

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

2008-13 CORPORATE PLAN

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SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

2008-13 CORPORATE PLAN

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This Corporate Plan sets out a strategic framework for the continuing success of Sheffield Hallam University over the next five years. The priorities outlined in the plan have been developed by myself and senior colleagues, but reflect numerous valuable contributions made by members of staff from across the institution, the Students' Union and the University's Board of Governors.

In developing this plan I want to build on the achievements of the last corporate plan, to develop further the potential of the University. I want to do this by giving greater emphasis to key aspects of the University's mission that were understated in the previous plan, and by providing a sharper focus on implementation. The core focus of this Corporate Plan is on enhancing the student experience, developing our academic portfolio, and consolidating our reputation for research and innovation, whilst improving operational effectiveness across the whole of our activities. This does not represent a radical departure for the University. I want to build on our past, to lay the foundations for the future.

As a relatively new Vice-Chancellor, I am immensely proud of the reputation that Sheffield Hallam has established for itself over many years.

Sheffield Hallam has been able to combine an impressive national profile with a strong regional presence. Key areas of distinction include the University's track record of innovation in teaching and learning, excellence in selected areas of applied academic research and a pioneering approach to work based learning, business engagement and knowledge transfer. The University has also developed its international profile over the last five years, with the number of international students enrolled on the University's courses having more than doubled.

Our reputation – and much of the University's institutional character - is founded on a strong connection with the Sheffield City-Region. This is something which we should celebrate. Sheffield Hallam is one of the largest metropolitan universities in the country, and with approximately 37% of our students coming from the local region our 'regional roots' are of vital importance to us. We have been particularly successful in opening up opportunities for local people to fulfil their potential, and the quality of our applied research and consultancy is widely recognised as playing a pivotal role in the economic and social development of the region.

These areas of distinction must continue to define and guide the development of the University over the period of the Corporate Plan. However, if we are to raise our profile and increase our impact regionally, nationally and internationally - as we must - we will need to develop and implement effective strategies that enable us to adapt to new challenges.

Over the next five years we can see that a number of high level societal and global forces such as globalisation, economic instability, climate change and changing social attitudes and values will influence what we do. The nature of these changes is uncertain and we will need to assess their scope and impact alongside more specific developments such as a potential change in government. The prospect of continuing economic downturn and further turbulence in world markets is clearly of particular concern.

It may well be the case that previous assumptions regarding the role of higher education and the traditional expectation that student enrolments will continue to increase will need to be re-thought.

As we take account of these broad changes in the external environment, we need to ensure that we focus on those issues which will have the most critical bearing on the future of the University. In my view, there are three fundamental longer term challenges which we must give the highest priority to over the period of the Plan.

These are as follows:

- To adapt successfully to a much greater intensity of competition for students.
- To adapt successfully to greater competition for resources.
- To manage rising costs in the context of financial turbulence.

The first challenge arises in part from a continuing rise in expectations, as students develop a more consumer orientated approach to higher education. This challenge is all the more significant as a consequence of changes in the demographic profile of the UK. Between 2009 and 2020 there is the prospect of a significant decline in the number of 18-20 year olds entering higher education.

Although the precise impact of demographic change is hard to predict, it is clear that the University will be particularly affected. The expected scale of the demographic downturn is not uniform across the country and the regions from which most of the University's young undergraduates are recruited will experience a much sharper rate of decline. The downturn begins after 2009/10, when the 18-20 year-old full-time undergraduate cohort is at a maximum. The overall decline from peak to trough averages just over 17% across the University's recruitment areas. This represents an annual percentage decline of 1.5% - 1.75% over the eleven years between 2009/10 and 2020/21.

The higher education sector will become increasingly competitive as universities adjust to this comparative decline in the supply of undergraduates. In this context, we can expect elite universities to respond by competing for those students who we have previously regarded as 'naturally ours'.

Competition for undergraduates and postgraduates is likely to be further exacerbated by the emergence of non-traditional private training providers. These providers are likely to compete with universities for students in professional subjects where there is high demand and low entry costs. We might also see a decline in the demand from international students, as developing countries increase investment in their own higher education systems.

We might, finally, see the full development of technologically based learning through significant public and private investments, and significant growth in employer-led demand for part qualifications. This would require a much greater investment in e-learning and probably significant subsidies to employers or/and employees. While there is no evidence at present that private providers and employer based training will displace more conventional universities except in niche markets, we do need to remain alert to this possibility and new initiatives in this area will therefore be piloted.

The second challenge which we face requires us to adapt successfully to greater competition for resources, particularly in the area of research funding, while ensuring that the financial basis of the University is sustainable in the longer term.

Government policy for the public funding of research has always favoured a highly selective approach and this has benefited elite universities disproportionately. While Sheffield Hallam has a strong track record compared with other similar universities, it is likely that in future funding for academic research will be even more competitive than has previously been the case.

The increased level of competition for resources is all the more challenging given the broader financial context in which the University will be operating over the next five years. This financial context provides the third challenge. At a macro level the massive shifts in credit markets threaten a wholesale restructuring of financial markets, whilst inflation in the price of food, raw materials and energy threaten to undermine core assumptions that have underpinned decision-making over the past fifteen years. At an institutional level the impact of pay modernisation, annual pay awards and pension scheme funding constitute a major financial challenge for the University. The cost of employing staff is forecast to increase at a faster rate than our income and the gap will become even more acute as the benefit from variable fees unwinds.

The financial strategy, the principles of which are set out in section 8, will seek to accommodate this gap by finding ways to generate financial headroom. However, in the longer term, increases in pay costs which are not met by increases in income must ultimately lead to reductions in the number of staff paid.

I am determined that whilst the University must be academically led, it must also be underpinned by the financial strategy and be supported at an operational level by robust financial management. Our strategic planning and day to day decision making cannot be driven solely academically or financially but needs to bring together both sets of cultures and needs. This will be pivotal in meeting the challenges of the future.

Although the challenges we face are of a fundamental nature, it is important to remind ourselves that Sheffield Hallam is starting from a position of strength. To address these challenges we need to build on our distinctive strengths, while taking steps to develop the University as a strategically aligned organisation. This means that there must be a clear connection between the challenges we face, our vision for the future, and the ways in which we work to develop our academic priorities and enabling strategies. This is the basis upon which the University's Corporate Plan has been developed.

The vision for the University is to be recognised nationally and internationally for the excellence of our learning and teaching, for the outstanding quality of the student experience, and as an exemplar in innovation, applied research and knowledge transfer.

The context in which we pursue this vision is shaped by the key challenges arising from the increased competition for students and resources. Clearly, the strong emphasis on providing an outstanding student experience relates directly to the key challenge arising from a much greater degree of competition for students.

We must keep this vision and these challenges at the forefront of our minds as we focus on the key priorities or 'themes' of improving the student experience, developing the education portfolio, excelling in innovation and raising our profile.

These themes, which are addressed in sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Plan, are underpinned by a number of enabling strategies. These enabling strategies - managing and developing our people, improving operational effectiveness, enhancing our estate and managing financial sustainability - have a vital role in supporting the delivery of the key themes.

Since joining Sheffield Hallam, I have been taken back by the extent of staff commitment and enthusiasm, and general appetite for success. Not every university is fortunate enough to have this and I consider this to be one of our major strengths.

Through working together to provide the best possible experience to our students and business partners I believe that we can do more than simply respond to the challenges which we face. I believe that through active engagement and mutual support we have the opportunity to position Sheffield Hallam as one of the highest achieving, sought after and exciting universities of its kind.

