University of Dundee

Strategy to 2022
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The University of Dundee is an extraordinary university. In 2017 we mark our 50th anniversary and we do so with plenty to celebrate.

- We are the Scottish University of the Year for two years running (The Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide)
- We are one of the world’s top 200 universities (Times Higher Education)
- We are one of the top ten universities in the UK for student experience (National Student Survey)

Over the past five decades, we have pioneered innovations as diverse as flat screen technology and keyhole surgery, had the vision to bring the V&A Museum of Design to Dundee and have worked with partners to help drive the city’s regeneration. Many of the satellites and spacecraft launched into orbit have circuitry designed and built here, while our translational biomedical research underpins global efforts to tackle cancer, diabetes and tropical diseases that kill millions each year.

Our forensic scientists support the judicial system in a range of specialised activities from mass grave and homicide investigations to the development of new technologies in the war against some of society’s most heinous crimes. From Turner Prize winners to political leaders, activists for social change to captains of industry, our alumni are transforming the world and the way we look at it.

We stimulate debate around Scotland’s constitutional future, we contribute to the education and preparation of the next generation of leaders, and we offer an internationally recognised student experience.

Frank Sword, Cleaning Supervisor

“I know my line manager, I know academics, I know the principal. Everybody speaks to you. It’s a good sense of community, tight knit.”

‘Good sense of community’
This document sets out our strategy as we embark on our next fifty years. Our mission remains the same - to transform lives, locally and globally.

This is our vision of how we can build on our successes and meet our future challenges, in a high performance community with a commitment to excellence in all that we do.

We set our strategy in five-year periods. To give an indication of what can be achieved in that time we need only look at our progress from 2012 to 2017.

→ We have improved our position across all of the major university rankings.
→ We have increased our income from teaching and broadened our horizons, welcoming students from more countries than ever before.
→ We have progressed further than any other Scottish university in widening access to higher education.
→ We have improved our student retention and graduate employment and are now among the top institutions in the UK.
→ We have been named among Europe’s most innovative universities, reflecting the strength of our research. In the Research Excellence Framework we ranked first in the UK for biological sciences and top for the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and Art & Design in Scotland.

All of this has taken us significantly towards our goal of becoming Scotland’s leading university. In these next five years we will climb even higher.

Ronnie Bowie
Chair,
University of Dundee Court

Professor Sir Pete Downes
Vice Chancellor, Principal and Chair of Senate
University of Dundee

Sean O’Connor
President,
Dundee University Students’ Association
“I’ve always felt that the University of Dundee is a real community, from my student days right up until teaching here. When you pick up the phone there’s always a friendly person on the other end who is willing to go the extra mile to help you. There are really good connections between the different schools within the university. We’re always happy to make these connections and that’s really important to get a sense of a university that works together for everybody. I’ve always felt very much part of a community here.”

Jacqueline Eccles,
Mental Health Nursing Lecturer
Our strategy supports the core purpose, vision and values of the University.

Our Core Purpose
The University’s core purpose is to transform lives, locally and globally through the creation, sharing and application of knowledge.

Our Vision
We will be recognised as Scotland’s leading university.

Our Values
Our core values determine how we will achieve this ambitious vision. We will do this by valuing people, working together and with integrity, making a difference and pursuing excellence.

Our Community
We will achieve our goals by working as a community committed to excellence. In doing so we will benefit our city and region by acting as a key gateway to the world. Our impact will be felt around the globe.
Students are at the heart of what we do, which is illustrated by our sector-leading approach to student representation. Students form a part of our governing bodies, committees and appointing panels for important posts such as the Chair of Court, the Principal, Vice- Principals, Deans and Directors. Student opinion is central to our community and we are committed to responding to their feedback and driving enhancement. This is reflected in our strong and improving scores in the National Student Survey, where we are ranked in the top ten in the UK for overall satisfaction. Dundee University Students’ Association (DUSA) was ranked in the top 10 in the UK and top in Scotland between 2012 to 2016 with overall satisfaction for students’ associations, when this question was in use, and top in Scotland in the more recent Times Higher Student Experience Survey in 2017.

