

Strategic Plan

Addendum 2021-2023



The Strategic Plan

The University of Stirling is an international university with a global reputation for high-quality teaching and research.

The University's Strategic Plan 2016-21 represented ambition across our research profile, learning and teaching priorities, and international standing. Significant success has been achieved under the Plan across a range of headline institutional ambitions, including the objective to be one of the top 25 universities in the UK.

The environment in which the University operates has changed considerably since the formulation and launch of the 2016-21 Strategic Plan, with Brexit and Covid-19 being but two pertinent examples of turbulent and cross-cutting change. The sector context – inclusive of funding environment, political landscape and HE sector performance outputs – has also shifted significantly since the Strategic Plan ambitions and performance milestones were plotted.

The emergence of Covid-19 as a disruptor signalled a rethink of the timescale and process whereby the next Strategic Plan, initially intended to be a 2021-26 strategy, is developed. The impact of the pandemic also undermines any baseline against which institutional performance would be assessed and has destabilised the external environment (e.g. funding environment and broader economic conditions) and the policy drivers against which any Strategic Plan would be delivered.

With consideration of the pertinent factors, including successes achieved and the scope for further progress under the existing Strategic Plan, University Court recommended an extension to the existing Strategic Plan across the period 2021-23. Additionally, Court endorsed continuation of the existing headline vision: to be one of the top 25 universities in the UK, to increase income by £50m, to enhance the research profile by 100 percent and to ensure internationalisation is at the heart of everything we do.

The extended Strategic Plan may be viewed as a transitional phase, during which the University would continue to respond to the live events and disruptions caused by Covid-19 while, more crucially, preparing for and enabling sustained success post-Covid.

Following conclusion of the Strategic Plan 2016-23, it would be the University's intention to bring forward a five-year strategy to govern the period 2023-28. An extensive student and staff consultation exercise is to be a key principle at the core of the Strategic Plan 2023-28 development.

In November 2019, the University of Stirling's world-leading Institute of Aquaculture was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize.



Key Institutional Achievements, 2016 – 2021



The University's key achievements during the lifecycle of the 2016-21 Strategic Plan include:

- Improved league table performance exemplified in a 28th in the UK ranking in the [Guardian University Guide 2021 league table](#). Stirling's commitment to sport earned notable recognition in the University being named as The Times and Sunday Times UK Sports University of the Year 2020. The University's sporting strategy was embodied in the [£20m redevelopment of the University's sports facilities](#), providing an even better environment in which to train, play and stay healthy. Stirling's sporting excellence was exemplified by six Stirling-based athletes being selected to compete in the Tokyo Olympic Games, returning home with five medals – two of which were gold.
- In 2021, the University achieved the highest possible ELIR judgement, following independent review of institutional quality led by a QAA Scotland panel.
- Achieved a step-change in [National Student Survey performance](#), with the University successfully placing in the UK's top-20 for overall satisfaction in both the 2020 and 2021 iterations of the survey. Against the context of a competitive recruitment environment, the University continues to attract high calibre undergraduate students, demonstrated by entry tariff scores being ranked in the UK's top-quartile for the third successive year. As the sector transitioned to the Graduate Outcomes Survey (previously the Destination of Leavers from HE Survey), the University's 'positive destination' employability indicator remained excellent with 96% of graduates reported having progressed to work or further study 15 months after graduation.



- Since the Strategic Plan baseline year (2014/15), the University has increased its unregulated student population by 47%, demonstrating its appeal across an increasing profile of student recruitment markets.
- The University is proud to be a central partner of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, which presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to position the city and surrounding area as an economic and cultural powerhouse. The aim of the Deal is to establish the region as a world-class, dynamic and enterprising destination, complementing the University's own ambitions to be recognised globally as an institution that can make a positive difference to people, communities and partners.
- In November 2019, the University of Stirling's world-leading Institute of Aquaculture was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize. This prestigious award, part of the UK honours system, [recognised pioneering work](#) in the world's fastest-growing food production sector in a bid to tackle global hunger.
- Enabled by our research strategy, the University achieved recurrent increases in research grant and contract (RGC) awards value during the Strategic Plan period. RGC award capture for the 2020/21 academic year eclipsed the £26m Strategic Plan milestone, representing significant growth against the baseline year (2014/15, £13.3m).
- The University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in of itself demonstrated a significant achievement across themes including continued delivery against governmental policy drivers and outcomes; redistribution of the postgraduate programme portfolio across two intake windows to support unregulated student recruitment; quickly transitioning to wholly online learning and teaching; student and staff support via the Be Connected programme, Big White Wall and more broadly; institutional financial sustainability and progress against the institutional capital plan – including continued progress with the Campus Central project.

Since the launch of the Strategic Plan in 2016, the University has made considerable progress towards its overarching strategic objectives, embodied within the 25-50-100-i mnemonic, and its underpinning priorities.



Strategic Priorities 2021 – 2023

Recognising the considerable scale and rapid pace of change – due in large part to the Covid-19 pandemic – including the transition to online learning and our first at scale intake of students in the spring semester, priorities will aim to consolidate successes and lessons learned, to deliver further progress towards the overarching 25-50-100-i strategic objectives.

Over the lifetime of the extended strategic plan 2021 -2023, we will:

Enhance the research profile by 100 percent

Continue to strengthen the vibrant institutional research culture which develops high quality, mission-focused research and attracts top researchers and collaborative partners.

Progress and deliver against Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal ambitions and associated research themes.

Consolidate the positive trend of research grant and contract award capture, with acknowledgement of the rapidly changing research landscape.

Position the institution to achieve a successful outcome from a future REF exercise.

Articulate and demonstrate the University's impactful research contributions to society, both locally and internationally.

Increase income by £50m

Consolidate the unregulated student recruitment successes of academic year 2020/21 by optimising the multiple intakes model and associated programme portfolio composition.

Grow international partnership activity inclusive of articulation, online and TNE activities.

Develop the University's global reputation, brand and market reach.

Manage the recovery of commercial and sport activity and associated income streams.

Progress along a trajectory to the delivery of outturn financial surplus positions to secure financial sustainability.

Realign resources to meet emergent and forecast patterns of demand.

Ensure internationalisation is at the heart of everything we do

Be one of the top 25 universities in the UK

Deliver a seamless learner journey, and high quality student experience, from recruitment to graduation.

Deploy innovative teaching practices and learning infrastructure to offer a top-class, digital-ready and flexible learning experience for our students studying on-campus and at distance.

Develop and deploy agile and blended modes of working for the staff community.

Support and develop a culture of health, wellbeing and inclusion, across staff and student communities.

Optimise and fully harness the physical campus space, including Campus Central and the Sports facilities, to encourage engagement, collaboration and innovative teaching delivery.

Progress institutional sustainability priorities and green credentials, in a manner proportional to the prevailing policy and funding environment.

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