Global Education in a Civic University

Learning & Teaching Strategy
2011 – 2016
1. Purpose of our Learning & Teaching Strategy (LTS)

The LTS provides a shared direction for learning and teaching. It does this by defining our aspirations for the period to July 2016 and in turn providing a framework for:

- Delivering an excellent portfolio of education.
- Developing new or revised programmes.
- Delivering high quality undergraduate and postgraduate learning and teaching, with an emphasis on combining inspirational practice with consistent standards.
- Identifying resource needs with respect to sustaining or enhancing the quality of learning and teaching.
- Understanding the relationship between learning, teaching and assessment and the broader student journey.
- Combining our aspiration to develop inquiring minds, with ensuring that all of our students have the opportunity to fulfil their potential by gaining knowledge, skills and experience that make them well placed to obtain graduate level employment and to participate as active citizens in their communities.

The LTS is a guide: the intention is to provide institutional coherence and leadership whilst enabling the Faculties to shape the delivery in ways which are suitable in the contexts of their disciplines. It is strongly informed by research undertaken in preparation for changes to the fees regime in 2012. It is closely aligned with other strategic plans, for example the Estates Strategy. Details of the inter-relationships between strategies are to be found in Appendix 2.

For each element of the LTS there will an action plan for discussion, development and policy formation, with monitoring of progress and evaluation of the impact throughout the period.

It is informed by the University’s Strategic Plan and overarching objectives:

- To be recognised worldwide for excellence in research-led learning and teaching of the highest international quality.
- To be recognised worldwide for an outstanding and distinctive student experience which produces graduates who are in demand.
- To attract and retain the best students, staff and partners.
- To inspire and enable our students to stretch themselves and achieve greater things.
- To provide facilities that are designed around how students learn.

To provide learning, and other developmental opportunities, that transforms the lives of students.

To nurture a community in which equality and diversity contribute positively to student and staff experiences.

To enhance how we deliver learning and teaching activities.

To maintain the high quality of our student experience.

To encourage our students and alumni to care about the University and its future.

It is shaped by our learning and teaching philosophy and values:

- Our mission as a university rooted in civic engagement.
- The importance of diversity within our students and staff.
- Our emphasis on research-led learning, exposing students to the big challenges in their disciplines, and inspiring them to pose their own questions.
- The importance of transparency in the provision of information, advice and guidance on our learning and teaching activities.
- Our emphasis on the creation and maintenance of communities of scholars, encompassing students and staff.

The emphasis we place on inspiring students to engage with communities and clients outside the university.

Our emphasis on the development of practical and professional skills such that our graduates can transform their own lives and the lives of others.

The importance we place on supporting students to set their own goals, to achieve them, and to overcome any impediments on the way.

Our ambitions for our students to enter global labour markets and to become global citizens.
2. Our Aspirations: by 2016 we will be known for:

1. Undergraduate programmes combining research informed disciplinary knowledge and skills, wider transferable skills, professional competence, cultural agility and real world engagement, delivered in Sheffield and in our International Faculty/ies.

2. Taught postgraduate programmes emphasising disciplinary depth, research training, and the development of professional competencies, delivered on both a full-time and part-time basis in Sheffield and in our International Faculty/ies.

3. Cross-cultural experiences of learning in more than one country and higher education system, provided through innovative collaborative undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in partnership with other leading universities and other higher education institutions around the world.

4. Distance and blended learning postgraduate taught programmes, generally delivered on a part-time basis for those with employment commitments.

5. Flexible Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes that provide for the accumulation of learning experiences for professionals to build to a University of Sheffield award.

6. Research training and development programmes and qualifications which enhance the skills of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers.

7. Graduates possessing a highly regarded set of attributes, making them well equipped to make a difference in a complex world (‘The Sheffield Graduate’, see Appendix 1 for details of the attributes).