Each year DUSA and the University sign a Student Partnership Agreement setting out key priorities for the year ahead and the overarching principles we agree. We will continue to agree and set our priorities in this way. We will develop and enhance our approach to Student Partnership Agreements to ensure impact for the student body across the Schools and disciplines. We will continue to work together to further strengthen and develop student representation and the student voice across the University.

“It’s the community here at the University of Dundee that brought me here as a student in the first place. From the management to the students to the janitors to the academics, we’re all pulling in one direction. And from the minute I stepped foot in Dundee, that’s what I felt.”

Sean O’Connor
President, Dundee University Students’ Association

‘We're all pulling in one direction’
“I feel very strongly about the community I am part of at the University, and that extends outwards as part of the work we do, looking to transform lives locally and globally. I could not do my research without collaborating with people from different disciplines, and there are no barriers to that here. My work is very interdisciplinary so I am working with colleagues from Humanities, Art & Design, Medicine and Life Sciences. The opportunities are there to interact and work with colleagues in my own School and right across the University. Without that my research work could not be as exciting as it is.”

Divya Jindal-Snape, Professor of Education, Inclusion and Life Transitions and Associate Dean (Research)
Who we are – who we will be

We are already extraordinary in many ways, a medium-sized university on the east coast of Scotland which is outperforming global rivals of considerably larger size. We have established strengths across the breadth of our activity. Our strategy for the next five years will build on these foundations.

The extraordinary strength of our research has been a bedrock in establishing our reputation as one of the world’s top 200 universities. We have the fourth highest proportion of research grant income to total income of any UK university, which speaks to our outstanding success in winning competitive grants and funding. We have been named one of Europe’s most innovative universities due to our track record in translating research into impact.

We are committed to ensuring the continuing success of our research, to its global reach, and to ensuring that research carried out at the University is always of the highest quality and has the greatest possible impact.

Our research performance is fully matched by our outstanding quality in learning, teaching and wider student experience. We provide one of the very best student experiences in the UK. The foundation of this excellence is the unique strength and depth of partnership that exists between the University and our students.

We are committed to ensuring that, working in partnership with our students, our learning, teaching and student experience are of the highest quality across the whole University.

We are extraordinary in the contribution we make to the city of Dundee, the region and Scotland. Our close-knit city campus is right at the heart of Dundee, which is the UK’s only UNESCO City of Design and is reshaping itself for the 21st century through a £1 billion waterfront development, with the V&A Museum of Design at its centre, a project initiated at the University. Our economic impact in Scotland is over £740 million every year, and 1 in every 12 jobs in Dundee is supported by the University’s activities.

We are committed to sustaining our outstanding track record in widening access and to drawing strength from and contributing to the future success of our city/region through economic, social and cultural impact.

We have strong links with employers, giving our students the best opportunities to prepare themselves for the world beyond university. Our subject mix means that a high percentage of our degree programmes are accredited and a very high proportion of our students are engaged in work-based learning. We have been the most successful university in Scotland in being awarded places for students to learn in the workplace on graduate level apprenticeships. We are ranked in the top 10 in the UK for the employability of our students after graduation.

We are committed to becoming the leading university in Scotland for graduate employment, enterprise and work-based learning.

We are a special community, committed to our values – working together, valuing people, integrity, making a difference and excellence – in everything that we do. Our ability to work together as a single University community has been strengthened by the reorganisation of the University in 2015.

We are committed to maximising the benefits of our structural reorganisation and accompanying cultural transformation, enhancing our ability to work together across disciplinary boundaries in both research and teaching and across Schools and Directorates to deliver outstanding services to our community.
From now, and over the next five years to 2022 we will:

+ enable the people in our community to flourish, enhancing their readiness to succeed in a digital world and transforming our approach to individual and team performance through engaged leadership that achieves collaborative advantage.

+ further advance our commitment to our values, accelerating progress in diversity, inclusion and fairness.

