Transforming potential into success

Middlesex University Strategy
2017-2022
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Middlesex University | Transforming potential into success
Foreword

Middlesex is an amazing institution, taking its students on life-changing journeys and confident of its role in an increasingly uncertain world. We are proud of our history, which dates back over 140 years to the specialist London colleges and institutions that over time became a successful polytechnic and then a leading modern university.

Our heritage has laid the foundations for who we are today – a global institution that embraces inspiring teaching, lifelong learning and creative innovation. At Middlesex we put students first, empowering our students with highly valued skills and knowledge for rewarding careers and fulfilling lives, enabled by expert teaching and enriched by applied research.

Our mission lies at the heart of some of the most pressing issues of our time, from social mobility to the skills needed for economic success. Through transforming the lives of our students and the impact of our research and practice, we are an engine of social mobility and productivity growth.

Middlesex owes its success to the expertise and dedication of its staff and the commitment and achievements of its students and graduates. The Strategy has been shaped collaboratively by the many ideas and contributions of our staff and students, who will be central to shaping the University’s future as we build on our legacy.

The Strategy presents a renewed vision and mission for Middlesex, looking forward yet respecting and building on our past. Six strategic aims and accompanying objectives set out how our activities will be focused, whilst our new values will guide how we work to achieve them. A suite of eight cross-cutting Enabling Plans will take forward specific initiatives that link directly to our aims.

It is with great pleasure that we introduce our new Strategy. Whether a member of staff, student, alumnus, partner or supporter, we invite you to join us on our exciting journey.
Our Strategy

Transforming potential into success

Middlesex is about transformational journeys, empowering our students with the tools, attributes and opportunities to turn their potential into success.

To do this, we know how important it is to get our students on the right learning pathway and provide a distinctive, high quality education for the modern world. Our inspiring courses with clearly defined routes into career opportunities are a cornerstone of our offer and commitment to our students’ futures. With personalised support and flexible learning, we enable every student to study on the right course and in the right way for them.

Our distinctive student experience is defined by innovative teaching and learning, engaging and vibrant campuses and the richness of our diversity.

All our students will engage in active, practice-based learning, supported by personal tutors, and using our academics’ ground-breaking research and practice to ensure they are at the cutting edge of their subjects and professions. They will stand out as Middlesex graduates, equipped with the skills and attributes they need to succeed.

Our campuses are a signature strength of the University, creating a student experience that promotes wellbeing and a sense of community. They are designed as places where our students want to be, whether to study individually or in groups, socialise, exercise or relax.

We are a global university and like our home city of London reflect its diversity and share its internationalism, from the different cultures and communities of our many London students, to the 145 nationalities of our international students studying at our Hendon campus, our campuses abroad and our academic partners in the UK and around the world.

At Middlesex, we not only value diversity but harness its potential to enrich learning and personal development. By using our diversity of identities and abilities, we empower our students with the skills and mindsets to work with different ideas and perspectives, whether to create new designs and artworks, solve technical and business problems, or improve professional practice.

Our students’ journeys do not end when they graduate. They go on to shape the world and keep learning. As an institution, we cannot just look inwards to what happens while our students are with us. We need to look outwards and use our expertise and capabilities to be part of the big conversations that matter to our students and their future lives, from tackling barriers to social mobility to sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The Strategy sets out the University’s direction for the next five years. Our priorities are presented as six strategic aims, supported by specific objectives. These are driven by our new vision, mission and values, which will guide the way we work together and unite us in a common purpose of transforming potential into success.
Strategy overview

Inspiring success

Strategic Aim 1
Provide an inspiring choice of courses and learning pathways that empower students with the ambition, skills and knowledge to succeed in graduate employment.

Objectives
• We will offer a wide range of inspiring courses that are designed to meet future skills needs and put every student on a path to realising their full potential.
• We will enable students to study on the right course and in the right way for them, with the support and flexibility to achieve their goals.
• We will build our partnerships with industry, the professions and other learning providers to create career opportunities for our students and develop new programmes and pathways such as apprenticeships and mobile learning.
• We will establish new and strengthen existing recruitment pathways for potential students to join us and benefit from a Middlesex education.