3. Meeting our Aspirations

We have identified the key areas we will need to work on in order to meet our aspirations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority themes to shape the enhancement of our activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Operational changes required in order to achieve our objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associated resource and support needs for learning and teaching developments.</td>
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All will require partnership working between academics, professional services and students.

3.1 The Priority Themes (please note, these are numbered to aid follow up rather than to show an order of importance)

1. Focus on inspiring our students and broadening their understanding of academic study within its wider intellectual context.

   We will seek to inspire students on the major issues that key areas of academic study can contribute to and provide them with opportunities to demonstrate the tools they can use to solve problems. In addition to cross-departmental initiatives within Faculties, we will evaluate the potential for wider courses and activities. We also aim to energise student learning through inspiration rather than through the necessity for assessment.

2. The creation of communities of learning.

   We will enhance induction and other activities within departments and faculties, bringing all staff and students together to create a sense of belonging and of common purpose, enabling greater staff/student contact, more peer and inter-cohort support and mentoring, and a greater sense of ownership of academic agendas.
3. The creation of a significant personal research experience for all students on all programmes.  
   We will aim to ensure that all students have personal experience of research-led learning through individual and/or collaborative discipline related work. In doing so we will recognise the varying ways in which research and research-led learning are interpreted in different areas of study.

4. The creation of an employability strategy for the University, to be adapted by each Faculty to suit disciplinary contexts, with an identifiable skills spine running through every programme.  
   This will assist students to: articulate what they can do as a result of their academic study and related or extra-curricular activities they have undertaken; identify routes to skills development; and present their skills portfolio in the most effective manner.

5. The creation of opportunities for all students to learn and develop personally through experiences outside the university, in particular reflecting the University’s mission as a civic institution.  
   We will seek to extend our range of opportunities, and embed these within degree programmes wherever possible. Such opportunities could involve work or clinical placements, community-based volunteering, targeted outreach activities, enterprise activities, commissioned research projects with industrial, commercial or third sector partners and a variety of other activities.

6. The development of cultural agility, flexibility, and the ability of our graduates to compete strongly in the global labour market.  
   We aim to ensure that all students extend their understanding of working with others of different cultures. Wherever feasible, all students should be offered the opportunity to spend part of their time abroad as part of their studies. All students should be encouraged and be able to take a modern language or to deepen their understanding of a second (or third) language they already know.

7. The provision of consistent and effective academic and personal support for student learning and development  
   We will seek to enhance the effectiveness of student learning and support by identifying a series of key goals relating to major issues such as who students are taught and supervised by, the teaching and assessment methods used, how they are supervised, feedback on progress, personal tutorial support, and inclusive support for students from diverse backgrounds.

8. Extending the Sheffield Graduate concept  
   We will explore the value of defining specific attributes in relation to our PGR research students or CPD students. We will also consider whether the increasing numbers of students who take Sheffield University programmes without ever physically entering the University have or should have access to sufficient opportunities to gain the full range of Sheffield Graduate attributes. In addition, to enhance existing provision we will aim to provide modules/opportunities that are specifically designed to develop the capacity for independent, imaginative and creative thinking that we view as attributes of the Sheffield Graduate.

9. The maintenance and enhancement of the university’s high reputation for the quality of the student experience and for the university’s academic standards.  
   We aim to stay at the forefront of the development of new means of supporting learning, including the use of learning technologies. We recognise the need to provide effective support to those developing and delivering teaching as well as to students.

10. The effective and efficient use of available resources.  
    We will recognise the significance of sustainability within the University’s Strategic Plan, and will work to use all resources – staff, space, time, equipment etc. – in ways which are effective and efficient.
The following operational and resource implications have been identified. Their inclusion here is intended to inform advance planning and the allocation of learning and teaching development funds, but it is anticipated that they will evolve as the work on each of the priority themes takes shape.

3.2. Anticipated operational changes

Revisions to the academic teaching year with the aim of eliminating many of the rigidities of semesterisation in order to enable the introduction of elements such as inter-departmental project weeks, short intensive modules, or civic engagement periods. Any changes will take account of the possible impact on international exchanges/opportunities to study abroad. (Themes: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9).