+ increase our impact and public engagement locally and globally.

+ extend and embed an interdisciplinary, team-based approach across teaching and research, with all members of our community jointly tackling real world problems in key thematic areas.

+ substantially grow and diversify our student body, ensuring that we remain a uniquely welcoming community.

+ strengthen our ability to achieve extraordinary things in a financially and environmentally sustainable way.

+ transform our business systems and our ways of working, further strengthening our one-Dundee approach to partnership working between and across academic Schools and Professional Services.

+ grow our reputation for excellence nationally and internationally.

All these plans can be summed up in our commitment to develop the University as a high performance community, working together and supporting each other to become Scotland’s leading University.
“We are one of the strongest research centres in Europe but it isn’t just about producing world-class results in our science and research – we also strive to be world-class in how we work together as people. It is a great place to be because we are big enough to include great diversity among our people and ideas, but small enough to know each other. The same applies to the city, where the people are great supporters of the work of the University.”

Inke Näthke
Associate Dean for Professional Culture and Professor of Epithelial Biology
Our approach has eight strands. These will enable us to transform lives using an interdisciplinary thematic approach, transform knowledge and practices through excellent research and engaged scholarship and education, and transform our University to work better together as a high performance community.

Delivering transformation – how we will do it

Transforming knowledge and practices
We will work within and across disciplines to conduct research that enhances fundamental knowledge and builds upon this to deliver impact for society.

We will enhance our sector-leading programme of public engagement, sharing and co-creating knowledge in accessible and informative ways.

We will ensure our community is equipped with the skills to succeed in an increasingly digital world and meet the challenges of our future society.

Transforming Lives
The University of Dundee’s core purpose is to transform lives globally and locally.

Working across the University and with key partners on problems of high societal importance and impact, our collective energy will be focused on four interdisciplinary themes:

→ Understanding and improving health and wellbeing
→ Life-enhancing creativity and design
→ Innovating technological solutions to tomorrow’s problems
→ Promoting social change to enhance diversity, justice and socio-economic prosperity

Within these themes, we will combine basic, translational and engaged research and innovative practice to bring cutting-edge scholarship to bear on clinical, professional and societal activities that enhance lives, and produce new knowledge that can influence understanding of key issues.

We will support life-changing learning by working with our students and alumni as part of a world-wide network, enabling people from all socio-economic backgrounds and all parts of the world to be part of our network, and developing our graduates as the most employable and most enterprising in Scotland, through extending opportunities for work experience and entrepreneurial ambition.

We will increase our capacity to transform lives by working with a broader range of partners across the globe, and we will create an environment which enables each person in our community to make their own contribution to transforming the lives of others.

Our approach will be leading
Our transformational approach will build and expand on the excellent work we do to connect our community, alumni, external stakeholders and partner organisations. In the next five years, we will educate more students on campus and around the world, more international participants will join an expanded range of distance and blended learning programmes, and more home students will have participated in global mobility and overseas learning opportunities.

We will build upon the strong and creative connections our Schools have with partners in our region, professional bodies and external companies/organisations who share our values, to influence the world around us.

We will better advance our interdisciplinary themes and the global challenges we address by mobilising diverse expertise in collaborative working groups.

We will successfully carry through the commitment for change we have started under the banner of the One Dundee approach and Business Transformation. This will enable us to be leading by which we mean:

→ we enable those we work with to achieve extraordinary things
→ we learn with passion and purpose that empowers us to act with tenacity
→ we enact our values resolutely
→ we are willing to change and adapt ourselves and so inspire others to do likewise

By achieving these things, we will transform the lives of people in our community and the people who benefit from the knowledge we create.
“I’m really lucky working at the University of Dundee, and I sincerely mean that. I’ve always found people to be not only supportive, but there’s a genuine willingness to help each other. Actually I find some of them quite inspiring and challenging at times. You have an idea that you think might work, then in discussion with people you think I haven’t considered this, and you find that as a result what you’d planned to do becomes even better.”

