



The Higher Education Academy Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016

Championing excellent learning and teaching in higher education



The Higher Education Academy (HEA) champions excellence in learning and teaching in higher education. We are committed to improving the student learning experience by raising the status of teaching, adding to the body of knowledge relating to pedagogy, enhancing professional teaching practice, and facilitating networks and communities of practice. We work in partnership with institutions, student bodies, academic and professional staff, and sector agencies and funders.

This is the HEA's third Strategic Plan. We have consulted widely over the past year to inform thinking and this new Plan describes our ambitions which will be reviewed annually.



Foreword by Professor Sir Robert Burgess

Chair of the Higher Education Academy and Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester

During this period of extensive change in higher education, the work of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in developing the student learning experience has never been more important or more relevant. It is crucial that the organisation is flexible enough to respond to the fluctuating needs of the higher education community and those within it - both in the UK and abroad - while also providing stability to the sector. It is vital that we maintain and embed our focus on improving quality in teaching and learning in HE and this Strategic Plan addresses both of those areas.

As higher education institutions increasingly seek to demonstrate their commitment to high quality teaching, the HEA's priorities to inspire and support effective practice in teaching and learning, and to recognise, reward and accredit excellent teaching are exactly what is required. Through its team of experts with recent teaching experience and its network of over 700 Associates, the HEA can provide timely solutions to contemporary challenges and focus at a generic and a disciplinary level on teaching and learning. Through its accreditation service and individual fellowship scheme, both aligned to the nationally-recognised UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), the HEA can lead higher education towards excellence in teaching - which is just what students increasingly expect, and deserve.

Crucially, the HEA will build on its reputation as the leading provider of evidence-based knowledge about teaching and learning in HE, commissioning, analysing and disseminating research, and building on existing services such as its postgraduate experience surveys. It will also work with its key stakeholders - primarily students and HE staff - to influence national debate on policy and practice.

During times of change, the ability to adapt is required and the HEA can continue to help higher education institutions (HEIs) to respond through its change programme. HEA staff will continue to work side-by-side with academic leaders to initiate change that impacts on teaching and learning provision in institutions. The HEA has already worked with half of all UK HEIs implementing over 300 change programmes, and, as set out in the key performance targets of this plan, it aims to reach a wide range of all institutions with this service over the next four years.

I am confident that the HEA has the strength and flexibility to support the sector in delivering the most effective teaching and learning experience possible to the 2.5 million students currently in UK higher education over the next four years and beyond.

Introduction



Students in higher education deserve the best possible educational provision, comprised of outstanding teaching, underpinned by excellence in practice-based research, provided in modern facilities making use of contemporary and appropriate technology. Education has a role in enhancing opportunity, broadening horizons and expanding the mind, creating graduates with impact who contribute to the public good. As educators, we are responsible for ensuring students have an outstanding learning experience. This requires curriculum design and approaches to learning, teaching and assessment which promote the development of attributes and values which enable personal fulfilment and which contribute to wider society.

UK higher education is undergoing a period of unprecedented change, creating new challenges and significant opportunities. Major pressures include changes in university finances, a shift towards demand-led funding resulting in rising student expectations, more flexible approaches to delivery for a changing student population comprised of part-time, international, work-based and campus-based learners, greater use of technology to support learning, and increased engagement with open educational resources, smart technology and Web 2.0 applications. An expansion of private provision, increased competition and ongoing debates about the purpose, shape and focus of higher education will bring into sharper focus the learning experience of students and the teaching strengths of academics.

In light of these changes, the HEA will support institutions to lead and manage ever-increasing demands on time and resources as they relate to teaching and student learning. We are committed to supporting students studying in UK higher education regardless of their place of study. We will respond by focussing resources where they can have the greatest impact and expanding our institutional subscription base. New sources of income will be secured through an expansion of our existing services both within the UK and to international markets.

Building on previous achievements and making use of current strengths, we will:

- / Be a national voice for learning and teaching across higher education.
- / Ensure a focus on improving students' learning experiences.
- / Support staff throughout their careers.
- / Help to create knowledge and share learning across higher education including changes in the way students learn in the light of developments in technology.
- / Apply research and evidence to improve outcomes for students.
- / Support contemporary thematic and discipline priorities.
- / Establish an international reputation for expertise in learning and teaching.

Our new Strategy also articulates how we will contribute to the development of pedagogy and higher education teaching through investment in new services such as the development of applied research, doctoral support, small grant and international scholarship schemes, and by scanning for new knowledge that can be applied to a UK setting but with a global outlook.

We will concentrate on making our resources work harder for all of UK higher education while ensuring the HEA is more influential on higher education policy. We will offer improved support for institutional change and for reward and recognition, a refreshed fellowship and recognition scheme and a revised UK Professional Standards Framework to underpin leadership and teacher excellence. We will build on work previously undertaken across the HEA to support academics in developing discipline-specific approaches to learning and teaching. We will also regularly review, identify and support changing priorities that are relevant to the development of the curriculum within a dynamic and increasingly competitive higher education landscape. Together our services will provide higher education with a rigorous basis for demonstrating global leadership and professionalism in supporting student learning.

We look forward to working with you to realise our shared ambitions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Mahoney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'C'.

Professor Craig Mahoney | Chief Executive | December 2011



Our Vision

For UK higher education to be recognised and valued by students, staff and wider society for its provision of consistently excellent learning and teaching.

Our Mission

To use our expertise and resources to support individual staff, disciplinary and interdisciplinary teams and higher education communities and institutions in general to enhance the quality and impact of learning and teaching.