I commend this Corporate Plan to you as the guiding framework for achieving this goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Jones', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Professor Philip Jones
Vice-Chancellor
October 2008

PLAN OVERVIEW

Our Vision:

Proposed new version

By 2013, we will be recognised nationally and internationally for the excellence of our learning and teaching, for the outstanding quality of the student experience, and the valuable contribution which our research and innovation makes to the development of businesses, professions and communities.

Our Purpose:

- To provide a high quality, vibrant and challenging learning experience.
- To create, develop and transfer knowledge through research and innovation.
- To have a significant impact on the development of the region and to contribute to meeting national and international priorities.

Key Themes

The four key themes which constitute the central focus of the Plan are:

- Developing our Education Portfolio
- Improving the Student Experience
- Excelling in Innovation
- Raising our Profile

These themes are articulated in full in Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Strategic Enablers

We will seek to deliver these themes through the following strategic enablers:

- Managing and Developing our people
- Improving Operational Effectiveness
- Enhancing our Estate
- Maintaining Financial Sustainability

These enablers are articulated in full in Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8.

The following strategy map sets out the key elements of the Corporate Plan in diagrammatic form and will provide a basis upon which we will develop our implementation plans and track our progress.

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

STRATEGY MAP

Vision

By 2013, we will be recognised nationally and internationally for the excellence of our learning and teaching, for the outstanding quality of the student experience, and the valuable contribution which our research and innovation makes to the development of businesses, professions and communities.

Purpose

- To provide a high quality, vibrant and challenging learning experience.
- To create, develop and transfer knowledge through research and innovation.
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Key Themes

¹ Developing our Education Portfolio

² Improving the Student Experience

³ Excelling in Innovation


⁴ Raising our Profile

Strategic Enablers

⁵ Managing and Developing our People

⁶ Improving Operational Effectiveness

⁷ Enhancing our Estate



⁸ Maintaining Financial Sustainability

1 DEVELOPING OUR EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

1.1 CONTEXT

Sheffield Hallam University is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK and has continued to grow in overall size. Since 2003-04 overall student numbers have increased by 9%, much of that growth having taken place in the last three years.

We have diversified the range of programmes we offer by renewing the educational portfolio. The formation of the Faculties has played a key role in this, enabling the University to develop new areas of provision based on existing strengths and exploiting emerging opportunities at the interfaces between traditional subject disciplines.

Associated with the renewal and creation of academic programmes, we have strengthened student recruitment and ensured that the University's position in relation to its main teaching funding contracts is secure.

A number of the specific objectives for the development of the educational portfolio have been achieved:

- There has been growth in programmes for the development of the public sector workforce through a significant expansion of nursing and midwifery and other programmes for professions allied to medicine. Sheffield Hallam is now the second largest provider of nursing education and training in England. As well as providing training for an additional 2,500 pre-registration nurses, postgraduate and CPD programmes and research activity in health have all been increased.
- A leading position in the provision of programmes for sport has been achieved, within an overall theme of wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. Taught programmes are complemented by a strengthening profile in sport research.
- New programmes have been developed in creative practice at the interfaces between design, engineering, computing and communication, which correspond to the application of new technologies and design in the wider economy. This has counteracted the effect of the national decline in demand for traditional provision in engineering and computing and strengthened art and design by its applied dimension.
- Planned growth in international activities has been achieved. The number of international students has increased by 50% since 2003-4 with students coming from 120 different countries. Direct recruitment of international students is complemented by an increasing number of collaborative partnerships with overseas institutions, in particular in China, India and Malaysia.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The dynamic nature of the external environment which we face over the next five to ten years presents us with a number of significant challenges and uncertainties. The University needs to ensure that our successes are sustainable in the long term and that we deliver the quality expected by our students, partners and stakeholders.

Our educational portfolio will continue to be characterised by excellent teaching and innovative approaches to delivery with a strong emphasis on the application of knowledge to the world of work and professional practice and contributing to sustainable economic and social development.

In developing the educational portfolio, we will continue to use evidence-based and market-orientated planning processes. Uncertainty and volatility in the external environment increases the importance of our portfolio development being supported by good, forward-looking business intelligence and risk management, effective marketing and careful evaluation of performance.

Our portfolio will focus predominantly on programmes where students follow their course on-campus, although a significant proportion of courses will also include learning in other settings such as the workplace or study abroad. We will explore opportunities to grow employer engaged, work-based and flexible provision.

All programmes will incorporate e-learning resources and technologies that enhance students' learning experience, are responsive to the way they choose to learn and are relevant to how information and communication will be used by individuals and organisations in the future. We will also use e-learning to deliver programmes which need to be flexible, for example in pace of study, location and accessibility, where there is demand from students or employers.

In terms of overall size, the total number of students at the University is planned to grow to a level which is sustainable, supportable and sufficient to continue the momentum of our development. Much of this planned growth is expected to fall in the early years of the new Corporate Plan and follows on from the priorities set in the last Corporate Plan. We will take opportunities for further measured growth where it generates real additional resource and income, or where it supports our strategic positioning and can be accommodated within existing resources.

We will sustain our core funding from HEFCE and continue to strengthen our ability to recruit successfully, while ensuring that the number of students does not compromise our ability to improve the quality of what we offer.

The majority of our programmes will continue to be full-time and at undergraduate level, but the proportion of students studying on postgraduate programmes and in modes other than full-time will grow, continuing the trend from the last five years. We will aim particularly to expand provision oriented towards professional development, career enhancement and the needs of employers.

We will take opportunities to continue to increase direct recruitment of international students. Growth in the number of EU students will focus on areas where there is a need to counter-balance lack of demand from UK students. We will also continue to develop international partnerships to deliver the University's programmes and awards overseas, with the emphasis on building substantial relationships of high quality. All international recruitment and partnerships will take into account the scale and sustainability of future overseas markets.

1.3 THE FACULTIES

The benefit of forming our four Faculties is evidenced by a more vigorous approach to the development of our educational portfolio and our capacity to work across boundaries and make the most of our resources.

These advantages will now be complemented by taking steps to strengthen and make more visible the academic identities that provide the foundation for academic leadership, development and distinctiveness.

We will review academic structures within all the Faculties and establish new academic departments. The purpose of departments will be to provide a focus for academic leadership and development, enhance the quality and delivery of provision, strengthen the management of, and accountability for, resources and enhance the external identity and reputation of the subject areas. Academic departments will be communities with which staff and students can readily identify, but in creating new departments we will take care not to lose the advantages of co-ordination and coherence that Faculties have delivered. We will evaluate the benefits achieved by the formation of Faculties and ensure that their contributions for the future are agreed and clearly articulated.

1.4 FACULTY PLANS

1.4.1 ACES

The Faculty's priorities for the future are to realise the full potential of the creative fusion of disciplines in art and design, computing, engineering and science which was the Faculty's founding vision.

The decline in demand for traditional subject areas has been reversed and new programmes based on innovative relationships between disciplines have the potential for continuing growth in undergraduate provision. There will be some growth in Engineering, but the most significant expansion will be in Art and Design with more students taking programmes in the creative practice area. Sandwich placements and work based learning will become more central to undergraduate programmes, in line with the University's overall objective to offer work experience opportunities to its students.

The Faculty expects to increase the number of students studying in ways which are different from the traditional full-time model, through flexible provision and blended learning supported by e-learning resources.