Derek Robertson
Head of Undergraduate Studies, School of Education and Social Work

‘A genuine willingness to help each other’
To build on our successes and meet future challenges, we will:

- realise the benefits of our diversity within a common vision
- share a sense of ambition
- collectively and intensively translate our strategy into action
- cooperate to optimise collaborative advantage

A high performance community

Developing our community over the next five years will ensure that we can achieve far more than the sum of our parts. We will work together across disciplines to deliver research with impact, teaching that develops enterprising and employable graduates, and teams of problem solvers drawn from our academic and professional service groups.

Our identity lends itself to making high performance in our community an enabling theme in how we operate. By advancing our values and the One Dundee approach, we will further develop creative ideas through our diversity, exhibit a shared purpose, be output-focused and have clarity about the benefits of working together. Our positive, thought-infused action will enable us to realise a co-operative advantage that many aspire to, but that few can accomplish. We will recognise excellent performance and motivate each other to achieve this.

Our thematic approach puts community-based collaboration at its core, increasing the opportunity for novel interactions that capitalise on diverse disciplinary expertise. Our community orientation enables us to co-design our research aims in the pursuit of new and applicable knowledge. We will work with others outwith our community to deliver collaborative advantage.

A community orientation runs through much of what we do successfully and what we have achieved in recent years. We have a track record of success that we can build upon.

Students’ role and participation in our community, giving them genuine voice, is exemplary. Many people in our community work in communities of practice. The practice of partnership working between academia and professional services is established and distinctive in our community. Our size enables this way of working. High Performance Communities are about People. We will transform how we understand and measure performance, how we develop individuals and the organisation, and how we understand and enact leadership throughout the organisation. Our leadership will be of the highest quality to enable talent in our community to perform at the highest level.

We will continue to provide an integrated programme of health and wellbeing for our community and the wider public, ensuring that the physical and mental wellbeing of our people is at the forefront of our priorities.

We will be receptive to change, drive innovation and develop the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities in our people. People in our community will be coached, mentored and trained to enable both the understanding and achievement of excellent performance. We will all receive feedback to enhance our performance and will expect high levels of performance of ourselves, our colleagues, students, fellow students and partners.

We will retain, nurture and motivate world-class talent. We will attract colleagues from world-leading universities and other organisations who will further enrich the talent base of our community.

In our community, we will value each other, value diversity and value fairness. We understand the values of the University, its themes and each person’s part in the advancement of the aims; we regard the University as a good place to work and would actively recommend the University as a place to work and study.
Our sustainable community

Our progress in the last five years has been achieved despite challenging economic conditions. In the next five years, we will deliver financially sustainable growth in order to invest strategically in our collective future. This will ensure a high-quality experience for all, regardless of location. We will build upon our strong track record of improving environmental sustainability to minimise the negative impact we have on the world and its resources.

Our position as the UK’s most research-intensive medium-sized university demands that we ensure we work together to improve our financial resilience. To take greater control of our future, we will create vital funds to invest in our strategy by taking an enterprising approach to developing our unregulated sources of income, our efficiency and our cost management.

We will develop an integrated, smart campus and digital environment to enhance the student experience whilst making the most efficient use of our facilities and capabilities. We will enable flexible and agile working together with easy and secure access for all our people. This will enable the collaborative approach that underpins our high performance community.

Allied to this, we will pursue evidence-based decision-making and quality enhancement of our activities through the development of our digital intelligence capability, analytics and mining of our new business systems. We will empower our community with tools and analytical capability to use information in innovative ways.

Investment in our estate will be prioritised to address required maintenance and to create significant new buildings in line with our interdisciplinary ambitions and our thematic approach. We will support this investment with active fundraising campaigns.

We will ensure that our physical footprint achieves a sustainable, proportional relationship to the size of our community. This means changing how we use and design our space. Through this and other measures we will reduce our negative impact on the environment. This will build upon our sector leading environmental approaches to our campus to ensure that we are delivering heat and energy as efficiently as possible. We will work with partners in the city to ensure that our approach benefits others and delivers a greater carbon reduction than we can achieve on our own.