Practice-based learning

Strategic Aim 2
Engage our students in active, practice-based learning, with teaching enriched by research and innovative practice that creates highly employable graduates.

Objectives
• Our curricular and co-curricular experiences will be co-created with students, employers and professional bodies.
• Using the diversity of our students as a resource will be a distinctive feature of their learning and personal development.
• Active, practice-based learning will be our standard, equipping our students with the skills and attributes to stand out in the modern workplace.
• We will provide personalised academic, professional and peer support, acting early to help students who get off track.
• We will work to reduce differences in outcomes related to students’ backgrounds or prior attainment.
• We will ensure that evidence, innovation and research continually enhance teaching and learning.

A vibrant student experience

Strategic Aim 3
Create a vibrant student experience that promotes wellbeing and builds a sense of belonging and commitment.

Objectives
• We will work with our students as partners to improve continuously their experience, engagement and commitment.
• We will ensure our campuses are welcoming spaces that promote wellbeing and a sense of community.
• Our learning, support and social spaces will be environmentally sustainable and have the flexibility to adapt to learning innovations and changing needs.
Our vision
The leading university for transforming potential into success.

Our mission
Everyone at Middlesex will have the opportunities and tools to chart their path to success in a community where the experiences we create together are life-changing and our diversity is a strength and inspiration.

Our values
- We put students first.
- We collaborate, achieving more by working together.
- We act fairly, with integrity, respect and purpose.
- We shape the future, continuously improving on what has gone before.

A values-driven culture

Strategic Aim 4
Foster a values-driven high-performance culture that enables us to realise our vision.

Objectives
- We will embed our values in everything we do.
- We will shape and support our workforce to have the capabilities we need and the commitment to achieve our aims by living our values.
- We will create a high-performance culture throughout the University that builds staff engagement, where poor performance is tackled and innovation and improvement are recognised and rewarded.
- We will develop streamlined, evidence-based and effective governance and management processes that empower everyone, add value and facilitate collaboration.

Research that benefits our students

Strategic Aim 5
Undertake high quality research, practice and knowledge exchange that benefit our students.

Objectives
- We will ensure that our research, practice and knowledge exchange are high quality, sustainable, user-driven and benefit our students.
- We will at least sustain our level of quality-related research funding in the next Research Excellence Framework.
- Our knowledge exchange activity will enable organisations in all sectors to innovate and, through this work, connect our students with learning and career opportunities.

Building support for our mission

Strategic Aim 6
Further our mission through corporate, policy and community engagement, building support for the University and setting agendas in tertiary education and skills.

Objectives
- We will play an influential role externally in the sectors and localities where we work, building support for our mission and securing decisions and resources that support our aims.
- We will engage with local, national and global policy communities and contribute agenda-setting thinking on tertiary education and skills.
- We will leverage our institutional expertise and capability to actively shape debate and policy on social mobility, skills and productivity growth.
About Middlesex

Our history is part of the extraordinary story of London and its rise as a global economic, creative and knowledge powerhouse. It includes inventing the concept of a ‘polytechnic’ as a radical new type of university, and a record of innovation and creativity copied around the world.

The University began to be forged in the late nineteenth century, starting with St Katherine’s College, which opened in Tottenham in 1878 to train women teachers. Middlesex still trains teachers, and the importance of expert teaching remains an integral part of our culture today.

Two of our other founding institutions are similarly reflected in our modern day character. Hornsey College of Art opened in 1880, becoming one of the most iconic centres of art and design education in the country and renowned for its progressive ideas. Soon afterwards Joseph Swan, the famous British physicist and pioneer of electric lighting, opened the Ediswan Institute in 1901, providing industrial research facilities and evening classes for his factory workers.

The Ediswan Institute later became Enfield College of Technology where, in the 1960s, Eric Robinson developed his vision for ‘people’s universities’ that were to become the new polytechnics.

Middlesex Polytechnic was created in 1973 by bringing together St Katherine’s (by then renamed the College of All Saints), Hornsey College, Enfield College of Technology and Hendon Technical College, the last of which is now the College building that fronts our London campus. Designation as a university followed in 1992, and in 2017 Middlesex was ranked by the Times Higher as London’s top university under 50 years old.