The Faculty's portfolio of foundation and extended degrees will provide progression routes into higher education, for example for students from our partners in the lifelong learning network.

There will be moderate growth in full-time and part-time postgraduate programmes aimed at career enhancement and supporting employers' needs. Programmes will be flexible in design and delivery, with the potential to offer sector-specific packages of provision for continuing professional development (CPD). CPD provision will grow substantially, moving into areas beyond the current base in IT towards communication skills, new media and design. This is aligned with priorities identified by the RDA Yorkshire Forward and the City's development agency. The Faculty is positioning itself as a significant contributor to the creative and digital sector in Sheffield, supporting the City's desire to develop Sheffield as a leading creative and digital centre in the UK.

International student numbers will continue to grow at a moderate rate at sustainable levels, largely focused on full-time postgraduate provision.

The Faculty will enhance the visibility and external recognition of one of its key areas of strength by establishing the Sheffield Institute of Art and Design (SIAD), as an operating entity incorporating teaching, research and industrial collaboration in art, design, communications and media.

SIAD will add value to the University by its clear identity as a creative community for students and staff and it will be the external face of our creative disciplines in engaging with academic and professional networks and external partners.

It will open up opportunities to develop the relationship between teaching, research and industrial collaboration.

SIAD will add a creative dimension and new perspectives to the wider University community, helping to make this an enjoyable and stimulating place to be. The SIAD Gallery will bring in important creative work from the region, national and international practitioners and groups and will develop a programme of exhibitions and events that disseminates the work of our staff and students, linked to a programme of public lectures and discussions.

The Faculty has an established world class reputation in selected areas of research and research will increase both in quality and volume. Interdisciplinary projects are a major feature and the Faculty will continue to be a leading contributor to the University's intellectual property pipeline and to knowledge transfer activities.

1.4.2 Development and Society

From a largely undergraduate base the Faculty's portfolio has been refreshed and renewed. It now has a focused and market leading postgraduate offer which attracts both domestic and a growing number of international students. The Faculty continues to be a leading provider of professionally accredited courses in the University. Its public sector contract research enjoys an international reputation and it plays a major regional role in workforce development through CPD.

Over the next five years the Faculty will embrace the challenge of engaging students as socially responsible global citizens who will make a positive and sustainable contribution to the economy and to society. The Faculty will offer:

- cutting edge, market leading and research-informed courses developed through dynamic portfolio review and shifts in course profile in key areas to become clear national and regional market leaders. These areas include Creative Writing, Early Years Education, Psychology, Architecture, Environment and Sustainability, and Forensics.
- the opportunity for all students to work or study abroad and to study in a learning context informed by internationalisation. This will enhance the Faculty's employability agenda incorporating work placement, applied learning and clinical experience.

The Faculty will sustain its existing undergraduate numbers although there will be some movement as a result of refreshing and renewal in each area. There will be an increase in foundation degrees in key areas (developed in liaison with employers) with progression routes to undergraduate courses, maintaining the Faculty's excellent record in widening access to under represented groups and in employability and higher skills development.

Postgraduate recruitment will increase as a result of new courses coming on stream and clear progression routes being created from undergraduate to postgraduate courses. This increase will take into account the impact of the removal of HEFCE funding for equivalent and lower qualifications.

There will be growth in international recruitment mainly onto the postgraduate portfolio and programmes delivered off-site or with partnership organisations, e.g. Property Appraisal in Poland and Social Science provision in Hong Kong. Reflecting the strong existing recruitment patterns into the Faculty, EU student numbers will increase as a result of investment in marketing and business development.

The Faculty will extend and diversify its highly successful contract research profile through the promotion of new multi-disciplinary Research and Knowledge Transfer Institutes that focus on the goal of gaining a world-wide reputation for work with Children and Young People, Creative and Cultural Society and Regeneration and Sustainable Communities.

1.4.3 Health and Wellbeing

The Faculty has established its position as a leading provider of teaching and research in health, social care, bioscience and sport. The Faculty aims to consolidate its position as a major provider of innovative and relevant taught course provision and high quality applied research. There are significant challenges associated with the achievement of this overall aim including:

- the volatile and politically charged external environment in health and social care
- meeting the needs of existing and new external stakeholders
- maintaining market share in an increasingly competitive environment

Commissioning agencies for health and social care will expect provision to reflect changing workforce needs. Adapting to meet this challenge will involve changes in pre-registration curricula and a shift towards e-enabled and flexible learning for the existing workforce.

Bioscience provision will need to develop in line with the government's review of health care scientists with an emphasis on research-led teaching and meeting the needs of both public and private sectors. The challenge for sport will be to enhance our reputation as a centre of excellence for applied research and to collaborate with national and regional organisations in the important areas of community participation and health.

The numbers of students on contracts for nurse education funded by the Department of Health are expected to remain broadly stable over the period of the Corporate Plan, although growth from gaining the Yorkshire and Humber SHA contract for nursing and midwifery will continue to roll through for the earlier period of the Plan. Subsequently, there may be changes to the balance within the portfolio to reflect commissioning agencies' priorities for workforce development.

The Faculty will actively sustain its HEFCE-funded provision, recognising that there will be sharpening competition for students particularly in the area of sport. The recent trend for the part-time undergraduate provision to grow is expected to continue, resulting in a shift of balance from full-time to part-time.

The recently established Centre for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education will exploit anticipated CPD opportunities for this particular stakeholder group. The Centre has developed strong relationships with clinicians, managers of local and regional NHS Trusts and the Postgraduate Deanery for Yorkshire and the Humber.

The Faculty will increase international student recruitment, starting from a low base.

1.4.4 Organisation and Management

The key priority for the Faculty will be to launch and develop the Sheffield Business School.

The new Business School will build on a former identity which was highly regarded among its peers and will encompass all the current work of the Faculty of Organisation and Management.

Our vision for the Sheffield Business School is to be a national and regional leader in business transformation and knowledge transfer. This vision will be enabled by innovative partnerships with businesses, organisations and the professions. The Sheffield Business School will be known for the delivery of a professional and cutting edge learning experience that puts the client and student first. Our focus on real world research, knowledge transfer and executive education will aim to play a key role in facilitating the economic and social regeneration of the region, as well as acting as a catalyst to improve the effectiveness of both individuals and organisations.

A key differentiator for Sheffield Business School is its strength and reputation in sector based management, particularly Food, Hospitality and Tourism. It also affords real opportunities to work more collaboratively across the University in sectors such as health, education, engineering, sport and real estate, all of which have leading reputations in their field.

Business engagement is the key challenge for Sheffield Business School and cuts across all the Faculty's activities, from undergraduate delivery and placements through to new models of collaboration in executive education and knowledge transfer. University flagship projects in business engagement will underpin the Sheffield Business school's ability to succeed and grow a reputation as a leading university that can successfully deliver the employer engagement and skills agenda.

Over the next five years the Faculty is planning moderate growth in student numbers, placing the emphasis on delivering a first class student experience. The Sheffield Business School brand will actively sustain its undergraduate provision in the face of increased competition and demographic change. Postgraduate provision is anticipated to grow in relative terms in response to market demand, but once again the focus will be on sustainable growth, moving from recruitment to selection and improving the student experience. Executive education, part-time flexible provision, business engagement and the development of a learning community will form increasingly important strands in the postgraduate portfolio.

