Academic Strategy

as excerpted from the

University Strategic Plan

2008-2018

Approved by Academic Council: 14 September 2007
Academic Strategy

The Academic Strategy consists of the Research Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, as described in the University Strategic Plan.

Research

| To build upon its excellent reputation for leadership and competitiveness in all areas of research as measured by international standards so as to create an exciting, innovative and flexible, as well as intellectually and financially sustainable research culture to pursue programmes of world-class research such that leading research staff and research students will be attracted to St Andrews and such that its research will be highly valued by society. |

Points of Focus

- Appoint, develop, reward and retain excellent and internationally competitive researchers.
- Foster an intellectual environment in which the enduring values of scholarship are shared.
- Optimise the University’s research performance with attention to new UK measures of research performance and to the quality of research outputs.
- Provide a physical environment, infrastructure (including the demands for a high-level IT infrastructure), technical support and level of resource that is conducive to internationally leading research.
- Facilitate interdisciplinarity in research at all levels and consider development of cross-School appointments, whilst not diminishing the importance attaching to “core” disciplines.
- Encourage national and international research collaborations and strategic alliances as well as increasing opportunities for visiting scholars.
- Promote Knowledge Transfer / Exchange across all disciplines through the application of top quality research to economic development, policy issues and cultural engagement.
- Develop appropriate mechanisms to encourage innovation, exploit University intellectual property and support commercialisation of research.
- Optimise the University’s research income through grants and contracts from all possible sources.
- Support opportunities to improve postgraduate and post-doctoral education in research.

Context

- St Andrews secured for itself international recognition in all academic fields in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise. The results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise are expected to consolidate this position, but may also inform institutional planning decisions for future research.
- Through Research Centres and Institutes St Andrews has developed integrated structures to embrace interdisciplinary research. The management of Institutes, Centres and of buildings in which research is undertaken by more than one School will continue to be closely reviewed in order to achieve efficient and effective use of resources.
- A plan to consolidate most of the Science Schools and the Medical School to the North Haugh has been formulated to promote intellectual exchange and encourage well-targeted multidisciplinary research initiatives in the sciences.
• Improvement of the University Library as a research facility, particularly for the Arts, has been identified as a priority.
• New requirements for major computing facilities for the sciences and enhanced support are anticipated in the North Haugh.
• Support and encouragement for researchers in applying for and managing grants will be undertaken in the context of the reformulation of Research & Enterprise Services and the Research Grant Funding Office.
• Recruitment of and provision for an augmented postgraduate doctoral population will be undertaken in the context of the newly-revived St Leonard’s College through the office of the Provost (Dean of Graduate Studies).
• Future opportunities for research pooling, funded by the Scottish Funding Council, will be dependent upon the outcomes of funding decisions following a very tight Comprehensive Spending Review.
• New opportunities for cultural engagement will be provided by the development of the new University museum (MUSA) on The Scores and will complement existing opportunities afforded by the Music Centre, special collections, drama, and School-based initiatives.
• Establishment of a technology innovation centre is a major short-term objective.

Major Risks and Dependencies
• Achieving sustainable surpluses in order to maintain and enhance the physical infrastructure for research and take advantage of new initiatives;
• Retaining and recruiting leading research scholars and teams amidst increasing competition by major research centres;
• Volatility of the market for overseas doctoral students and difficulty of funding for both home and overseas doctoral students.
• The uncertainties of QR funding in Scotland following the 2008 RAE, and changes in policies by UK Research Councils.

Key Performance Indicators
• Research income and trends
• Number of PGR students (including number supported by externally-funded awards) and trends
• KT income and trends
• [Research outputs and quality: Carry forward until clarity on any new metrics for REF]

Learning & Teaching

To build upon its excellent reputation for learning and teaching as measured by international competitiveness, so as to create a challenging, imaginative and flexible, as well as intellectually and financially sustainable, learning and teaching culture such that the very best teachers and students will be attracted to St Andrews from a diverse and international background; and so as to enable those students to realise their full potential and make a valued contribution to society.

Points of Focus
• Appoint, develop, reward and retain excellent teachers.
• Ensure all subject areas continue to promote high levels of research-led learning, knowledge and competence amongst their students and to provide beneficial levels of staff-student contact and feedback.
• Foster an intellectual environment in which learning is nurtured and teaching is valued.
• Provide a physical environment, modern infrastructure, technical support and level of resource that is conducive to excellent learning and teaching.
• Engage actively with enhancement-led learning and teaching.
• Adjust the portfolio of subject disciplines, degrees, collaborations and modes of delivery (such as e-learning) as appropriate to the University’s priorities.
• To develop partnerships for summer courses for American students
• Recruit undergraduate and postgraduate students of the highest academic calibre from an international market.
• Expand overseas undergraduate numbers through international collaborations that build upon special relationships (joint/dual international degrees)
• Continue to promote an inclusive culture that ensures a diverse range of students has access to the University and is able fully to participate in the student experience.
• Promote a learning experience that contributes to personal development, preparation for the workplace and other forms of societal engagement, in part by nurturing partnerships with employers to expand work placements in degree programmes and provide other employment opportunities for students.
• Increase the proportion of high-quality postgraduates within the University’s student numbers.

Context
• Improvement of the physical infrastructure for learning and teaching has been guided by priorities established by the University’s Teaching Infrastructure Strategy Group and has been incorporated into planning for recent capital projects.
• Student and staff support for a renewal of the University Library facilities has been identified as a priority for the planning period.
• Without anticipating significant overall growth in student numbers, management of home undergraduate numbers to no more than our funded targets and controlled expansion of direct-entry overseas students (partly through collaborative partnerships) have been identified as priorities for the planning period.
• Future significant expansions of postgraduate FTEs may require in some disciplines an increasing focus on niche programmes and distance-learning programmes.
• Sustainable Development has become an exemplar for development of multi-disciplinary undergraduate programmes which build upon existing subject expertise, have high social and economic relevance and achieve international distinction.
• A review of staff development arrangements, so as to provide a more integrated service across the university, is also part of the Staff Strategy.
• Although a “selecting” university, rather than a “recruiting” university, St Andrews’ commitment to diverse and wider access is currently expressed by
the establishment of bursaries to support particular categories of students, by the development of its evening degree programme and by carefully targeted articulation agreements with further education institutions (such as in Medicine).

Major Risks and Dependencies
- Dependency upon overseas markets
- Increasing expectations of students
- Affordability of improvements to physical and ICT infrastructure
- Possible impact on University progression and completion rates of expanded distance-learning programmes
- Dependency on Research Councils for funding of home postgraduate students
- Unfavourable changes to funding patterns by the Scottish Funding Council

Key Performance Indicators
- Quality of student entry (admissions standards)
- Number of PGT students and trends
- Completion rates
- Student achievement standards (classification of degrees)