

Middlesex University Enhancing Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2007-2012

1. Background

- 1.1 This document describes the revised University strategy for the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment to meet the needs of the University's students in the period 2007-2012. The revised strategy is placed in the context of the Learning Framework and the Corporate Plan.
- 1.2 The ELTA Strategy is one of the ways through which the University delivers its Corporate Plan, and the revised strategy is therefore set in the context of the current plan.
- 1.3 The Strategy reflects specific priorities of the Corporate Plan. In particular the Strategy is expected to support the corporate priorities concerned with *improving the student experience and student success*. In doing so, it should also contribute to the Corporate aims *to improve the working experience of staff and reduce the operating costs of the University*.
- 1.4 The Strategy is defined by an overarching aim, with eight principal goals for the enhancement of learning and teaching. Each goal has a number of objectives, to be achieved over the period.
- 1.5 Appropriate measures and performance indicators will be established for each objective, and clear actions to achieve them will be initiated and annually reviewed.

2. Aim and goals

- 2.1 The **aim** of the University's Strategy for Enhancing Learning, Teaching & Assessment is: **to ensure a rich, effective and sustainable learning experience for all its students, which:**

- **promotes student engagement in life-long learning**
- **embraces varied, flexible, innovative and sustainable modes of learning, teaching and assessment, informed by research**
- **celebrates and values the diversity of the academic community**

- 2.2 The aim is to be achieved through a set of strategic **goals**:
 1. enhancement of the learning experience for the diverse students of the University
 2. development of highly-valued, innovative programmes
 3. improvement in student achievement
 4. enhancement of the assessment experience for the diverse nature and background of our students
 5. enhancement of the learning environment
 6. improved flexibility in delivery, to meet diversity of student situation and characteristics
 7. development of a more inclusive curriculum and approaches to teaching which promote equality and diversity
 8. support for professional standards and excellence in teaching and the support of learning

3. ELTA Strategy goals

3.1 Enhancement of the student learning experience

- 3.1.1 The University aims to provide educational opportunity for a wide range of students, who enter the University with great variability in their previous experience, their mode of study and in their expectations of what university study is like. The student learning experience must be varied, responsive and of the highest quality possible.
- 3.1.2 A high quality learning experience is one of the key ways of attracting, and retaining well-motivated students. The University's record in effective learning and teaching is good but it will be increasingly important over the next five years to build an even stronger national and international reputation.
- 3.1.3 The objectives for this goal over the period will include:
- to improve quality ratings for learning & teaching in NSS and other forums
 - to maintain and enhance the University's reputation for providing an excellent learning experience.
 - to improve the understanding and evaluation of the student experience, and to apply what is learnt to prioritise enhancement activity.
 - to ensure that an appropriate learning environment is available to students
- 3.1.4 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: improved ranking position on the relevant scales of NSS; improvements in overall scores in module feedback over the period; at least 2 NTFS awards before 2012; increase numbers of HEA registered Fellows and Associate Fellows by at least 60%; at least 3 Senior HEA Fellows by 2012; response to and evaluation of qualitative student feedback data, evidence from Board of Studies minutes, and QMRs.

3.2 Development of innovative programmes

- 3.2.1 The University has a reputation for innovative programme content and delivery which it seeks to enhance still further. Through the Learning Framework, the University aims to offer programmes which are innovative, attractive to students, and relevant to the needs of employers and professions. We seek to enhance the relevance of programmes by increasing engagement with employers.
- 3.2.2 Programme content at undergraduate, as well as postgraduate, level will demonstrate strong links to relevant and up-to-date research.
- 3.2.3 Innovative approaches to programme delivery will be developed which offer flexibility in location and meet other identified needs of students
- 3.2.4 The objectives for this goal over the period will include:
- to develop and deliver new programmes and short courses, in partnership with

employers

- to ensure all programmes are based on to up to date research and professional practice related to the subject(s) of study
- to ensure all programmes offer research-like learning experiences for students
- to continually improve the employability of students
- to encourage and support greater use of Personal Development Planning, with improved reflection and recording of students' learning
- to increase the use of a wide range of innovative delivery methods
- to increase the amount of work-place learning

3.2.5 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: numbers of programmes and courses developed in collaboration with employers; School data on research-teaching links; student survey responses; graduate employment data; employer survey data; data on student usage of e-portfolio for PDP

3.3 Improvement in student achievement

3.3.1 The University aims to motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning and to aspire to high academic standards. We wish to ensure that every student can achieve their potential in the University, and is well-equipped for appropriate work or further study on leaving.

