. Our *Circles of Influence* fundraising campaign will raise £60 million by 2012 to support areas of critical investment, and will be developed beyond that date, demonstrating that philanthropy will play a major role in diversifying our income streams. We will also be seeking partnerships, locally and on a worldwide basis, which can benefit from our knowledge base, excellence in research and associated use of our world-class facilities. We will develop imaginative structures to enhance and exploit our intellectual property.

We will ensure that our teaching and research infrastructure is effectively used and, where possible, shared across disciplines and projects to create efficiencies. This will include renewing equipment where necessary, and ensuring that our infrastructure is sustainable and supports the creation of research collaborations.

Capital investment will be a key part of this, ensuring that we enrich and maintain our estate and provide a world-class environment to attract and retain the best staff and students. Environmental sustainability is a core part of this aim, and our Carbon Management Strategy will deliver a range of responses to ensure we achieve a 20% reduction in our carbon emissions by 2020, whilst preserving the iconic cultural heritage embodied by our historic estate.
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ACTIONS

- Review and extend Sustainable Excellence
- Develop an investment strategy, encompassing capital investment, to deliver the goals of the Strategic Framework
- Ensure the effective use of teaching and research infrastructure on a sustainable basis
- Maintain the University’s sound financial position

KPTs

- Core income per academic FTE
- Optimise investment in academic excellence and key capital projects
Enhance our performance and status as an engaged University

We will bring the University’s resources to bear on societal needs, through knowledge development and transfer, and strategic partnerships in the intellectual, commercial, cultural and policy spheres.

These will involve our academic and professional staff, our students and our extensive community of alumni. Engagement will establish the University as a body capable of leading national and international agendas, inspiring our local and regional community, and bringing the world to Birmingham. We have a considerable economic impact, being directly or indirectly responsible for more than 9,500 jobs in the West Midlands, and generating over £750 million of income for the region.

This economic impact will be coupled with growing civic engagement. We will work in partnership with Birmingham City Council around the Olympic Games in 2012; and collaborate further with the City Library and Art Gallery. We will foster and deepen relationships with significant commercial partners. We are already doing this with several partnerships: in the pharmacological sector, leading to significant participation in clinical trials; with our participation in the Engaging Research for Business Transformation (EREBUS) project, opening access to academic business research for SMEs in the West Midlands; and with carefully selected ventures through Birmingham Science City, developing research in and exploitation of translational medicine, advanced materials and energy futures. Projects such as these will contribute to economic and social regeneration by creating employment and disseminating knowledge, create a commercial cradle for research innovation and establish our position as a significant provider of expertise.

We will build upon the experience of hosting the UK election’s leadership debate in 2010 and the visit of the UN Secretary-General, and become a national and global thought leader, influential in policy formation, and a leading source of public intellectuals. We will come to be seen as the ‘critical friend of choice’ for policy formulators, with the academic credibility to act as such.

We will develop strategic international engagement and partnerships, such as those already under way in the USA, India, China and Australia. These not only enhance our international reputation and exposure, but they broaden our scholarly community and maximise the opportunity for internationalisation for both staff and students. Such engagement will enable our faculty to widen the arena for their scholarship and will enhance the learning experience and outcomes for our students.
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ACTIONS

- Development of strategic partnerships with the NHS, industry and major employers
- Develop and implement a global engagement strategy
- Develop and implement a cultural strategy
- Enhance our external visibility and reputation

KPTs

- Increasing the proportion of academic staff engaged in knowledge transfer and public engagement activities
- Development of a University of Birmingham basket of weighted measures examining engagement from a number of angles
The strategic goals in detail

Be the destination of choice amongst our peers

Being the destination of choice is about our ability to attract, develop and retain the highest quality students and staff from around the world.

We will focus our student recruitment on attracting more postgraduate and international students, while retaining our position as a leading national recruiter of high quality UK undergraduate students. We will raise our reputation with undergraduate and postgraduate students from the UK and throughout the world by providing a distinctive learning experience which combines outstanding academic, cultural and sporting provision with a strong, supportive and thriving student community. Our University of Birmingham Graduate and University of Birmingham Student Experience programmes will draw together the key strands of the student journey through the University: induction; an innovative curriculum; participatory scholarship; skills and support to enhance employability; and welfare and support networks.

We will support and develop our staff, eliciting from them their personal best. We will provide opportunities to develop leadership and management skills. We will foster an environment of supportive and effective performance management, encouraging all staff to excel. We will employ talented professional staff who will work in partnership with academic faculty in delivering the level of performance needed to realise our ambition. We will develop recognised pathways for career and personal development. We will identify and reward excellent performance.