Our Purpose

The HEA:

/ Works across the UK to meet national priorities and to enhance students' learning experiences in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

/ Is owned by the higher education community, through Universities UK and GuildHE, and works with, for, and on behalf of higher education, supporting subscribing institutions to develop their learning, teaching and assessment practices.

/ Collaborates with higher education providers, funding bodies, higher education mission groups, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, subject associations, sector agencies including the National Union of Students, and groups representing external stakeholders, for instance, employers.

/ Operates across the higher education community, bringing together different perspectives to inform and challenge developments in learning and teaching.

Our Values

Creativity

– applying expertise and knowledge to push boundaries and foster a culture of innovation.

Empowerment

– collaborating with individuals, groups and institutions to transform staff and student learning.

Working for the public good

– providing transparency, accountability and value for money.

Professionalism

– ensuring an equality of opportunity and treating all others with respect by taking responsibility for our actions.

Our Priorities

1 To inspire and support effective practice in learning and teaching

Supporting individual disciplines and promoting interdisciplinarity

– providing subject-specific support, including impact-focussed events and resources for teaching staff throughout their careers, working closely with discipline associations and networks, and ensuring opportunities for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary developments.

Supporting professional staff

– providing support to staff working alongside academics, for instance librarians, student support services, careers staff and e-learning specialists.

Addressing challenges

– supporting the higher education community to rise to contemporary challenges such as satisfying greater expectations with less resource, flexible delivery, equality and diversity, assessment and feedback, education for sustainable development, reward and recognition, employability and internationalisation.

Encouraging reflection and innovation

– commissioning pilot projects, research syntheses or new research into learning and teaching, and disseminating the findings to enhance practice and shape policy.

2 To recognise, reward and accredit excellent teaching

Recognising and rewarding individuals

– creating opportunities for professional recognition and accreditation, in particular through our fellowship scheme - aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework - our National Teaching Fellowships programme and our teaching awards.

Accrediting institutional provision

– maintaining and promoting take-up of the sector-owned UK Professional Standards Framework, and supporting institutions to use the Framework to accredit their continuing professional development for academic and professional staff and to support institutional reward, promotion and recognition policies or procedures.

3 To influence policy, future thinking and change

Influencing national policies

– working with representatives of students, staff and external stakeholders to interpret, challenge and shape learning and teaching policy, for instance through commissioned briefings and position statements, and convening events to influence debate.

Evidence gathering and analysis

– capturing, analysing and disseminating intelligence to benchmark and improve policy and practice, for instance through our postgraduate surveys for taught and research students (PTES & PRES), analysis of external surveys such as the National Student Survey, and by conducting international comparisons.

Facilitating institutional change

– offering change programmes, consultancy, development opportunities and resources to help academic leaders initiate and embed change that has a positive impact on teaching policy and practice in their institutions and enriches learning.

4 To develop an effective, sustainable organisation that is relevant to and valued by higher education

Effective governance

– working with our Board of Directors and Trustees to ensure the needs and expectations of our funders and owners are met or exceeded.

A client-focussed service

– through a team of HEA partnership managers, we will meet the learning and teaching needs of subscribing institutions by guiding them through our services, tailoring our offer to meet their specific needs, and responding to their feedback to ensure we remain useful and relevant.

Staff engagement

– becoming a reflective learning organisation that ensures its values are translated into practice, making the HEA a place where staff feel professionally fulfilled.

Securing financial sustainability

– we will seek to secure new sources of revenue, for instance by providing services to international institutions or agencies and expanding our subscription base.

We will measure our success against the following targets:

Development of Academic Practice

At least 85% of users of HEA services to support academic practice and teacher excellence are satisfied and able to demonstrate how our partnership work has enhanced their practices, as evidenced by satisfaction surveys and feedback.

Teacher Excellence

At least 50% of eligible academic staff working in UK higher education have achieved Descriptor 2 of the UK Professional Standards Framework through HEA accreditation or HEA recognition processes by 2016.

During the same period we expect 2,000 eligible academic staff to achieve Descriptor 3 and more than 1,000 to achieve Descriptor 4 of the UK Professional Standards Framework.

At least 85% of subscribing HEIs have a CPD framework accredited against the 2011 UK Professional Standards Framework.

Institutional Strategy and Change

At least 80% of institutional leaders and policy-makers surveyed agree that they have gained valuable support from the work, knowledge, evidence gathering activities and interventions of the HEA.

At least 75% of institutions in the UK have used the HEA's institutional strategic change services.

Organisational Effectiveness

Income from sources other than core funding body grants will grow to £8m per year by 2016, arising from expansion in subscribing institutions and business development.

At least 90% of students studying for a UK higher education qualification are taught in HEA-subscribing institutions.



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The HEA is a national body for enhancing learning and teaching in higher education in the UK. We work with institutions across the HE system to help bring about change in learning and teaching to improve the outcomes for students. We do this by recognising and rewarding excellent teaching, bringing together people and resources to research and share best practice and by helping influence, shape and implement policy.

The HEA supports staff in higher education throughout their career from those who are new to teaching through to senior management. We offer services in 28 disciplines throughout the UK and have offices in England, Wales and Scotland. Through the partnership management team we work directly with institutions to understand individual circumstances and priorities and bring together resources to meet them.

The HEA has knowledge, experience and expertise in higher education. Its service and product range is broader than any other competitor, and it is trusted to deliver HE system advancements in partnership with its member institutions.

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