International activities will continue to be developed, but growth is expected to be at a more moderate rate than in the last two years, recognising the importance of ensuring quality, balance and sustainability. Academic portfolios will be continually updated and characterised by leading edge programmes that embed employability and add real value to individuals, businesses and organisations.

2 IMPROVING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

CONTEXT

Sheffield Hallam's traditional strengths derive from putting students' interests first. The University is well known for its excellent academic standards and comprehensive student support, and for its achievements in promoting social inclusion by widening access to higher education. We are highly regarded by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and by the many professional and statutory awarding bodies with which we works to promote academic learning linked to employment. Our reputation continues to grow as a sought after place to study.

We are recognised as a leading centre for innovation in learning and teaching and progressive academic development. Our expertise has recently been acknowledged by the Higher Education Funding Council through funding for three Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (one held jointly with Coventry University), and the Learning and Teaching Institute is recognised across the sector for its innovative work with Faculties to embed good practice. The University offers excellent learning and teaching facilities and is also a sector leader in e-learning. Because modern communications change so rapidly, particular emphasis is placed on the effective use of digital tools and resources as a core graduate attribute.

Members of the University's academic staff are recognised regularly for the quality of their work through national awards schemes such as that for National Teaching Fellows. In 2007 two of the University's professors were among the first academics awarded the title of Senior Fellow by the Higher Education Academy, and Sheffield Hallam is one of only two universities in this top category.

Sheffield Hallam is one of the largest providers of placement learning opportunities in England, and almost nine out of ten of our graduates are in employment or further study within six months of leaving the University.

Models of good practice in student support have been developed by professional support staff in areas such as the University's Learning Centre and Student Services.

CHALLENGES

The University faces a number of important challenges, not least in response to rising student expectations about graduate employment and students' experience of learning and teaching in higher education.

We must prepare students for living, working and learning in an increasingly globalised world and respond to their expectations of graduate employment.

Students' international horizons should be raised through development of the curriculum and promotion of opportunities for international learning, either in the UK or abroad.

The contemporary world is saturated by digital technologies and students and staff need new skills to learn and work successfully in this complex environment. This also has implications for the development of more flexible modes of delivery.

There is a need for greater consistency across the University in student entitlement and the student experience more generally. A shared understanding is needed of student entitlement, as well as the effective ways to embed good practice and address areas of under performance.

A key imperative is to enhance the sense of institutional pride which students and staff have in the University. We will do this by taking action to strengthen students' sense of belonging to a supportive learning community and through taking a holistic view which recognises the importance of the wider social environment. We will work with the Students' Union and other partners to develop and promote opportunities for active engagement in the life of the University.

Greater efficiency and higher standards are essential in core University-wide processes which have a critical impact on the quality of the student experience.

There is a pressing need for the University to improve its standing in relation to the National Student Survey and university league tables.

GOAL

We will provide an outstanding student experience. We will do this through offering opportunities for active, authentic and personalised learning, extensive engagement with the world of work, and through fostering a stimulating social environment.

OBJECTIVES

In order to provide an outstanding student experience, we will focus our efforts in three main areas:

- 2.1 Supporting student transition, progression and achievement
- 2.2 Excellent and inspirational learning and teaching
- 2.3 A new approach to quality

2.1 SUPPORTING STUDENT TRANSITION, PROGRESSION AND ACHIEVEMENT

2.1.1 Increase the University's capacity to anticipate, understand and respond to future student choices and preferences.

We need to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to anticipate and understand the choices and learning preferences of future cohorts of students. Such choices will be shaped by a wide range of factors including changing social attitudes, educational reform, government policy on participation in higher education, advanced skills and student finance, labour market changes and demand from employers.

While future demand will vary significantly across individual Faculties, we will develop a joined up approach which will integrate various sources of student focused market intelligence from across the University.

In addition to understanding the implications of educational choices already made by potential students, there will be a sharper focus on understanding what future learners are likely to value. A practical implication of this is that more effective ways will need to be established for Departments and Faculties to work together to share new insights. We will also develop a stronger emphasis on course specific intelligence.

2.1.2 Provide excellent advice, guidance and information services

As the diversity of the student body increases over the next decade, the expectations and requirements of potential students will become more extensive and complex.

A key priority will be to develop the consistency and effectiveness of the support the University gives to potential UK undergraduate students so that they are well prepared to make the transition into higher education.

We will also continue to ensure that a high standard of advice and guidance is available to international students through our offices in China, India, Malaysia and elsewhere. There will be an increased emphasis on providing more personalised forms of advice and guidance, and where appropriate, providing access to information on a self-help basis.

The Students' Union is a key partner in providing information, advice and guidance to students. We will work closely with the Union to ensure that students are able to benefit from the services that they need throughout their time at the University.

2.1.3 Strengthen the pathways for progression into University study by building on existing partnerships with schools and colleges and exploring the scope for new forms of partnership with employers

We will build on the success of the Associate School and College Partnership with a view to developing the range and effectiveness of the pathways for progression into the University. The aim will be to maximise mutual benefit and develop the alignment of progression pathways and course provision.

Close engagement with employers and professional bodies is a defining feature of the approach to learning at Sheffield Hallam. It is therefore appropriate that we play a full part in the new agenda of developing workforce skills. We will therefore pilot new approaches to employer engagement such as the Executive Education programme and explore the scope to build on our leading role in managing the Higher Futures vocational learning network.

2.1.4 Build on the University's reputation for combining widening participation with high rates of student progression

Sheffield Hallam has a strong track record for combining effective widening participation with high rates of student progression and course completion. Many of the strategies that are outlined here will actively contribute to this aim. Nevertheless, it is of vital importance that we actively monitor and improve our performance in this area, and therefore this dimension of the student experience will be reviewed regularly and appropriate action taken.

2.1.5 Design measures to support students at key transitions in the student journey

Over the last few years good progress has been made in embedding supportiveness as a distinctive aspect of the Sheffield Hallam student experience. We will build on this approach by developing the support which is available at key points of transition throughout the student lifecycle. The development of the Student Support Framework will be a key vehicle for achieving this.

We will explore the scope for piloting a new system of peer mentoring for students. We will also review the scope for increasing the level of support we provide to students at the point of graduation and to alumni as part of our new approach to enhancing employability.

2.2 EXCELLENT AND INSPIRATIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.2.1 Provide inspirational and creative teaching

We are committed to providing a learning experience which offers inspirational and creative teaching and which draws on the partnership between strong academic disciplines and innovative professional/vocational practices, a commitment to high-quality and research-informed teaching, and from a history of pioneering research based practice in pedagogic innovation.

The combination of these three elements will be critical to our future, but so too will be a combination of creativity and professionalism in teaching practice. Students will need to be challenged and inspired if they are to develop as learners, but they will also need clear frameworks, with clear time parameters to enable them to develop as learners.

2.2.2 Provide outstanding opportunities to engage in active and relevant learning

The University acknowledges the diversity of students' skills and ways of learning. We will set and communicate high expectations for student achievement through courses that are characterised by the use of active learning techniques. We will engage our students in authentic learning experiences and, wherever possible, will focus on real-world situations and outcomes, with problem-based learning, experimentation, case studies and group activity all playing their part. In this way, our students will develop the critical thinking skills that will enable them to engage actively and creatively with their learning. Distinctive elements of this approach will be the development of digital fluency and learner autonomy.

