Academic Strategy 2015-2017

Mission

Through our teaching, research, knowledge exchange and professional practice, the academic strategy for Middlesex University aims to deliver the University's mission to produce a growing community of staff, students and partners who make vital contributions to the economic, cultural and social well-being of the societies in which they live and work.

Vision

Our vision, as set out in our strategic plan 2012-17, is to be a leading university of choice, recognised internationally for excellence in all that we do. We will seek to further our achievements and raise performance to become:

- The first choice for students, staff, partners and employers;
- Known for delivering sought-after courses which are considered amongst the best available in higher education;
- Home to staff who are academically outstanding and enjoy strong reputations among research peers as well as policy and practice stakeholders;
- Recognised as a leading international university;
- A partner of choice to both the education and business sectors.

This strategy is designed to achieve this vision by focusing our academic activities, both in the UK and overseas, on the following two strategic priorities:

- Enhancing student achievement and satisfaction;
- Strengthening leadership and staff performance.

In so doing, our activities will be based on our Middlesex values:

- Striving for excellence;
- Putting students first;
- Promoting diversity and inclusiveness;
- Freedom of academic enquiry;
- Professionalism.

The Academic Strategy encompasses key aspects of our ambitions in learning, teaching, student experience, research and knowledge exchange. It informs other, more detailed strategies and will be underpinned by action plans and key performance indicators.

Objectives for learning, teaching and the student experience

We believe that a productive educational experience goes beyond subject knowledge to encompass the development of professional skills and attributes. We aim to produce graduates who have the knowledge, skills, confidence and ambition to achieve success in their studies and their chosen careers. We aim to provide the supportive learning and working environment, and professional development, that enables meeting this aim. The key objectives of our strategy for student experience, learning and teaching are set out below.

Student experience

We seek to ensure that our students have a fulfilling and transformative learning experience. Key objectives are:

- To attract students with the ability and ambition to excel and inspire them to achieve their potential;
- To increase levels of student satisfaction;
- To work in partnership with the student body, including close working with Middlesex University Students' Union (MdxSU), to increase student engagement in all aspects of University life, including in the design and delivery of their education;
- To provide multiple opportunities to engage in, and co-produce, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, strengthening the sense of belonging within our academic community for students and staff;
- To ensure that our physical and virtual facilities and resources are of the highest possible standard;
- To provide responsive and innovative student support services, valued highly by our students.

Learning and teaching

We aim to provide effective and engaging learning, teaching and assessment opportunities for our students to enable them to progress and achieve their potential. Key objectives are:

- To increase levels of progression, retention and achievement;
- To support a community of professional and inspirational teaching staff, committed to excellent teaching and putting students first;
- To bring together expertise from the academic and professional practice spheres for the benefit of students and their employers and businesses;
- To develop, recognise and reward excellent practice in teaching and the support of learning;
- To ensure our approaches to teaching, learning and pedagogies are effective, innovative and informed by research;
- To raise the external profile of the excellence of our teaching and support for learning, including our research and innovation in these areas.

Curriculum

We will provide a diverse portfolio of high quality provision at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The portfolio is mindful of market requirements nationally and internationally, and its currency and rigour are maintained through a robust process of course approval, validation and review. Key objectives are:

- To maintain a curriculum that is outcomes based, supported by concepts of constructive alignment between programme and module learning outcomes and appropriate assessment;
- To ensure that the curriculum is informed by research and professional practice, as appropriate to the level of study, which engages students and meets their needs wherever they are studying;
- To ensure that our curriculum reflects our Middlesex values;
- To offer programmes with professional accreditation where available and appropriate;
- To extend the academic reach of Middlesex nationally and internationally through the University portfolio, collaborative provision and distance education.

Employability

We aim to ensure that our graduates are well-prepared for employment and professional practice through our curriculum design, pedagogies of active learning, extra-curricular activities and support in gaining work experience. We guide and support students to achieve their aspirations, and help them find routes to employment in their chosen field. Key objectives are:

- To enhance graduate employment prospects;
- To ensure that our courses enable students to develop strong skills and attributes relevant to professional employment and entrepreneurialism;
- To ensure that, where appropriate, our courses are professionally accredited;
- To provide opportunities for students to engage with professional practice and/or employers;
- To support our graduates with entering employment, self-employment or entrepreneurship, in line with their ambitions;
- To enhance and develop the relationship with MdxSU to provide extra-curricular opportunities;
- To foster collaborations internally and with external partners that will increase student employability.