Our history of pioneering new developments includes the UK’s first business degree and professional doctorate, and leading the field in work-based learning and transnational education. This continues today with our contributions to workforce innovation, such as new graduate mental health workers for the NHS, highly skilled performance analysts for the sports industry and lawyers trained as expert mediators. We are also driving technological innovation, including research on smart vehicles, music technology and tackling cybercrime, and providing cutting-edge professional development in areas such as building information modelling and using virtual reality in the fashion industry.

Middlesex today is a global London university with a strong sense of community. Our main campus in the London Borough of Barnet is part of the economic and cultural life of this growing and successful borough. We directly or indirectly support over 4,000 jobs, help hundreds of businesses each year, stage student shows, take part in volunteering and host community events. Together, our staff and students spend over £70 million in the local Barnet economy every year.
Over 19,000 students study at our London campus, with almost a third coming from overseas. A further 20,000 students study for Middlesex awards with our partners in the UK, Europe, Asia and Africa, and at our overseas campuses in Dubai, Mauritius and Malta. Diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Our students and staff encompass many nationalities and backgrounds. This creates a vibrant environment that welcomes diversity and inspires learning by introducing different perspectives and approaches that can be used in teaching and co-curricular activities to enrich the lives and outlooks of our students.

Academic life at Middlesex revolves around three Faculties: the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries, the Faculty of Professional and Social Sciences, and the Faculty of Science and Technology. Each Faculty works closely with employers to give students the skills and knowledge needed for future careers.

As well as taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, we provide a range of continuing professional development courses and research degrees. Some programmes are also provided entirely or mainly online. All our programmes engage students with leading practice and research in their fields. Our research, often based in dedicated research centres, forms an integral part of the learning experience at Middlesex. A range of professional services complement our academic provision. Library, study support, wellbeing and employment services ensure our students have the best possible opportunities to succeed, while estates and facilities, human resources and finance all provide vital enabling functions. We also have major contracts with companies providing student accommodation, catering, security, and information and communication technology, as well as with partners in the UK and abroad, providing high quality, value for money services.

The external landscape that Middlesex works in is dynamic and uncertain, with strong and growing competition between higher education providers. Students in England pay high fees and are encouraged to evaluate possible courses and institutions with a growing amount of public data on quality, price, and employment outcomes.

The development of degree apprenticeships and alternative technical education opportunities for young people has the potential to divert growing numbers of school and college leavers from full-time degree study. Degree study is likely to be increasingly provided in different ways, such as cheaper, more flexible ‘no frills’ degrees and online courses. Innovations such as two-year degrees are being incentivised by policy-makers, new providers encouraged with quicker and easier approval processes for awarding degrees, and credit transfer reviewed to make moves between institutions easier.

The impact of Brexit is high among the challenges we face. Our EU staff and students are valued members of the University’s community and we benefit tremendously from research and education collaborations across Europe. We will need to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances and make sure that what we do is sustainable, meets a demand and represents value for money. However, these challenges are not new for Middlesex. We have been at the forefront of innovation and change throughout our history.
Inspiring success
Strategic Aim 1:
Provide an inspiring choice of courses and learning pathways that empower students with the ambition, skills and knowledge to succeed in graduate employment.

Objectives

a) We will offer a wide range of inspiring courses that are designed to meet future skills needs and put every student on a path to realising their full potential.

b) We will enable students to study on the right course and in the right way for them, with the support and flexibility to achieve their goals.

c) We will build our partnerships with industry, the professions and other learning providers to create career opportunities for our students and develop new programmes and pathways such as apprenticeships and mobile learning.

d) We will establish new and strengthen existing recruitment pathways for potential students to join us and benefit from a Middlesex education.

Our courses will empower our students with the tools, attributes and opportunities to succeed, both in their learning and future careers. We want all our students to be able to realise their potential, which is why our courses will be strategically aligned to current and future skills needs. Our graduates will be well prepared for the industries and professions they enter or the businesses they create. They will all have professional work experience, complex problem solving skills and the confidence to succeed.