As we enhance our research performance in line with our ambitions, we will become an increasingly attractive destination for leading global researchers who will, in turn, attract the best research students.

We will develop a cultural strategy which enhances the University’s appeal as a leading cultural and leisure destination within the city, and acts as a significant additional attraction for students and staff.

We have outstanding museums, galleries and theatres, physical and virtual, which link to local, regional and national arts organisations. We will seek to make explicit the heritage, significance and social impact of the cultural assets we control. These activities will contribute towards a dynamic and exciting environment for all who work or study at the University of Birmingham.
ACTIONS

Development and delivery of a coherent suite of programmes for:
- University of Birmingham Graduate
- University of Birmingham Professional
- University of Birmingham Academic
- University of Birmingham Researcher
- University of Birmingham Experience
- Appropriate reward and recognition for performance for staff

KPTs

- Increase our share of the market for quality taught postgraduate and international students
- Recruit and retain staff of demonstrably outstanding quality

1. The domes of the Aston Webb Building, a recognisable feature of the campus
2. Bullring in Birmingham city centre
3. The canal that runs through our Edgbaston campus
4. We are the only UK University with its own railway station
Student

I am proud to have won a place to study at the University of Birmingham. I am confident that the academic opportunities I have here are of the very highest standard and will equip me well for life beyond university. I value the opportunities I have to engage in extra-curricular activities: sporting, cultural and social, as well as the opportunities that I have both to be part of an international community and to contribute to the local community. I am sure that, at the end of my studies, I will be well placed to get a graduate-level job. I want to make the most of being here and I feel that others will see my university as the place to be.

Academic

The University of Birmingham gives me the opportunity to develop my research and career in an intellectually stimulating, challenging and rewarding environment, where I can interact with world leaders in my field. I have plenty of opportunities to showcase my research and its impact to industry and business, as well as presenting my work to the best research groups globally. I enjoy delivering inspirational and motivational teaching to bright students from around the world. I benefit from working in an environment where everyone aspires to achieve their personal best.
Alumni

I am proud to have studied at the University of Birmingham. I was challenged and developed academically, intellectually and personally as a student, and this prepared me for a rewarding life as a contributing member of a global society. I am proud of the world-leading and life-changing research that continues there, and appreciate staying in touch with the University and contributing to its ongoing success. I enthusiastically recommend the University to my family, friends and colleagues, confident that people recognise the value of my degree and the standing of my university on the world stage.

Professional

The University of Birmingham presents me with opportunities which are often challenging, but always fulfilling. I enjoy the teamwork, relish the opportunity to demonstrate leadership when required, and I know how my work contributes to making the University a better place for our staff and students. I feel that the University values me, and I particularly enjoy working in partnership with my academic colleagues. There are well defined structures for supporting my professional development, and exciting opportunities to further my career.

Partners

I have actively sought to engage with the University of Birmingham. I understand that its internationally recognised research and high quality teaching deliver insight and support to advance my business. I appreciate the opportunity to employ skilled graduates to advance my workforce. I can easily identify the academic and professional staff most able to help me meet the challenges that my organisation faces. I welcome the opportunity that partnership with the University provides to make contact with other international business partners.
An inclusive framework

Formulating this Strategic Framework has taken a highly inclusive approach, building upon the success of a series of fundamental, institution-wide changes over the past two years: the University’s restructure into five academic Colleges; the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor and the establishment of a new University executive team. These changes have reinvigorated the University community, and have permeated the development of the Strategic Framework. The success of the Strategic Framework is wholly dependent on the commitment and contributions of all our 6,000 staff and our student body, and so it was important that they had opportunities to engage in its development, including identifying, defining and clarifying of key performance targets to measure the success of the underpinning strategies.

The Strategic Framework has been developed through three lenses, offering different perspectives on our status as a university with civic roots, national eminence and global impact. These lenses offer important perspectives on our vision and the way we operate as a university and, critically, on the way that the world views us. We used the three lenses in a series of workshops focusing on each theme; town meetings open to all staff; and discussions at Senate, Council and University committees.

The Framework is not a prescriptive blueprint. Rather, it raises the ambition for the University as outlined in our vision, and sets our direction of travel. It enables the University to adapt to changing external circumstances. It provides a coherent framework, a sense of ambition, and a direction for Colleges’ and Corporate Services’ strategic and operational plans.
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