Sheffield Hallam has a tradition of focusing strongly on students' personal development by embedding opportunities to acquire advanced skills and attributes within the curriculum and providing opportunities for learning in the real world. One of the key commitments of the Corporate Plan is that the University will extend its offer by providing all students with opportunities for work-related study, engagement with economic and social regeneration, or international learning. This is a challenging but achievable commitment which will help to define the distinctive value of the Sheffield Hallam student experience.

The goal of providing an outstanding student experience can only be achieved through the efforts of highly skilled and motivated members of staff who are supported by a comprehensive range of staff development opportunities. One aspect of our People Strategy will therefore be to improve recognition and reward for staff who make particularly significant contributions to delivering the University's commitment to its students.

2.2.3 Strengthen the University's approach to employability

The University is one of the largest providers of placement courses in England and has extensive links with employers and professional bodies. Nevertheless, the proportion of the University's students that enter graduate level employment does not reflect the positive accounts which employers regularly provide regarding the quality of Sheffield Hallam graduates.

A key priority over the period of the Corporate Plan will therefore be to prepare students in the best ways possible for employment and to focus on building more effective relationships with a wider range of graduate employers. In support of this aim, we will establish a comprehensive employability framework which will integrate the different facets of students' employment related learning. Action will also be taken to increase the profile of successful University graduates and develop new partnerships with graduate employers.

We will encourage students to consider a wider field of employment opportunities across the UK and overseas.

2.2.4 Develop stronger disciplinary coherence

The successful establishment of the University's four Faculties has positioned us well for the challenges which we are likely to face. While the development of interdisciplinary themes has enabled us to seize a number of new opportunities, it is important that greater emphasis is now placed on strengthening the coherence of individual subject disciplines. Disciplinary coherence is a necessary condition for the academic integrity and wider reputation of the University. It also plays an important role in fostering strong academic communities with which students and staff can readily identify.

Over the period of the Corporate Plan, steps will be taken to establish sub-Faculty structures and ways of working which will reinforce the identity and vitality of individual subject disciplines. The scope for greater disciplinary coherence will also inform a continuing review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the current system of module choices and programme structures.

2.2.5 Using technology to enhance student learning

Sheffield Hallam is recognised as one of the leading universities in the innovative use of technology enhanced learning. The University's pioneering learning centres are recognised as models of good practice in serving students' needs and are well equipped to deliver access to books, journals and online information sources. Our strengths in this area constitute a distinctive competitive advantage which we expect to be increasingly relevant.

Our approach to the use of technology is firmly rooted in an educational philosophy which values the development of learner autonomy. Over the period of the Corporate Plan we will build on achievements by developing an approach to digital fluency which will enable all of the University's students to engage actively and creatively with their learning. A key focus of our strategy will be on ensuring that good practice is embedded across the University.

2.3 A NEW APPROACH TO QUALITY

2.3.1 Develop a quality assurance framework that moves from compliance to quality enhancement

Academic standards and the quality of the student experience are of primary significance to the performance and standing of the University. Our quality and standards framework has served us well, but is increasingly at odds with the approach which is now being adopted across the sector and our own strategic priorities. We therefore wish to move away from an approach which sees quality assurance as a set of requirements which need to be complied with, to one which is focused on taking deliberate steps to enhance students' engagement with their learning experience. We will establish a project which will embed this new approach over a two year period.

2.3.2 Explore new ways to ensure effective student participation

There is a need to ensure that appropriate processes and structures are in place to enable student to participate fully in the academic life of the University. The establishment of initiatives such as student juries, cohort panels, and peer mentoring will therefore be considered. Working in partnership with the Students' Union, we will seek to identify the key factors that motivate student engagement, and will explore ways in which students can be supported and gain recognition for their participation.

2.3.3 Increase staff responsiveness to student feedback at course and subject group level and ensure greater consistency in student entitlement

In order to put students' interests first, it is necessary to ensure that the issues and concerns which students themselves consider to be important are addressed quickly and effectively. A rewarding course experience will continue to provide the foundation for an outstanding student experience and will therefore be a key focus for action. Student feedback is already obtained in a number of formal ways. However, there is much more that could be done to address students' concerns as they arise and to ensure that appropriate management action is taken.

Experience suggests that while in overall terms students' course experiences are very positive, there is still significant variation in quality and entitlement in areas such as timescales for providing feedback to students, support for assignments and access to learning materials. Action will therefore be taken to ensure that Faculty management processes are more responsive to student feedback. More generally, we will take an active approach to responding to student feedback across all aspects of its provision. Over the period of the Corporate Plan we will seek to increase the University's overall satisfaction rating in the National Student Survey.

3 EXCELLING IN INNOVATION

CONTEXT

Sheffield Hallam is one of the highest performing new universities for research and knowledge transfer and, in terms of income, is competitive with a number of older universities.

The University has consistently improved its Research Assessment Exercise grades and held its position for the last three exercises as the most successful new university. In the last RAE three units of assessment were awarded a 5 rating: Art and Design, History and Materials and Metallurgy.

The research which is undertaken is predominately applied and is focused on the needs of society and individual customers. Fundamental research is undertaken in selected areas to support specific learning and teaching programmes and large-scale applied research programmes.

A comparatively modest publicly funded research base is used to attract substantial additional research funding. The additional funding secured by the University is significantly more than other new universities and more than double the rate for research intensive Russell Group universities.

Strong links and long-term research and consultancy partnerships have been established with a range of regional, national and international organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Recent partners include BP, NASA, Network Rail, Microsoft, Sony, Siemens and the NHS.

The University has an impressive track record in promoting student enterprise, having established its own highly successful business planning competition for students and staff. It is also a national agent for the Shell Step programme, a UK-wide initiative offering undergraduates the opportunity to undertake real business projects with SMEs.

CHALLENGES

A key challenge for the University will be to provide focused support for areas of research strength, whilst identifying and investing in emerging research areas that demonstrate future potential.

Early indicators suggest that even with higher quality research being undertaken, the level of funding which we are likely to receive will decrease, with resources being concentrated in research intensive universities. Future RAE QR funding is uncertain in the short term due to a change in methodology, and also in the long term, due to the introduction of the new Research Excellence Framework which will make more extensive use of quantitative indicators. However, knowledge transfer funding secured through the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and Business QR is of increasing importance and value to us. Both funding streams will have an important role to play in future investment and should be examined together.

The establishment of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills is expected to create a greater symbiosis between research and knowledge transfer, as Government seeks to maximise the value of publicly funded research through closer working relationships between the Technology Strategy Board, the Research Councils and the Regional Development Agencies. The University needs to ensure that it is favourably positioned to benefit from this new emphasis while remaining alert to the implications which might arise from a change in Government.

The formation of the Faculties in 2003 was, in part, to enable interdisciplinary working. In practice, many cultural and organisational barriers exist that prevent effective working. There is a clear need to strengthen the academic and scholarly culture of the University so that research and knowledge transfer activity are respected and acknowledged as a vital and vibrant part of University life.

Within the University, there is generally a clear demarcation between research and teaching both physically and culturally. The cultural segregation that currently exists does not maximise the potential in both teaching and research and may impede not only the prospect of research informed teaching but the opportunity for staff to diversify their careers.

GOAL

Our aim is to position Sheffield Hallam as one of the leading universities in the sector for innovation, research and knowledge transfer. Our reputation will be founded on an approach which emphasises economic and social development and which is underpinned by international excellence in selected areas of applied research.