Collaboration is in our DNA. We will continue building our partnerships with employers, professional bodies, schools, colleges and other education and training providers to create new opportunities to study for a Middlesex award, whether at one of our campuses, online, at work or with a partner institution.

We are proud to be an international university. We will make full use of our global connections, working with our international campuses and partners to create opportunities for students to experience learning in another country and access a wider range of employment. We will also build on existing opportunities such as Erasmus+. Our diversity is an integral part of our character and we will actively maintain this with a continuing commitment to attracting and supporting international students.

We recognise that students take different and changing routes through education, which is why we will design flexible and joined-up modes of study to meet these needs and create ladders of opportunity. We will continue to expand access and drive social mobility by strengthening our recruitment pathways and outreach activities, using innovative campaigns such as ‘Make Your Mark’, which inspires young people in schools and colleges to be ambitious about their futures and plan their next steps, ‘Made for More’, which is targeted at prospective Middlesex students, and ‘Made in Middlesex’ which showcases our most successful alumni as role models for our current students.

At the heart of our students’ journeys are their learning pathways, from finding the right course to graduation and beyond. Beginning with a personalised applicant journey and continuing beyond graduation as a member of our worldwide alumni network, ‘Made in Middlesex’ lasts a lifetime.
Practice-based learning
Strategic Aim 2:
Engage our students in active, practice-based learning, with teaching enriched by research and innovative practice that creates highly employable graduates.

Objectives

a) Our curricular and co-curricular experiences will be co-created with students, employers and professional bodies.

b) Using the diversity of our students as a resource will be a distinctive feature of their learning and personal development.

c) Active, practice-based learning will be our standard, equipping our students with the skills and attributes to stand out in the modern workplace.

d) We will provide personalised academic, professional and peer support, acting early to help students who need support.

e) We will work to reduce differences in outcomes related to students’ backgrounds or prior attainment.

f) We will ensure that evidence, innovation and research continually enhance teaching and learning.

Our student experience is where we are most distinctive, combining active, practice-based learning with personalised support, and a commitment to using our diversity as a resource in teaching and co-curricular activities. All our courses will have an emphasis on skills development, support digital literacy and provide access to professional work experience.

We will work with our students, co-creating the curriculum, our support structures and the opportunities we provide. We will also work in partnership with employers and professional bodies to create pathways into employment and self-employment.

Our students need to be able to solve difficult problems, think and act creatively, and communicate and collaborate effectively. We will develop a toolkit of signature pedagogies to support this, defining how we teach and fostering innovation. All our teaching staff will use research and evidence about what works to continually enhance their teaching and their students’ learning and engagement.

Our students' diversity is both a strength and a resource. Different identities and abilities bring ideas that can be used to inspire creativity and solve problems. Our graduates will be able to succeed in the workplace because of their abilities in using different ways of seeing and designing solutions in an increasingly complex world.

The wellbeing and achievement of all our students will be supported by a sector-leading personal tutor network and continuing our successful Graduate Academic Assistant (GAA) and Student Learning Assistant (SLA) initiatives. We will also target specific measures to reduce differences in positive outcomes that relate to background or prior attainment.
A vibrant student experience
Strategic Aim 3:
Create a vibrant student experience that promotes wellbeing and builds a sense of belonging and commitment.

Objectives

a) We will work with our students as partners to continuously improve their experience, engagement and commitment.

b) We will ensure our campuses are welcoming spaces that promote wellbeing and a sense of community.

c) Our learning, support and social spaces will be environmentally sustainable and have the flexibility to adapt to learning innovations and changing needs.

We want our students to be engaged and feel committed to Middlesex as a place where they belong. Our student experience will actively promote wellbeing and engagement in study, work experience and co-curricular activities, from outstanding induction activities and personalised support to welcoming and inspiring physical and virtual environments.

Our students are partners and we will work together to build a culture of trust and mutual respect. We will work with Middlesex University Students’ Union (MDXSU) to ensure effective engagement with our wider student body and that feedback is sought and acted on. Through our Student Charter, we will set out what students can expect from their University, and what is expected of them.