3.3.2 The objectives of this goal over the period will include:

- improved degree classifications and module grades
- reduced proportion of students failing modules
- increased evidence of other kinds of student achievement
- all students engaged in research-like learning

3.3.3 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: PIs informed by benchmark data (eg % increase in 1/2.1 awards over period; annual improvement in data (eg % students achieving 16 and above); student success in scholarships and prizes; graduate employment data; employer survey data; ongoing internal review and benchmarking of practice;; student survey data

3.4 Enhancement of the student experience of assessment

3.4.1 The variety of diverse students who study with the University, and the range of subjects which they study, requires an innovative and flexible approach to assessment methods. We recognise also that assessment which supports learning is critical to student success.

3.4.2 The objectives of this goal over the period will include:

- to improve the quantity and range of useful feedback to students based on formative assessment, and to increase activities with students designed to ensure that feedback is understood and responded to

- to assess all students by an appropriate variety of assessment methods within programmes
- to encourage and adopt innovative assessment methods and approaches, including the use of self and peer-assessment
- to increase the use of online assessment, through OASISplus, for both formative and summative purposes.
- to reduce the assessment workload for staff

3.4.3 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: improved student achievement data year on year; improved student responses to relevant survey items; student usage of OASIS and e-portfolios; School QMRs

3.5 Enhancement of the learning environment

3.5.1 The University aims to ensure that teaching takes place within appropriate environments, with excellent facilities, and that the physical and virtual infrastructure and support mechanisms for learning and teaching meet the needs of teachers and learners, taking account of best practice.

3.5.2 Over the period of this strategy students will increasingly undertake important parts of their learning through the VLE OASISplus. By the end of the period VLEs and other online or mobile means of supporting learning will be expected by students as a normal part of a 'blended' learning environment. This 'virtual' part of the learning environment will need as much attention as the physical if the needs and expectations of students and staff are to be met.

3.5.3 The objectives of this goal over the period will include:

- to develop and maintain high quality, flexible accommodation, appropriate for changing learning and teaching methods, and equipped appropriately
- to ensure that IT, learning resources, estates and facilities strategies and operations are guided by learning and teaching considerations, through consultation with relevant expertise
- to develop and implement effective e-learning strategy and support systems to support growth in use of blended learning

3.5.4 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: student feedback and survey responses to environmental factors; response rate of services to student issues; usage data and survey results from OASISplus; engagement of L&T expertise in strategic planning of estates, facilities and student-facing services

3.6 Improved flexibility in delivery

3.6.1 The University recognises changing patterns of technology and employer needs and aims to support appropriate methodologies and technologies to respond to the continuing demands from students and other stakeholders for more flexible modes of attendance, more online access to learning, and more student-friendly methods of learning.

- 3.6.2 The University's experience and reputation in relation to work-based modes of learning is exceptional, and has been recognised in the Centre for Excellence in WBL. As a means of responding to an increasing need for effective employer engagement, the opportunities for expanding work-based approaches to learning, often supported by online activity, will be exploited.
- 3.6.3 The objectives for this goal over the period will include:
- to develop and implement a clear and effective strategy for the development and support of appropriate blended learning provision
 - to encourage programmes to provide alternative methods by which students might choose to achieve specific learning outcomes
 - to ensure that work-based learning provision is more widely embedded throughout all Schools
 - to implement new work-based initiatives, to meet the needs of new clients or students
- 3.6.4 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: OASISplus student usage data (%increase in online activity); positive student responses to OASISplus provision in survey and feedback; increasing numbers of students on WBL modules and programmes; increasing numbers of WBL modules and programmes

3.7 Development of inclusive curriculum and approaches to teaching

- 3.7.1 The University provides an inclusive curriculum aimed to help all students to achieve their maximum potential, regardless of background, ethnicity, gender or disability.
- 3.7.2 We recognise, in all our planning of curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment, our responsibility and statutory obligations to encourage equality of opportunity and positive race relations.
- 3.7.3 The objectives of this goal over the period will include:
- to review and revise, where necessary, all programmes, to ensure the curriculum and teaching methods are inclusive and encourage positive race relations
 - to ensure that all teaching staff engage in development or training which reinforces the statutory duties and good practices associated with inclusivity
- 3.7.4 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: School reports of inclusivity benchmarking; numbers of staff attending workshops related to inclusivity and equal opportunities

3.8 Support for professional standards and excellence in teaching and support of learning

- 3.8.1 The University aims to enable staff to maintain the highest possible quality and standards in teaching and learning. We recognise that excellence in the support for

learning is not restricted to academic staff, and that other kinds of staff roles can play an important part in students' achievement.