Encouragement for the further rationalisation of our undergraduate degree programmes, removing small dual programmes, in order to enhance the flexibility of delivery of a smaller number of core programmes. Consideration will be given to new models of inter-disciplinary programmes. (Themes: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9).

The facilitation of more synoptic and integrative assessment as an alternative to the existing module based approach. As this is likely to require changes to existing assessment schedules it is dependent on changes noted in point 1 above. (Themes: 1, 5, 6, 8).

The guarantee of formative feedback to students in all modules, with guidance and exemplars provided to support good practice. (Themes: 7, 8).

Encouragement to departments to provide programmes with a minimum of 20 credits taken outside the core department(s) in both levels 1 and 2. This will support the aim to facilitate the broadening of students’ intellectual bases and to enhance their skills development. (Themes: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8).

Early adoption of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR), incorporating the Bologna Diploma Supplement, to recognise students’ achievements in areas not covered by academic assessment. Aspects of the Sheffield Graduate not necessarily covered in academic programmes would be identified in the Sheffield HEAR. (Themes: 4, 5, 6).

The creation of a central support structure to facilitate the development of collaborative programme development with partner institutions. (Themes: 2, 6, 8, 9).

The establishment of a framework for the development of an enhanced offer of continuous professional development courses, and for their recording. (Themes: 2, 4, 7, 8, 9).

The integration of procedures for the academic management of all programmes – undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research – such that we can benefit from the synergies between them and ensure consistency. (Themes: 2, 3, 4, 7, 9).

The introduction of centralised timetabling and room booking to facilitate the effective use of all teaching resources. (Themes: 1, 9).

3.3. Resource implications

To implement this strategy we will need to resource:

Suitable numbers of committed and inspirational academic and support staff, with the skills to develop and deliver high quality learning and teaching for all student groups.
The provision of effective staff development for learning, teaching and assessment roles, catering for varying levels of experience and a range of disciplinary contexts, and including training for aspects of the future portfolio that are currently not fully developed.

The creation of strong central support for the development of blended and distance learning aspects to our portfolio, in particular at postgraduate level.

The creation of an integrated approach to the provision of CPD courses and their accumulation into named awards.

Support for the introduction of the HEAR, and the provision of student portfolio production software, to ensure that we can fulfil our commitment to recording and providing evidence of attaining the Sheffield Graduate attributes and to validate activities that are recorded in the HEAR.

Continued resource to co-ordinate activities designed to develop and embed internationalisation, including the appointment of an academic lead (Director of Learning and Teaching, Internationalisation).

Central co-ordination of the range of extra and co-curricular opportunities that support students in gaining the Sheffield Graduate attributes, and the provision of information and advice to academic staff in supporting academic and transferable skills development.

Continued support for delivery of the Sheffield Graduate Award, potentially to increased numbers of students.

Continued and extended support for the central co-ordination and delivery of enterprise activities and community engagement around enterprise.

The creation of a new ‘Languages for All’ programme to deliver part of priority theme 6 (above) on cultural agility. This programme should cover as many as possible of the languages currently taught in the University.

Continued support for the Union of Students’ Sheffield Volunteering programme, to enhance departmental engagement as well as individual student involvement.

Continued support for the network of departmental, Faculty and University-wide Student Ambassadors in Learning and Teaching, so that they can work collaboratively on enhancement activities, and particularly on initiatives fostering community development.