We will make our campuses places where our students want to be and want to learn. A range of projects will be taken forward to support student learning through shared collaboration spaces and increased opportunities to access sport, health, cultural and recreational facilities.

Our innovative Learning Landscape Project will enable a multi-dimensional approach to the design and use of real and virtual learning spaces, providing flexibility to integrate advances in pedagogic thinking and new technology.

We will continue to improve our physical estate, making it more engaging and fit-for-purpose for our range of specialist subject provision, whilst meeting clear criteria for environmental and financial sustainability. Our staff working environment will be a priority for improvement, particularly where space pressures are greatest, and we will continue working to enhance student accommodation.

The quality of our campuses is particularly important to feeling part of the University community. However, many of our students commute and have commitments outside formal studies, such as paid work and caring responsibilities. To support them, we will introduce greater flexibility, including mobile and distance learning resources, and improve the timetabling process. Our student experience will be enriched by our virtual campus, which will support our students’ learning anywhere and anytime.
A values-driven culture
Strategic Aim 4:
Foster a values-driven high-performance culture that enables us to realise our vision.

Objectives

a) We will embed our values in everything we do.

b) We will shape and support our workforce to have the capabilities we need to achieve our aims.

b) We will create a high-performance culture throughout the University that builds staff engagement, tackling poor performance and recognising innovation and improvement.

c) We will develop streamlined, evidence-based and effective governance and management processes that empower everyone, add value and facilitate collaboration.

Our vision can only be realised through the passion and expertise of our staff and a commitment to our shared values. We want our staff to be proud of Middlesex, to lead and welcome change, and to feel supported facing the challenges and complexity of today’s higher education environment.

We will continually review, shape and develop our workforce, ensuring that we have the roles and skills we need, while providing opportunities for development and progression and ensuring our staff costs are aligned with our expected revenues and target surplus.

We will look to sector good practice to develop our approaches to the evaluation, recognition and reward of high performance and tackle low performance. We will develop and grow our leaders through a comprehensive leadership development programme.

Our values will underpin an open, diverse and inclusive culture in which everyone is respected. We will seek to achieve important external accreditations that demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity, including Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter and the Stonewall index.

To drive continuous improvement, our staff will be equipped with the skills, data and insight necessary to take evidence-based decisions. Constructive challenge in the pursuit of innovation, effectiveness and efficiency will be encouraged. To aid this, we will further develop our approach to business enhancement across the University.

Our governance, leadership and administration will be enabling and value-adding, supporting high performance and collaboration throughout the University. Following an internal review of our governance structures and processes, we will streamline decision-making and develop assurance and reporting frameworks that enable us to track progress and act on issues effectively.
Research that benefits our students
Strategic Aim 5:
Undertake high quality research, practice and knowledge exchange that benefit our students.

Objectives

a) We will ensure that our research, practice and knowledge exchange are high quality, sustainable, user-driven and benefit our students.

b) We will at least sustain our level of quality-related research funding in the next Research Excellence Framework.

c) Our knowledge exchange activity will enable organisations in all sectors to innovate and, through this work, connect our students with learning and career opportunities.

At Middlesex, we see vitally important roles for both high quality research and professional, entrepreneurial and creative practice in enhancing student learning. To achieve this, we will promote the use of our academics’ research and practice in their teaching. This will include creating learning resources that develop our students’ skills of inquiry, communication and critical analysis, as well as ensuring our students have opportunities to learn at the leading edge of their subjects and professions. Our research and practice will also strengthen and develop our courses so that they continue to respond to the knowledge and skills needs of a rapidly changing world.

We will identify and support high quality research likely to benefit our next submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), aiming to at least maintain our current level of quality-related research funding in the next REF, while continuing to improve our recovery of research costs.

In pursuing high quality research and practice, we will support our academic staff to develop their knowledge and skills, and share their passion for discovery and invention with their students.

Our research, practice and knowledge exchange will have real world impact and enhance our external reputation as an applied institution engaged with tackling complex issues to improve lives. Our knowledge exchange activity will focus on maximising the impact of our research and create opportunities for our students by building links with employers and professional bodies.