- 3.8.2 The objectives of this goal over the period will include:
- to increase the number and range of staff with HEA professional recognition at Associate, Full and Senior Fellowship levels
 - to increase the number and range of University Teaching Fellows
 - to ensure that University Teaching Fellows play an active and visible role in enhancement activities in their School and across the University
 - to increase the number of National Teaching Fellows and engagements in national teaching and learning projects
 - to increase the numbers of staff researching, presenting and publishing on pedagogic practice
 - to draw on and embed good practices recognised in the two University CETLs

3.8.3 Sources of evidence for performance indicators: increasing numbers of staff with professional standards recognition from HEA (at least 60% increase in HEA Fellows and Associate Fellows by 2012); NTFS awards (at least 2 by 2012); Senior HEA Fellowships (at least 3 by 2012); successful bids for pedagogic development and research; increased number of pedagogic research outputs

4. Monitoring and evaluation

- 4.1 An evaluation of the strategy and its implementation will be undertaken annually from 2007-08, using agreed performance indicators and reported on an adapted form of the HEFCE Self evaluation tool
- 4.2 The progress and impact of the ELTA Strategy is monitored annually in Schools. Associate Deans (LQE) will work with their Learning & Teaching Strategy Leader, to produce a report on progress, which will be considered at Teaching & learning Committee.
- 4.3 The L&T Strategy Team (LTST) will undertake consultation exercises in between monitoring reports, in order to evaluate the extent to which previously identified issues are being addressed, to review the appropriateness of existing targets, and to identify emerging issues.

Annex A: Context for ELTA Strategy

1. The ELTA Strategy is one of the ways through which the University delivers its Corporate Plan, and the revised strategy is therefore set in the context of the current plan (see Annex B: Relevant aspects of the Corporate Plan), in which the University affirms its commitment to: *inspiring its students to achieve ambitious goals through the delivery of outstanding innovative, career-focussed courses that result in highly valued qualifications to begin and develop successful professional careers*
2. The revised ELTA Strategy reflects specific priorities of the Corporate Plan. In particular the Strategy is expected to support the corporate priorities concerned with *improving the student experience and student success. In doing so, it should also contribute to the Corporate aims to improve the working experience of staff and reduce the operating costs of the University*
3. The Strategy is informed by specific assumptions in the Corporate Plan. Amongst the key assumptions which have implications for teaching, learning and assessment are the following:
 - *the market for home and EU students will grow. At the same time this market will become more volatile and competitive.*
 - *the market for international students will grow but will also become more volatile and competitive.*
 - *the market for on-campus part-time provision will decline and the unit of funding will be significantly less than for full-time students*
 - *the market for work-based and on-line courses will grow*
 - *the market for consulting and CPD will grow and will be increasingly competitive*
 - *student choice of university will increasingly be driven by value for money, lifestyle offered, access from home and other convenience factors*
 - *the unit cost of staff will rise in real terms*
 - *the unit cost of space and equipment will rise in real terms*
 - *advances in information and communication technology will continue to provide opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in administration, teaching and learning.*
4. The University's strategy for growth includes the following objectives, to which the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment is expected to contribute:
 - *making Middlesex the preferred choice for more potential students*
 - *maintaining a portfolio of highly valued popular courses supported by quality facilities and equipment and excellent teachers.*
 - *maintaining high quality ratings for teaching*
 - *improving the student experience and students' rating of their experience in the National Student Survey*
 - *improving student progression and achievement*
 - *increasing the employment opportunities and success for our graduates*
 - *developing productive partnerships for the delivery of Middlesex qualifications*
 - *successful implementation of the new learning framework*

5. There are several additional contextual factors, some institutional, and some national, which are significant for this revision of the ELTA Strategy:
 - the implementation of the Learning Framework as a new curricular structure provides opportunities to rethink and remodel the ways in which students learn, are taught and are assessed
 - changes in the campus environment as part of the Estates Strategy provide opportunities to plan and exploit improved physical spaces appropriate to the flexible and changing needs of learning and teaching
 - the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund has supported the development and maintenance of enhancement structures and processes across Schools and central services since 1998.
 - in 2008-09 the HEFCE funds for the enhancement of teaching will be rolled into core budget, rather than being separately provided as an earmarked fund. Universities will be expected to undertake an annual self-evaluation of their enhancement activity and progress.
 - The DfES, HEFCE and QAA articulate a number of national priorities and requirements which Universities are expected to address as part of their enhancement of learning and teaching (and which will be reflected in the self-evaluation). In the current period these include:
 - the expectation that the University will have an explicit strategy for developing and implementing e-supported learning
 - a requirement to ensure that curriculum and teaching approaches are inclusive with regards to disability, race, culture and gender, and meet the statutory responsibilities regarding equality legislation
 - the development of more effective links between teaching and research
 - improvement of the achievement and progression of students from diverse backgrounds
 - the provision of opportunities for student volunteering
6. The ELTA Strategy is also underpinned by pedagogical principles which are drawn from the literature on student learning and affirm the qualities of learning experience to which the University aspires.