OBJECTIVES

3.1 Maximise innovative capability through the integration of research and knowledge transfer

We will seek to maximise the business opportunities offered by the integration of research and knowledge transfer. There is a symbiosis between research and knowledge transfer, with fundamental research and academically driven applied research leading to customer specified research and consultancy.

We will build on our strengths and track record as a research active university which is embedded within its client base.

We will seek to inform and influence national and European policy regarding the role of universities in economic and social transformation.

3.2 Support innovation through high quality research

We will seek to identify and consolidate research of international quality in selected research areas. Greatest emphasis will be placed on academically driven applied research and user specified research.

We will take steps to create a research and scholarly culture that recognises research excellence in terms of the RAE and also knowledge transfer. Quality assurance of research activity will be critical in order to maintain our reputation with our peers and maximise research income. Research and knowledge transfer metrics will be put in place and used as performance indicators for RAE related research. A rolling review of research areas will be implemented on a three yearly cycle.

Financial resources will be a limiting factor and so RAE quality research activity will need to be focused and prioritised. However, the research environment is dynamic, with new research themes continually developing to reflect the emergence of new ideas and changes in policy and local strengths. New areas of research activity will therefore be considered for start-up funding and, if approved, will be carefully monitored. A consequence of prioritisation will be the need to disinvest in areas which are not performing or are no longer consistent with the University's strategic objectives.

Multidisciplinary research remains a high priority by funding bodies in the UK and Europe. Large cross-Faculty and cross-institutional research programmes will therefore be pursued.

Research and knowledge transfer is a dynamic domain and there is a need to ensure that potential areas for growth are regularly assessed.

Preliminary work has identified a number of areas to consider for development over the next five years, these include: assistive technology, intelligent infrastructure, policy analysis, regeneration and sustainable communities, robotics and sustainability.

3.3 Support innovation through increased competitiveness in knowledge transfer

We will seek to increase competitiveness in selected knowledge transfer areas, support research which underpins successful knowledge transfer and establish mechanisms to consolidate engagement with the public sector and increase engagement with the private sector.

We will review our competitive position in specific areas of activity and technologies to attract user specified research contracts. Areas of activity in which the University is, or may become, regionally, nationally or internationally competitive will be prioritised. Metrics associated with knowledge transfer will be monitored and maximised to increase HEFCE income through business QR and HEIF.

Different business models will be adopted for different types of knowledge transfer to maximise activity and income. A range of models will therefore be developed to meet the varying business requirements of working in the commercial, public and voluntary sectors.

We will be more pro-active in exploiting commercial sector opportunities. This will require a more strategic approach to the establishment and management of partnerships with businesses and other organisations. We will provide a 'corporate front door' for knowledge transfer activities which will link with employer engagement initiatives. We will develop a sharper focus on the needs and decision making requirements of the customer and will develop processes to enable more efficient business transactions.

We will seek to expand the focus and volume of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and joint studentships. Opportunities to secure additional funding from external agencies such as Yorkshire Forward will also be pursued, and there will be a greater emphasis on supporting social enterprise within the voluntary sector.

We will pursue a range of mechanisms to support economic transformation through the commercialisation of intellectual property and specialist know-how in ways which optimise the financial return to the University.

Whilst supporting the Sheffield City Region where possible, we will aim to increase the scope of our licensed Intellectual Property by working in partnership with commercial companies throughout Europe.

The commercialisation of intellectual capital will be supported in a variety of ways, including licensing, royalty contracts, and the formation of spin-out companies. Consideration will be given to the scope for spinning out commercial activities that it may no longer be appropriate to continue in-house.

Training and follow-up support for students who wish to form their own business will be provided.

3.4 Provide high quality training for the research and knowledge transfer specialists of the future

We will develop education and training which is appropriate for researchers and knowledge transfer specialists of the future, most of whom will be working outside the HE sector.

Research degree performance will be an important research quality indicator for future RAE metrics. We will improve the student experience for research PhD students by ensuring that PhD students are concentrated in research areas that have the appropriate support mechanisms.

Steps will also be taken to improve the experience of students and action will be taken to improve completion rates for research PhDs to above the sector average. We will explore options which will enable us to increase the numbers of PhD students, improve the quality of research training and strengthen the effective use of performance indicators.

Novel approaches to training in research, including European style PhDs, will be considered in line with developments in Europe. Specific postgraduate qualifications in knowledge transfer will be explored to support capacity building in this area.

3.5 Provide the optimum organisational framework to support innovative activities

There is a need to streamline the variety of research and knowledge transfer structures and practices which exist across the University. A corporate framework will therefore be established which, while still providing sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individual Faculties, will increase overall effectiveness and efficiency. This new framework will be responsive to changes in performance in individual subject areas. The framework will also provide the basis for the more co-ordinated approach that is required if we are to engage in innovative multi-disciplinary research and access sources of large scale funding.

The career pathways which are open to staff undertaking research and knowledge transfer will also be reviewed.

Different types of research and knowledge transfer activity have different abilities to make a financial contribution. There is therefore a need to operate a principle of portfolio funding and adopt a variety of business models in order to maximise activity and income. There will be a sharper focus on securing efficiency in the local management of research and knowledge transfer activities, with the expectation that within a given subject portfolio all direct costs will be recovered plus a contribution made to overheads. Longer term financial planning will be adopted as an integral element of research and knowledge transfer management.

Methods of incentivisation will be explored to improve productivity and there will be an increased emphasis on enhancing the customer focus of our research and knowledge transfer processes.

4 RAISING OUR PROFILE

Over the period of the Corporate Plan we will build on our reputation as one of the leading new universities by taking a number of steps to raise our profile and increase our impact at regional, national and international levels.

4.1 Regional

Active engagement with the region represents a core aspect of Sheffield Hallam's institutional identity and purpose. The success of the region and the University are inter-related and our role in the region is therefore underpinned by a strategic commitment to social, cultural and economic transformation, extending educational opportunity and civic engagement. In line with this commitment we will:

- Maximise the benefits and cost effectiveness of regional engagement by developing effective cross-University co-ordination and intelligence sharing. This will support a more integrated approach in areas such as partnership with regional employers.
- Develop a strategic approach to managing our engagement with different sub-regions and localities, while remaining alert to the possible implications of new regional policy agendas for higher education.
- Take advantage of our strong regional engagement as a platform for developing our national and international profile. Key projects where such an approach will be taken include the launch of the Sheffield Business School, the re-location of Art and Design to the City Campus, and the development of a new Executive Education project. In so doing, we will develop our role as a global gateway for the City Region, fostering greater connectivity between local communities, businesses and sporting activities and the national and international activities of the University.
- Ensure that we are well positioned to take advantage of the changing nature of regional partnerships, particularly the increasingly important role of the private sector. We will therefore develop appropriate staff expertise in professional partnership working across the University, and assess the needs of our regional stakeholders on regular basis. Our aim is to be a responsive and accessible partner for private, public and voluntary sector organisations in the region.
- Strengthen our leading role in managing regional partnerships which promote educational opportunity and access to advanced skills. We will review the scope for further development of the University's Associate School and College Partnership and consider the opportunities that the Higher Futures network may offer in the context of the government's new employer engagement agenda.

4.2 National

Sheffield Hallam has established a reputation as one of the leading post-1992 universities. This reputation reflects our achievements in innovation in learning and teaching, our track record as the highest performing new university in the previous three Research Assessment Exercises (joint highest in 2001), the high standing of selected subject areas, and our extensive partnerships with business and the professions.

