

Learning and Teaching Strategy, 2010-17 (Updated October 2014)

1. Context

- 1.1 The University of Surrey's Mission is "***to work in partnership with industry, commerce, the professions and with other institutions for the benefit of our world. We will achieve this by providing scholarship attuned to the particular needs of society, developing leading-edge research and creating a rich and varied learning environment.***" The University has approximately 14,000 students, and over 2,000 staff. It is organised into four Faculties that undertake teaching and research in disciplines covering the sciences, arts, humanities, social sciences, and the health and social care professions.
- 1.2 This *Learning and Teaching Strategy* (LTS) has been developed from the University's [Strategy 2012-2017](#), and has taken account of the successful QAA Institutional Audit in 2009. It provides the University the opportunity to reflect on its policies and of national and international developments within the context of the University's ambitions of realising 10-100-10 (to be in the top 10 in the UK and top 100 in the world by 2017).
- 1.3 The University's *Learning and Teaching Strategy* will be supported in its aims by Faculty Learning and Teaching Strategies, as well as University Values, Strategies and Policies on Research and Innovation, Internationalisation, and Widening Participation.

2. Aims of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy

- 2.1 To provide the University with a strategic and effective mechanism for innovation, enhancement and monitoring of the student learning experience by ensuring that:
- i. the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) is the key strategic Committee of the University for all aspects of learning and teaching, admissions, the student experience, and academic development. It is supported by four sub committees: Quality and Standards, Student Experience, Admissions and Widening Participation and Outreach;
 - ii. the Faculty Learning and Teaching Strategies dove-tail with the University Strategy and represent all stakeholders within the respective Faculty, thus giving more autonomy, responsibility and accountability for innovation in learning and teaching.
- 2.2 To provide the highest quality student learning experience that combines academic rigour, personal and professional development and employability through introducing students to the most up-to-date knowledge that will enhance and develop their skills for independent academic study, digital media literacy, innovation, and working in professional contexts.
- 2.3 To fundamentally review the University Regulations, ensuring that they are fit for purpose.

- 2.4 To systematically review the current academic portfolio as a mechanism for ensuring that it allows for continuous growth, innovation, synergy between research and teaching, thus attracting students of the highest quality.
- 2.5 To review the current approaches to teaching, learning and assessment ensuring they are fit for purpose.
- 2.6 To review recruitment, retention and progression with a view to maintaining high entry profiles and where necessary raising the entry profile of students as a mechanism for improving academic quality and progression, whilst preserving the diversity of the student body.
- 2.7 To develop the University's e-learning environment and provision in order to create an e-learning strategy that supports new technology learning environments and digital media literacy, thus forming an integral part of the University's learning, teaching and enhancement activities.
- 2.8 To actively engage in new developments within and between Faculties, particularly those arising from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary collaborations and partnerships, through teaching, research, industry, national and international activity.
- 2.9 To recognise, reward, and enhance, the professional skills of all staff who support the academic endeavour of the University by the creation of the Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Award.

3. Learning, teaching and enhancement in the context of the University's Vision and Strategic Framework 2010-2017

3.1 The University is committed to six strategic imperatives:

- **Quality**
- **International Impact**
- **Distinctiveness**
- **Collegiality**
- **Professionalism**
- **Sustainability**

3.2 Each of the six strategic imperatives is embedded in the Learning and Teaching Strategy to ensure that the University strives for ***excellence in learning, teaching, enhancement, and the student experience***. The Strategy promotes four areas of improvement:

- **Academic portfolio and curriculum provision**
- **Internationalisation**
- **Assessment**
- **New Technologies**

Each of these are discussed in turn within Section 4.

4. Excellence in learning, teaching, enhancement, and the student experience

4.1 The University is committed to providing research-led teaching that introduces students to the latest findings in their subjects and which develops their powers of critical insight and intellectual synthesis.

- 4.2 The underlying principle of the University's undergraduate provision is to give a learning experience that is informed and enhanced by the University's commitment to being a research-led institution.
- 4.3 The University's postgraduate provision will continue to be based on the research strengths within the University. This commitment is driven by the need to further develop and sustain a vibrant research and postgraduate community of learning that:
- enhances, extends and enriches students' knowledge and understanding, enabling them to better contribute to society and the world of work;
 - equips students for the requirements of undertaking research at doctoral level;
 - provides continual professional development based on research strengths, to industry, and the local community, as appropriate.

Academic portfolio and curriculum provision

- 4.4 The University is committed to systematic and continuous review of its academic portfolio, as a means to providing the highest quality curriculum provision that meets the needs of an ambitious University, producing graduates with skills, creativity, confidence and the adaptability to succeed in the world of work and make a meaningful contribution to society.
- 4.5 The University's commitment to equality and diversity will continue by ensuring that policies and evaluation procedures take account of and incorporate legislation, as appropriate.
- 4.6 The University is committed to consolidating and extending student participation and representation on committees as a mechanism for ensuring that student experiences and concerns are taken into account in the planning, delivery and evaluation of programmes.
- 4.7 The University recognises the importance of recording and reporting both students' academic achievement and personal development. This will be actively developed and enhanced by the Student Experience Sub-committee, by providing an integrated approach to students' personal and academic development activities as a mechanism of maximising student employability.

