transformation
THE NEW VISION FOR OUR UNIVERSITY
This book is about us. It’s about what makes the University of Dundee distinctive. It’s also about what we need to do to make a real impact in the world.

Amongst staff and students there is a huge amount of pride in our University and a great commitment to what we do. We want to capture that positive attitude and make sure that it is focused and channelled to help us build a stronger, better, more influential University of Dundee.

We want to take this opportunity to transform ourselves, transform lives and transform the world in which we operate.
We had been established for decades when we received our Royal Charter. It captured what we set out to do and it restated a clear purpose:

“To advance and diffuse knowledge, wisdom and understanding by teaching and research and by the example and influence of our corporate life.”

This is still at the heart of what we do. It drives our thinking and our actions. But it doesn’t distinguish us enough. It tells us what we want to achieve; but we also need to be clear why and how we’ll do it.
Our Purpose

Our reason for existing is simple. It’s what we do today and it’s what we have always done. It is to transform lives... locally & globally through the creation, sharing and application of knowledge.
Our way

Since we began in 1883 we have always done things in a particular way, based on a clear set of values.

We have been committed to a broad range of subjects – from sciences to the liberal and fine arts – and to freedom of thought and speech. We have created knowledge and we have applied that knowledge, using it to catalyse change and bring about developments that have transformed society. Our can-do, entrepreneurial attitude has supported this at every turn.

We have been proud to be welcoming and accessible to all, regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, religion, creed or financial means. We have made an impact on the world, but we have never forgotten our obligation and commitment to serve the City of Dundee.

Our core values

We need to be clear about our way of doing things so that it’s easier for people joining us to know what we expect of each other, and for us to transform lives.

This has led us to distil and define a set of five core values:

• valuing people
• working together
• integrity
• making a difference
• excellence

These aren’t new values; they’re what have shaped the best actions and decisions we’ve made so far. We need to make sure everyone knows them and is guided by them, so that they’re at the heart of every action and every decision we take.
In 2012 students voted Dundee the best place to be in the UK, according to the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey.

Key challenges

We will make a real difference to individuals and to our society by grappling with the biggest challenges that face our world.

We’ve identified three broad areas – issues that really matter and where we believe that the University of Dundee can make a concrete difference and transform lives.

They are:

• promoting the sustainable use of global resources
• shaping the future through innovative design
• improving social, cultural and physical well-being

We can only find solutions for these and other important issues by working creatively together across Schools; and by being committed to excellence.
We have a big goal. It's ambitious and challenging. It'll take commitment and unreasonable effort to achieve. It may take us 25 years of on-going energy to get there – and we may not succeed. But it’s better to shoot for something big than make timid and incremental changes.

Our vision is this.

We will become Scotland’s leading University

celebrated internationally for the quality of our graduates and the impact of our research
Valuing people

Transformation takes people. We wouldn’t be here without people. Our staff, students, partners and community make our University. You shape our world, you make our university distinct, and we value the part that each one of you plays.

We nurture creativity and innovation, so that ideas flourish. We build energy and enthusiasm and we value the contributions from our staff, students and partners. We reward effort and success.

Respect is absolutely central to what we do. We treat everyone fairly, with dignity and with understanding. We support and promote equality and diversity. We value the variety of nationalities, backgrounds, beliefs and opinions that every person brings to us.

Our Access Summer School has brought over 1000 students into higher education through our pioneering work in widening access.

Working together

We are more successful when we work together. The challenges that confront society are complex and interdisciplinary. They can only be resolved by sharing concepts and synthesising new approaches. New thinking comes from collaboration and working across disciplines. It gives us inspiration and new perspectives. It brings greater understanding and greater appreciation of different situations.

Exposing our students to different fields of learning gives them a wider perspective, fosters curiosity and inspires them to bring different views and techniques to problem solving. Students leave us prepared for the workplace and equipped with the skills that are vital to drive social and cultural wellbeing – curious, knowledgeable and motivated to contribute to society.

The collaboration of our support services underpins this work. It keeps computer networks running, the labs open, the facilities prepared and working – it supports and fosters new approaches. Without this teamwork, the academic work could not take place.

We work as one team to meet the needs and expectations of our community. And we extend that team to partners at home and abroad when it helps us strengthen our work, thinking and reputation.
We have strong principles and we stick to them. People trust us because they know we’ll always behave ethically – whatever the situation.

It means we are always open, honest and fair. We are committed to the highest standards of governance. And we value and protect our world, respecting the needs, beliefs and priorities of everyone in it.

It’s not always easy. Sometimes we have to make difficult decisions, or make choices that not everyone will like. We do this together. We listen to every view, we encourage constructive debate and we do our best to make choices that are wise and fair.