Continued support for student engagement and representation in the governance of the University.
Appendices
Appendix 1

The Characteristics of the Sheffield Graduate

The aspiration of the strategy ‘Global Education in a Civic University’ is to create opportunities for all students which enable them to graduate with the abilities listed below. Faculties and departments may wish to supplement this list in ways appropriate to their own areas of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Text. 'The Sheffield Graduate can …'</th>
<th>Abbreviated version. 'The Sheffield Graduate is …'</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. demonstrate a sound knowledge-base within their academic subject, and the skills and competencies to apply that knowledge appropriately</td>
<td>Knowledgeable in their subject area</td>
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<td>2. carry out extended independent enquiry, formulating relevant questions and engaging critically and ethically with a wide range of evidence</td>
<td>A skilled and ethical researcher</td>
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<td>3. demonstrate the core capabilities and skills of information literacy, interacting confidently with the nature and structure of information in their subject and handling information in a professional and ethical manner;</td>
<td>Information literate</td>
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<td>4. explore the history of and challenge the processes of knowledge creation, applying creativity, enterprise and innovation, to push against the boundaries of current practice from a broad range of perspectives;</td>
<td>A critical, analytical and creative thinker</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An entrepreneurial problem solver</td>
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<td>5. be a constructive team member, working collaboratively towards a shared goal and demonstrating transferable skills; where appropriate, working across academic disciplines, professional and organisational boundaries;</td>
<td>A flexible team worker</td>
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<td>6. communicate effectively orally, in writing or by other means as appropriate for particular audiences and purposes;</td>
<td>An accomplished communicator</td>
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<td>7. handle information, communications and technology packages and specialist software efficiently, effectively and innovatively;</td>
<td>Skilled in the use of IT</td>
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<td>8. critically reflect on their experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and plan their personal and career development to fulfil both work and personal responsibilities and aspirations;</td>
<td>A well rounded individual, reflective, self aware and self-motivated</td>
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<td>9. work independently, setting their own goals and identifying the strategies for achieving them;</td>
<td>An independent learner</td>
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<td>10. overcome problems through effective planning, project management, monitoring and evaluation, whether working independently or as part of a team;</td>
<td>An efficient planner and time manager</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>identify the wider social, cultural and economic and global context of their academic knowledge and skills base, and relate their understanding and practical abilities to the needs of individuals and communities;</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>recognise and demonstrate their responsibilities as active citizens and apply their knowledge and skills productively, respecting diverse viewpoints and treating others as equals</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>demonstrate that they are fit to practice and progress in their chosen professional field, working responsibly, safely and ethically, recognising their limitations, and meeting the requirements of relevant statutory bodies where relevant.</td>
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14. explore their academic subject in **greater depth** focusing on a specific and specialised area by undertaking further study and/or research;

15. **critically analyse** the knowledge, ideas and research of their discipline and **apply that knowledge** to new scenarios or to professional practice;

16. enhance the skills developed at undergraduate level, further developing their ability to take **independent responsibility for learning** and knowledge creation.
Appendix 2

Links to other Strategies

Access and Widening Participation
To include issues around: diversity and student expectations; considerations of the engagement of students with outreach, aspiration-building and mentoring activities.

E-Learning Strategy (to be newly created)
To include issues around meeting student expectations, identifying technologies for collaborative work including beyond Sheffield, and sustainable development and delivery of our L&T portfolio.

Internationalisation
To include issues around: diversity and the breadth of student experience; internationalisation of experiences on campus.

Research
To include issues around: the routes from undergraduate to postdoctoral level, via PGT and PGR training; the uses of PGR students in teaching, and their training needs to do so.

Human Resources
To include issues around: the development of the ‘Sheffield Academic’: the reward and recognition of teaching and the educational mission of the university.

Employability Strategy (to be newly created)
To include issues around assisting and encouraging students to identify and address skills development needs through actions within their programmes and in other activities.

Estates
To include issues around the teaching infrastructure and its responsiveness to future demands that would be made by portfolio development and by new methods of teaching delivery.

Finance
To include issues around the business modelling of aspects of portfolio growth and change, taking into account central needs as well as departmental aspects of provision.

Student Support
To include issues around the interface between departmental and central student support, and the training implications of this.

Library
To include issues around the provision of information resources to students.

Computing and Information Services
To include issues around the provision of IT infrastructure to support teaching, learning and the student experience.

Union of Students
To include issues around collaborative working between the Union and the University over matters contained in this strategy.