Internationalisation

- 4.8 The University, in line with Strategic Imperative 2 and through its [International Strategy](#), is committed to "internationalise the educational, cultural and social experience of all students and staff, irrespective of location, such that the University's contributions to learning, teaching, research and enterprise gain real and concrete expression in professional and academic experience, relevance and international impact" (International Strategy (IS): Purpose,pg1).
- 4.9 The International Strategy's aim is to: "introduce a step-change in the international experience of all its students, irrespective of the place of delivery, and to this end it will promote mobility, raise intercultural awareness and make the curriculum (contents, mode of delivery and assessment) responsive to the needs of a global society, culture and economy."(IS section 2). This will be considered and developed, where appropriate, through the systematic review of the academic portfolio (Learning and Teaching Strategy, section 4.1).

Assessment

- 4.10 The University acknowledges that to establish excellence in learning and teaching, it must build on students' prior achievements and the diversity of learning styles and skills that students bring to the University. This must be recognised through the provision of a fair and equitable assessment that will ensure students are supported and appropriately assessed in order to facilitate progression from admission through to graduation and employment.
- 4.11 The University has been successful in developing innovative methods of assessment however, to ensure that best practice is disseminated, a fundamental review of assessment will be undertaken in order to increase the reliability, validity and equity of assessment practises, and more specifically, to allow further innovations to take place so that opportunities are created for all students to display their knowledge, understanding and skills. Alternative assessment arrangements will continue to be made for students with disabilities and other special requirements through the Student Support Services.

New technologies

- 4.12 The University is committed to the use of new technologies through encouraging and developing innovative e-learning environments. The University will work towards developing an e-learning strategy that supports staff and student engagement within a new technological environment including digital media. The evolving strategy will focus on:
- facilitating and supporting traditional learning and teaching methodologies with new technologies where appropriate;
 - increasing the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) to enhance the student learning experience;
 - facilitating staff in developing and implementing new technologies through technical and pedagogical training and support;
 - providing students with the opportunity to learn through the digital media

5. Widening Participation and student diversity

- 5.1 The University is a research intensive University that has, and continues to make a significant investment in the widening participation agenda. It is also a University that has one of the highest student employability records in the sector and aims to offer a high quality education and student experience to all its students. The University continues to provide the highest academic provision and access for all students, particularly for those from non-traditional backgrounds, international students, and students with differing needs. The University will continue to consult widely with key stakeholders to maintain the currency and appropriateness of the curricula it provides to ensure all students are catered for.
- 5.2 The [University's Access Agreement](#) clearly states its continued commitment to widening participation and student support and how this will be monitored and evaluated over the student lifecycle.

6. Quality enhancement and assurance

- 6.1 The University's most recent QAA assessment, Institutional Audit (2009), received the top rating, 'confidence' in its learning, teaching, enhancement and quality assurance activities. The University will use the areas identified as best practice in the Audit to further enhance the quality of provision across the institution, whilst acknowledging and enhancing the areas that would benefit from further development.
- 6.2 The responsibility for overseeing quality assurance and enhancement will remain with the University Learning and Teaching Committee reporting through the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee.

Supporting and rewarding staff

- 6.3 The University, through its Department of Higher Education, is fully committed to facilitating academic staff development and in supporting teaching excellence, innovation, and research. Current provision will continue to be enhanced and developed in order to support the University's aim to reward staff. The Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Excellence award has been developed to become a focus for rewarding excellence in teaching and learning.

Learning, and teaching, governance and management

- 6.4 Implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy will be monitored by the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC), which will report directly to Senate through its consideration of regular structured reports, in line with the University's governance framework.
- 6.5 The ULTC will report on annual basis to Senate on the implementation of Faculty annual learning and teaching reports, based on targets set, achieved, or brought forward. Faculty reports will be sent to ULTC for consideration and evaluation. There will be an expectation that Faculty reports will indicate close cooperation and integration with Central Services and Administration in reporting against their targets.
- 6.6 Responsibilities for the management of the annual Faculty learning and teaching report to ULTC will be devolved to the Deans of Faculty, acting through Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching). The implementation of University policy on learning, teaching, enhancement, and quality and standards will lie with Deans of Faculty, Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching), and Heads of School, Departments, Divisions as appropriate.

Future targets and Action Plan (updated October 2014)

Review of Regulations for academic appeals	Completed July 2014
Consolidation of undergraduate and taught postgraduate regulations, creation of Introduction to the regulations and streamlining	Completed July 2014
Further review of regulations (extenuating circumstances, Boards of Studies, Boards of Examiners)	Ongoing, to be completed by July 2015
Review of taught postgraduate provision Re-visited	Completed 2012 November 2014
Review of assessment practices	Code of practice introduced in 2013/14

Review of Enhancement Strategy	Ongoing, to be completed by July 2015
Review of learning and teaching infrastructure	Completed July 2014
Production of e-Learning Strategy	Completed 2014
Review of the Professional Training Year (PTY)	Completed 2013
PTY re-structure	Ongoing 2014/15
Introduction of the Quality Framework	First stage introduced in 2014/15, ongoing in 2014/15
Review of Associate staff	2014/15