As well as our physical estate, we will invest to ensure our students are properly supported to learn as effectively in the virtual realm, while ensuring that the important extra-curricular experience of being part of our community is not lost. This will require investment in both technology and our people to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver this.

‘Creative, innovative partnerships’

“One of the special things about the University is that ability to work creatively, be innovative, work in partnership. So perhaps a student presents with a particular problem, that we could phone somebody else for support with, and before you know it, we have developed something collaboratively, something new, that we can use and roll out to other students in future.”

Ruth O’Riordan
Senior Careers Adviser
It is important that we set out how we will deliver our strategy. Our strategy sets out the key outcomes for the next five years and, alongside our strategy, we will articulate the activities that will deliver these outcomes in our action plan.

Our action plan will align with our eight strategic strands, elaborating on the activity that we will undertake to deliver our strategy. The outer wheel below shows two or three examples of key action areas aligning to our strategic strands:

- Engage industry, policy-makers and the public
- Develop employability, enterprise and work-based learning
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- Recognise excellent performance and outcomes
- Value feedback and communication
- Ensure digital readiness
- Develop engaged leadership and shared goals
- Enhance personal development, wellbeing and performance

Composite measures allow us to consider the breadth of activity within each of the eight strategic strands. The indicators we use will not become ends in themselves, but help us to assess the effectiveness of the actions we undertake to achieve our core purpose and to advance our values.

Our approach to risk

Our strategy sets out considerable ambition in a time of great uncertainty. Our high performance community will develop a culture of shared ambition and the agility and flexibility to respond to both anticipated and unpredictable opportunities and challenges.

We need to ensure our ambition to grow is matched by our appetite for risk. Our Executive and Court will review and clearly set out our risk appetite at the start of the strategic period so that our ambition can be supported through the turbulence we expect to characterise the world around us in the next five years.

Our recent successes and achievements must give us the confidence to absorb higher levels of risk so that we can continue to out-perform sector-wide trends even while facing significant geopolitical challenges and pressure on public funding of higher education.

Our high performance community

We will assess performance in the delivery of our strategic outcomes and the effectiveness of our action plan through eight KPIs, each aligned with one of our strategic strands. Our KPIs will be composite measures which incorporate qualitative, quantitative and narrative assessments of our progress.

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Our postcard from the future

If we stay true to our core purpose and vision, how will we know we are successful? Imagine that we send ourselves a postcard from the future about our journey to become Scotland’s leading university. What would it say and how would it define what we need to achieve over the next five years?

Tayside is now recognised globally as a place of innovation and social transformation. This is because of our collective efforts to realise the potential that exists across our University community. This sets us out as the most potent force for social, cultural and economic transformation in our region.

We are a diverse, international, high performance community

Recognising that transformation requires a determined focus on excellence across all our activities, in a mutually supportive environment, we have created a high performance community. We are engaged with the world around us, welcoming people to share and create new knowledge.

We transform lives through our outstanding teaching and research

We have attracted outstanding talent from around the world to work and study in our flourishing community. We are solving real-world problems, working within and across disciplines. Our partners and students are fully engaged in our team-based approach, leading to innovative approaches and the application of the knowledge we create in new settings. Our professional services also work across boundaries to provide sector leading support for our community.

Our extraordinary university has a secure and sustainable future

Our thriving community has a sustainable platform upon which to base investment in our people, estate and infrastructure. Our One Dundee approach has delivered a more agile and responsive organisation. Our dynamism has been underpinned by our digital transformation, enabling exciting connections and innovative approaches within, throughout and beyond our community.

“Everyone plays a part”

“We have a big sense of pride in what we are trying to achieve. When you see the results of the awards that we win – Scottish University of the Year twice in a row! - you can see people are really, genuinely pleased and proud of what they are all achieving, and they all play a part in that.”

Shahbaz Majeed, Web Development Manager