Integrity means people can trust us and rely on us to do what’s right.

Organisations, from major charities such as the Wellcome Trust to local foundations, fund us because they have no doubt that we deliver on our promises. Their support and funding helps us do more to tackle disease, discover new treatments and widen access to disadvantaged groups.

We are smart thinkers, we appreciate lofty thoughts, new knowledge and clever ideas, but we also have our feet firmly on the ground. We believe in the power of curiosity-driven research, but we also make sure our research is valuable, that we apply it when the opportunity arises and that it makes a real difference to individuals and society.

Our teaching helps transform the knowledge, approach and opportunities of the students who come to us. Our research helps address the social, cultural and economic challenges facing communities and societies both locally and around the world. We are a force for good. We all go the extra mile to deliver what people need, and we do it because we understand the importance of our contribution and we recognise the difference it makes to the world.

D’Arcy Thompson, Professor of Biology from 1884 - 1917 invented, amongst other things, mathematical biology, a key interdisciplinary area in which the University of Dundee is still a global leader.
Excellence

Excellence is a value that’s easy to state, but hard to achieve, and yet it’s what we’re about. We don’t take it lightly – as it’s absolutely fundamental to everything we do. Excellence sets a standard that others will follow.

We are determined to give staff, students and anyone who comes into contact with us an experience that not only meets their high expectations, but that goes beyond them. We recruit the very best people in academic disciplines and support services, and we help them to develop and extend their skills. We deliver research and teaching that is of the highest quality, and that will enhance our academic reputation. We won’t rest on our laurels; we gather and respond to feedback so that we get better and better at what we do.

In 2011 the University won two of the three major prizes at the BBSRC Impact Awards (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council): for greatest delivery of impact; and ‘innovator of the year’.

The University produces graduates from DJCAD who are among the leading art and design talent in the UK. Recent examples include Susan Philipsz, 2010 Turner Prize winner, Hayley Scanlan, Scottish Young Designer of the Year 2012, and Colin Bennett, Art Director at Apple in California.

Our approach

To achieve our vision within 25 years requires some big changes. From today every decision must support this aim.

• At every level we must focus on transforming lives – whether it’s changing the lives of individuals we work with, or whether it’s transforming society as a whole.

• Schools must focus on excellence. They should benchmark themselves against the rest and learn from the greatest in the world – and do what it takes to be best in Scotland.

• Directorates must deliver the quality and standard of service needed to support Schools in achieving this goal.

• As a University we must appoint the highest calibre staff and we must all help to develop the skills and knowledge of everyone that works here.

• We must encourage our students and staff to look beyond the confines of their own disciplines, embracing ideas and knowledge from other fields.

Every change we make will help us transform our students, our university and society as a whole.
By making our vision a reality we’ll make real impact in the world – delivering tangible economic, health, social and cultural benefits.

We’ll have brought an even higher calibre of individual to the University, with world-recognised game changers in every School. We’ll have Nobel laureates wanting to be a part of what’s happening and students working and learning with the finest minds in the world.

And we’ll have done this by creating, sharing and applying our knowledge, working across disciplines and sticking to our values.

The impact we’ll make

If we achieve all of this - if we deliver our purpose, live our values and reach our vision – we’ll have transformed our reputation and our standing.

We’ll be known around the world for producing leaders and achievers in all walks of life. We’ll be the partner of choice for some of the best institutions in the world. People will see the University of Dundee as the leading Scottish University and a major player on the world stage. They will aspire to join us and want to collaborate in our work.

Internally we’ll all have helped to deliver this transformation.

We’ll have supported our ambition and reinforced our values. We’ll have attracted greater investment – raising and investing new funds to better equip our University for the future.

We’ll have benefited our community too.

People will see Dundee differently – as a confident and cosmopolitan City. It will encourage people to visit, drive investment and help our city to thrive.

How we’ll be seen
So that’s what we want to do and how we intend to do it

It’s a big ambition and it will take a lot of effort to get there

It’s up to us all to make it happen; if we pull together we can transform our University, our city and our world

We’re already a good University. I need your help to make us a great University.

We are having an impact on our society and transforming lives here in the City of Dundee and in the wider world. But we can do more, and our vision sets out our ambition for the next 25 years.

If we work together we can achieve this. Please get involved, share your ideas, and be part of this transformation.

Prof Pete Downes
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
“If the name of Dundee can be heard louder in the land; if the work of its academics, researchers and project leaders can be lauded and understood better; then the region, the University, Scotland and the high end of British education will all win too”

Stephen Fry

at the inaugural University of Dundee Stephen Fry Award for Public Engagement, January 2012