Over the period of the Corporate Plan, we will focus our efforts on establishing a national reputation for providing an outstanding student experience. We have also committed

ourselves to becoming a national exemplar for innovation, applied research and knowledge transfer. In seeking to strengthen our national reputation we will:

- Work to ensure that our distinctive achievements are promoted effectively and imaginatively in regional, national and international media.
- Link our positioning campaigns with those of high profile partner organisations, and promote strong associations with activities and individuals that are likely to stimulate wider interest.
- Identify and actively promote selected subject areas and 'star individuals' that have established a track record of academic excellence and innovation.
- Ensure that we take appropriate action where national performance indicators reveal areas of genuine under-performance.
- Take the initiative to influence the views of national opinion formers and policy makers.

4.3 International

Over the last five years, we have made considerable progress in developing the scope and impact of our international activities. We have more than doubled our international student population, with over 3,500 international students from 120 countries now studying at the University. Many UK students are now benefiting from our links with overseas educational institutions and international agencies. There is also a growing international dimension to our research and knowledge transfer activities, with important partnerships now established with numerous European universities, and research and consultancy undertaken for leading international companies such as Philips, Microsoft, Siemens and Sony.

In rising to the challenge of living, working and learning in an increasingly globalised world, we will:

- Continue to ensure that the highest academic standards apply to our international provision and that the quality of the international student experience remains paramount.
- Support a further significant increase in the number of international students taking our courses. This will be undertaken through country and subject diversification. We will respond to emerging markets in Africa and Asia, and to new demand for provision in areas such as art and design and humanities in its existing target countries.
- Raise the international horizons of all of our students through the development of the curriculum and by promoting new opportunities for international learning, either in the UK or abroad.
- Further develop trans-national provision, in which courses are taken partly in the home country and partly in Sheffield, with a small number of selected partner institutions.
- Actively explore the opportunities for closer engagement with European markets and EU funded programmes, both in relation to student recruitment and mobility and research and knowledge transfer.
- Place greater emphasis on the development of reciprocal relationships and mutual gain.

Through actively raising our profile in each of these domains - and strengthening the connections between them - we will seek to position Sheffield Hallam as a leading university of its kind.

5 MANAGING AND DEVELOPING OUR PEOPLE

The future success of the University will be delivered by its staff. We therefore need to establish a clear set of priorities which will guide the way in which we work together to achieve the objectives of the Corporate Plan. The priorities set out below provide the foundation of our People Strategy. This strategy reflects our belief that business and people principles must go hand-in-hand if Sheffield Hallam is to be seen as an attractive employer which is able to successfully recruit, retain and develop its staff in an increasingly competitive market.

5.1 Establishing Expectations for Achievement

The University has set itself ambitious aims. We wish to be known for providing an outstanding student experience, and to establish a reputation as a national exemplar for innovation, applied research and knowledge transfer. We can only realise these aims if we have the right calibre of staff and an expectation that high achievement becomes embedded as an integral aspect of the culture of the University. This puts a responsibility on all staff, but places an emphasis on senior leaders and managers to:

- Set clear objectives, provide regular and constructive feedback to staff and undertake annual appraisals of performance.
- Ensure that when faced with competing demands, staff are clear on overall priorities.
- Support and develop staff so that they are able to attain goals which contribute to the strategic aims of the University and their own professional success.
- Ensure that the development of a high performance culture is consistent with work/life balance principles.
- Celebrate examples of success.

5.2 Student and Business Focus

A key requirement for the successful realisation of the Corporate Plan is that staff behaviour is focused on meeting the needs of students and adding value to their experience of the University. A similar ethos should underpin the approach to working with businesses, employers, professional bodies and a range of other organisations. This implies a move away from a 'provider-led culture' to one which is focused on meeting the needs of external stakeholders. This external focus is essential if we are to realise our potential and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Core institutional processes and services such as the recruitment, development and appraisal of staff, investment decisions, annual planning and campus services should be focused on adding value to the experience of students, businesses and other organisational partners.

5.3 Developing Effective Leadership, Management and Engagement

A key aim is to engage managers and staff in the effective implementation of the University's strategic priorities. This places an emphasis on managers and senior leaders to:

- Be entrepreneurial and adopt an externally facing approach to the development of the University's business.
- Value active engagement, encourage empowerment and inspire staff by providing a creative balance between challenge and support.
- Contribute actively to the implementation and review of the University's strategy.
- Help staff manage change more effectively.

5.4 Promoting Organisational Learning

The University will need to develop new ways of working and a culture which, as a matter of routine, encourages staff to evaluate the effectiveness and implications of their actions. We need to assess the effectiveness of actions and performance in relation to agreed priorities, strategies and governing principles, and to consider whether, in light of actual experience, there is a need to adjust the original agreed priorities and strategies.

We need to reflect on our previous experience and ensure that good practice in delivering strategy is embedded across the University. We also need to regularly review our progress in meeting agreed milestones and targets, so that we are able to identify areas of difficulty at an early stage and take appropriate action.

5.5 Planning for the Workforce of the Future

Developing a student and business focus means that the University's workforce must be aligned to changing expectations and demand. This requires an approach to workforce planning which takes account of changes in patterns of student and employer demand, the emergence of new markets and changes in the economy, the development of new forms of delivery and competition from other universities and employment sectors.

We will develop a strategic approach to workforce planning which is underpinned by high quality market intelligence and integrates the development of individual Faculties and Departments with the University's key priorities.

5.6 Managing Organisational Change

The period covered by the new Corporate Plan is characterised by a number of uncertainties and challenges in the external environment. As we respond to these challenges it is inevitable that some changes to organisational structures will be necessary.

The University has managed substantial restructuring in the past, and in so doing we have developed a series of principles for managing change effectively. These principles played an important role in the successful establishment of the current University structure and will continue to guide the approach that will be taken in any future programme of change.

We will articulate a clear rationale for any changes that need to take place and in doing so we will consult staff on all major changes that will affect them as well as reaffirming our strong commitment to partnership working with our recognised Trade Unions.

5.7 Enhancing the Staff Experience and Promoting Wellbeing

The aims of the Corporate Plan can only be achieved if the staff experience of working at the University is positive and fulfilling. It is therefore important that regular consideration is given to the quality of the staff experience and the ways in which this may be enhanced or inadvertently compromised. We should:

- Develop processes and ways of working that facilitate the wellbeing of all staff so that people can perform to their highest potential.
- Develop appropriate career opportunities and pathways for staff in line with Corporate Plan priorities.
- Take practical actions which will enable the development of a scholarly culture.
- Provide staff with stimulating and challenging opportunities for professional development.

- Systematically take account of the implications for the staff experience and staff wellbeing when making decisions.
- Establish parameters and processes that will embed staff creativity and innovation.

5.8 Supporting Equality and Diversity

We are intent on advancing equality and diversity as key features within all our activities, as we believe this to be ethically right and socially responsible. Equality and diversity are essential factors that contribute to the academic and business strengths of the University.

Our goal is to recruit, motivate, and develop outstanding, diverse people who work together harmoniously toward common business objectives. Diversity expresses itself in many different ways - in age, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, education, physical ability, personality, experiences and approaches to work. We aim to maximize everybody's potential by creating a productive environment in which all are valued, where our talents are fully utilised and organisational goals are achieved through the principle of inclusivity.