Structures and resources for developing and supporting learning and teaching

We aim to offer a nurturing, creative, imaginative and modern learning and working environment for students and staff. We are committed to developing staff. Specialist and non-specialist facilities are expected to be of high quality. The environment reflects our extensive engagement with employers, sector bodies and other educational providers. Key objectives are:

- To develop, recognise and reward capabilities and achievements of academic staff in relation to teaching, learning and student experience, especially those who are early in their career;
- To provide high quality support for design, delivery, assessment and enhancement of teaching and learning, including professional qualifications and accreditation in teaching, through the Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement, the Library, information technology and availability of data;
- To ensure that our physical and virtual learning environments are of high quality and suitable to the needs of a diverse student community;
- To support student satisfaction and academic success through the effective design, selection, application and maintenance of resources for teaching and learning;
- To ensure that our environment supports the use of innovative methods of face to face, blended and, where appropriate, distance delivery;
- To increase the availability of learning materials that can be accessed electronically, on campus and remotely;
- To choose sustainable options wherever practicable in designing and using estates, facilities and resources.

Objectives for research and knowledge exchange

We will undertake research and professional practice of the highest quality both to advance knowledge and to have an impact on society. We will support staff to take their research and practice forward and keep up-to-date with developments in industry. This will create a rich, research-excellent environment in which to work and that will have a significant impact on building our reputation.

Research and professional practice cultures

We aim to stimulate vibrant and sustainable research and professional practice cultures. We value collaboration with business and public and voluntary services. Key objectives are:

- To increase the number of staff who are active in research and professional practice;
- To increase levels of research and knowledge exchange income;
- To increase the quality and impact of our research;
- To develop stronger involvement between our staff and partners from industry and public services;
- To develop teaching, research and professional practice staffing models to improve efficiency and enhance performance.

Research and knowledge exchange funding

We will strengthen our performance in competitive funding for research, knowledge exchange and professional practice. Key objectives are:

- To ensure that there is the necessary research and professional practice leadership in the University to achieve continued growth in competitive research and knowledge exchange funding on a sustainable basis;
- To reflect in academic staff work plans the importance of pursuing external funding to support research, professional practice and knowledge exchange;
- To support our academic staff with developing strong collaborations that support income generation and impact;
- To achieve a balanced portfolio of external funding that is resilient to changing circumstances.

Impact

We aim to enhance the academic and non-academic impacts of our research. Key objectives are:

- To establish strong routes to impact and dissemination that go beyond the traditional publication routes, including exhibitions, performances, social media and events;
- To value funding streams that are designed to encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange alongside research awards;
- To ensure that impact is built into project proposals;
- To facilitate cross-disciplinary research through techniques such as internal sandpits and problem-oriented challenges;
- To support staff in engaging with the activities of professional bodies, business, the NHS, schools and colleges, local and central government, voluntary organisations and theme-focused events;
- To promote good practice in maximising exposure to our research, including the use of our digital repository and open access publication.

Structures and resources for developing and supporting research, professional practice and knowledge exchange capabilities

We are committed to developing our research and professional practice selectively according to the resources available and priorities for increasing quality and impact; to the recruitment and development of high quality researchers, both staff and research students; and to a sustainable research base. We will develop structures for supporting research and its development that are efficient and fit for purpose. Key objectives are:

- To develop, recognise and reward the research and professional practice capabilities and achievements of academic staff, especially those who are early in their career;
- To develop research according to our strategic and funding priorities, including doctoral training where this is of high quality and sustainable;
- To provide high quality support for research, knowledge exchange and impact, including through the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office, the Library, information technology, data management and our digital repository;

- To delegate responsibility for research and knowledge exchange through schools to departments, groups and individuals in ways that support our strategic priorities, enable performance to be managed and respect disciplinary differences;
- To ensure that structures for supporting the development and management of research and knowledge exchange funded projects and for doctoral administration and support are of the highest quality;
- To provide a fit-for-purpose research infrastructure including laboratories, studios, workshops, computing facilities, space and other research resources.

This strategy was approved at the meeting of the Academic Board on 25 June 2015.