Research students are an important part of our community and the University’s research environment. We will ensure that the quality of research degree provision is high and that our systems and processes provide the support our research students need.
Building support for our mission
Strategic Aim 6:
Further our mission through corporate, policy and community engagement, building support for the University and setting agendas in tertiary education and skills.

Objectives

a) We will play an influential role externally in the sectors and localities where we work, building support for our mission and securing decisions and resources that support our aims.

b) We will engage with local, national and global policy communities and contribute agenda-setting thinking on tertiary education and skills.

c) We will leverage our institutional expertise and capability to actively shape debate and policy on social mobility, skills and productivity growth.

It is important that we work to ensure our students have a life-changing experience at Middlesex. In order to make sure this translates into a world where our students’ chances of success are as high as possible we need to build broader support for our mission. It is especially important that Middlesex is seen by politicians, businesses and opinion formers as part of the solution to the challenges we face to improving social mobility and productivity, because these are where our students’ diversity and skills have so much to contribute.

We will establish an influential Middlesex voice at a number of levels, from national and local government decision-makers to professional and business bodies, funders and think tanks. We will become a trusted and respected contributor to debates and policy-making on tertiary education and skills. This will include advocating for greater diversity in the workplace, ladders of opportunity to increase social mobility, and the importance of higher level skills in science, business and the arts to improving productivity, public services and quality of life.

Positioning Middlesex as a key player in London’s skills ecosystem will be a significant part of our work. Beyond London, we will explore opportunities for collaboration with our partners and locations overseas where there are similar challenges and opportunities.

The wider community is important to us in all our locations. We will continue to encourage staff and students to volunteer and contribute their expertise to supporting schools, sport, the arts and community activities, especially where these address disadvantage and lack of opportunities. Similarly, we will maintain our support to local businesses with advice, events and, where appropriate, through purchasing products and services.
Interior Architecture students in Interiors studios at the Ritterman building
Measures of success

Success in achieving our strategic aims and objectives will be measured against the following targets.

**Student employment outcomes**
- We will be the top modern university in London for graduate employment.

**Student satisfaction**
- By 2022, we will be in the top quartile of all UK universities for student satisfaction with their teaching and learning experience.
- By 2022, overall student satisfaction with their courses will exceed the sector and London averages.

**Student achievement**
- We will track our students’ learning gain and improve the value we add year-on-year.
- We will narrow gaps in positive outcomes related to the different backgrounds and prior attainment of our students.

**Student progression**
- By 2022, at least 92% of our new students will progress to their second year of study.

**Staff engagement and satisfaction**
- Our overall level of staff engagement will improve year-on-year.
- This will be evidenced by increased pride in working for Middlesex and recommending the University as a place to work, measured through the staff survey.

**Research**
- We will increase the extent to which our research, practice and knowledge exchange benefit our students and track this through indicators that measure the use of research in teaching and learning.
- We will at least sustain our level of quality-related research funding in the next Research Excellence Framework.

**Building support for our mission**
- We will increase our impact, year-on-year, on the policy areas and agendas we target to influence, particularly social mobility, skills and productivity growth.
Nursing students practising their skills in our simulation labs
Making it happen

Careful financial planning will underpin every aspect of the Strategy.

We will invest to grow and diversify our income, especially from partnerships, and will ensure that the University’s costs are aligned with expected revenues and targets for our operating surpluses. We will not take any unacceptable financial risks and will ensure that the University’s taught programmes, research and services all add value and are cost effective.

To drive implementation, we have developed a suite of Enabling Plans, which underpin our Strategy and detail how we will achieve our aims and objectives. These five-year operational plans cut across the University’s organisational structures and set out a clear roadmap for how we will work together to realise our vision.

There is an Enabling Plan for each of the following themes:

- People and Culture
- Marketing and Student Recruitment
- Learning and Teaching
- Student Experience
- Research
- Digital
- Estate and Facilities
- Communications, Engagement and Policy

The activities and benefits set out in these plans have been developed and prioritised in close discussion with colleagues across the University. Together they will help us measure success and regularly report on our progress toward meeting our goals. As working documents they will also enable us to reflect, learn and adapt over the course of the Strategy.