6 IMPROVING OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

We will complement the development of our academic programmes, research and knowledge transfer by ensuring that support processes and services are effective and efficient. There are a number of challenges in achieving this broad goal, which echo the overall themes of this Corporate Plan:

- Consolidating our success after a period of diversification and growth under the last Corporate Plan.
- Responding and adapting to a rapidly changing external environment.
- Enhancing the quality of all that we do and in particular the quality of the student and staff experiences;
- Ensuring that we deploy our resources most effectively and that we have the necessary resources to sustain the University in the long term.

6.1 Professional services

We have completed a number of reviews of support services and processes, including the role of central departments, which have resulted in changes to areas such as student and academic services, finance and marketing. We will continue to review our professional services to ensure that they most effectively support the University's business overall. There will be a close interaction and interdependency between development of our core business systems and management information and the development of services. Services will be benchmarked to comparators in the HE sector and elsewhere to help to ensure good practice, efficiency and effectiveness.

The priorities will include:

- Focusing on supporting the student life-cycle and meeting students' expectations;
- Removing barriers to effective and seamless end-to-end processes;
- Improving service delivery and reducing costs through standardisation of processes, increasing the ease-of-use and continuing development of online services;
- Enhancing professionalism and career development.

6.2 Information

Our information systems and services are integral to learning, teaching and working at the University and some areas, such as our e-learning systems, are part of our market leading offer and distinctiveness. We will need to ensure we remain at the forefront in these areas. The key objectives for information systems and services are to:

- Contribute to the quality of the student experience through systems and services that meet and respond to students' choices and preferences;
- Ensure access to information on how the University is performing and to intelligence about the external environment;
- Enable staff to work more effectively through access to integrated services and use of timely, accurate and accessible information;
- Provide sustainable systems and services that anticipate and meet changing demands.

The additional challenge is to achieve flexible, adaptive, enabling services without increasing the overall expenditure on IT. A related aim is to contribute further to the University's success by rebalancing the resources allocated to IT related functions across the University so that they may be refocused towards other activities, such as enhancing the student experience.

A key priority will be to improve the performance of the University's core business and management information systems so that they are fit for purpose, integrated and able to deliver to a higher standard and with greater efficiency. A five-year programme of system improvement and development will be established to deliver this priority.

Our overall aim is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our information systems, and associated processes, so that resources can be focused on delivering services which support the key objectives of the Corporate Plan.

7 ENHANCING OUR ESTATE

ACHIEVEMENTS

One of the University's distinguishing features is the overall high quality of our estate. We have successfully completed major estate developments that reflect the priorities set out in the last Corporate Plan and anticipate the directions for the future:

- The new Robert Winston Building exemplifies our inter-professional approach to the education and training of health care professionals and is recognised as a model for the sector.
- The new ACES complex, which combines the new Furnival Building with major refurbishment, provides the setting for the creative fusion of disciplines which was the vision for the Faculty's formation and co-locates all of its provision at the City Campus.
- The new Arundel Building incorporates flexible teaching spaces and the interaction of classroom-based learning with learning resources and support through learning hubs.
- The extension to the Adsetts Learning Centre provides new social-learning spaces including a cafe and informal areas, multi-use spaces for individual and group work and universal access to technology.

Alongside these major developments there has been continuous refurbishment and remodelling. As a result the majority of our estate is in good or very good condition.

CHALLENGES

A guiding principle has been the close connection between the development of the estate and the directions set by the growth and diversification of our academic activities, innovative approaches to learning and teaching and the expectations of students and staff. Other key drivers have been efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Continuing these principles over the next five years presents a number of challenges:

- Accommodating the effects of recent significant growth when the longer term rate of growth is expected to be lower.
- Supporting the continuing academic development of our faculties and meeting the future need for flexibility and innovation in learning spaces.
- Meeting the rising expectations of students and staff for the quality of their learning and working environments.
- Balancing efficiency with effectiveness.
- Balancing investment in the estate with investment in staff.

GOAL

To provide a high quality estate that supports the development of our academic activities, enhances the student and staff experience and projects our academic identity.

This goal will be achieved by implementing the Estates Strategy, which is built around the following priorities:

- Ensure that existing pressure on accommodation from recent growth does not compromise the student and staff experience.

- Estate improvements to move the Faculty of Development and Society from its existing multiple locations and provide accommodation that is more fit for purpose.
- Provide facilities to support the new strategies for employer and business engagement, research and knowledge transfer by meeting the expectations of partners, clients and students.
- Adapt and develop learning and teaching spaces to allow flexibility and innovation in the delivery of our academic programmes.
- Provide high quality learning, social and working environments that will make Sheffield Hallam the first choice for students and staff.
- Develop the look and feel of our estate to reflect academic identities within the University and promote our positive contribution to the City of Sheffield and its built environment.
- Ensure the long term sustainability and suitability of our estate as a key resource to support our academic development.

The Estate Strategy includes a phased estate development plan which will allow us to match estate improvements and projects to changes in our educational portfolio and the future pace of growth, while balancing priorities for investment and managing risk.

8 MAINTAINING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

CHALLENGES

The University is in a sound financial position with positive reserves and access to external funding needed to support capital investment. However, along with other organisations we face a series of major challenges.

At a macro level massive shifts in credit markets threaten a wholesale restructuring of financial markets, whilst inflation in the price of food, raw materials and energy threaten to undermine core assumptions that have underpinned decision-making over the past fifteen years. Along with the rest of the sector we also face the challenges associated with increased marketisation, demographic change and government intervention. In addition to these factors, the University is facing severe cost inflation. These cost pressures are particularly acute given the impact of pay modernisation, recent and prospective pay awards and the significant pressure on pension scheme funding. The cumulative impact of these factors represents a major challenge to the future financial stability of the sector, and our capacity to invest in quality will be compromised unless future costs and income are brought into alignment.

GOAL

A new Financial Strategy has been developed to address these challenges. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that the University continues to operate in a way that is financially sustainable. The implications of pursuing this goal are that:

- in aggregate, taken over all of our activities, we will recover the full costs of what we do;
- we will invest in our staff and infrastructure to deliver the Corporate Plan and meet the needs of all of our stakeholders.

In turn, this requires us to:

- ensure that our strategies provide clear direction and are supported by implementation plans that deliver future needs and manage risk;
- measure our performance in delivering our strategies;
- balance our expenditure and income in order to generate the surplus that we need to allow investment;
- ensure that our activity levels can be supported by our income base;
- manage risk and be ready to deal with the associated financial implications.

Given the inevitable constraints on our resources we need to make well informed decisions which reflect our priorities. Our strategic planning and day to day decision making cannot be driven solely academically or financially but needs to bring together both sets of cultures and needs. This means that the University must be academically led, but underpinned by the Financial Strategy and supported at an operational level by robust financial management.

The successful implementation of the University's main academic strategies will provide the foundation for financial sustainability. Sustainability will be further supported by measures

which create financial headroom, not only to manage the financial challenges but also to allow investment in the strategies themselves. These measures will include:

- Developing and embedding resource management techniques, financial measurement and reporting processes which reflect the need to prioritise financially sustainable activities.
- Pursuing potential opportunities for profitable growth of the University's academic portfolio, in line with our future size and shape strategy.
- Developing effective market engagement strategies which ensure that our prices reflect our reputational standing and optimise margin.
- Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of our activities and processes, with targeted investment to support change where appropriate.
- Continuing to systematically identify and manage financial risk.

The Financial Strategy will ensure that there is a balance between surplus levels, cash generation, borrowing and capital expenditure.