

## Education Strategy 2015-20

The University attracts exceptional and ambitious students who choose to study at Birmingham because we offer an opportunity to learn from researchers at the leading edge of their subjects, and we immerse our students in a vibrant academic and learning culture. Our goal, delivered through our Education Strategy, is to support them to become independent problem-solvers and natural leaders, enthusiastic about knowledge and learning and able to get things done. In a research-led environment, our students develop into inquiring, analytical learners who can push at the boundaries of knowledge. We engage, motivate, support and challenge. Our students ask probing questions, learn from their experiences, communicate well, and collaborate naturally. Collectively, these attributes define the 'Birmingham Graduate'. Our graduates have what international, national, and regional employers demand and they go on to have successful careers and to be engaged global citizens.

Education is one of the four pillars in the University's 'Strategic Framework' 2015-20. The Framework sets out four 'education action statements' to be delivered over the 5 year period:

- We will attract exceptional students with high potential, removing barriers to accessing a Birmingham Education
- We will support each student to develop a personal journey through their education at Birmingham
- We will continue to increase the innovation of our curriculum, drawing on our research and disciplinary breadth
- We will develop and value excellence in teaching

The Framework provides the contextual background to these aspirations and also translates them into four 'Key Performance Targets' (KPTs) against which progress can be monitored over the life time of the Framework. The KPTs for Education are to increase:

- The standing of our subjects in national league tables
- Our undergraduate students' assessment of their learning experiences through the National Student Survey
- The value we add to our undergraduate students as seen in their graduate employability
- Our success in recruiting students internationally, as an indicator of our strength in the market

The four action points from the 'Education pillar' of the Strategic Framework have been translated into the University's Education Strategy, comprising a series of institutional high-level objectives with accompanying 'Key Performance Indicators' (KPIs) against which the success of the strategy can be regularly assessed:

## **We will attract exceptional students with high potential, removing barriers to accessing a Birmingham Education**

- We will offer programmes and a learning environment which excites and stimulates our students, and continue to recruit and market Birmingham in the most compelling terms possible. We will identify real and perceived barriers to students' studying at Birmingham and seek to remove them.
- We will increase support for students from different backgrounds, with a focus on our region. The University of Birmingham School is part of a larger Widening Participation strategy to encourage local children to aspire high.

KPI: Widening Participation targets

- We will attract exceptional and ambitious students to Birmingham.

KPI: Tariff

- We will succeed in highly-competitive markets where we operate, including recruitment of the best international students.

KPI: International student numbers

- Recognising that some individuals cannot come to Birmingham to study on campus, we will increase the avenues through which students can experience a Birmingham education, including through alternative modes of delivery and partnership delivery.

KPI: Numbers of learners on AMD and partnership programmes, including MOOCs

## **We will support each student to develop a personal journey through their education at Birmingham**

- We will enable students to become subject specialists in the area of study they have chosen, providing excellent teaching and support locally.

KPI: Subject league tables.

- We will give students choices throughout their degree programmes, including through both curricular and extracurricular activities.
- We will provide personalised support for students both academic and pastorally to allow every student to realise their potential
- We will utilise multiple channels of engagement with students as co-creators of their educational experience.

KPI: NSS

- We will enable students to explore a range of educational opportunities, through study abroad, placements, internships, summer activities, mentoring, and training.

KPIs: Mobility, placements, internships, availability and take-up of such programmes

## **We will continue to increase the innovation of our curriculum, drawing on our research and disciplinary breadth**

- We will focus on innovative teaching to deliver what students need when they need it, including through small group teaching and use of digital technologies. We will increase the engagement of our academics' research in the teaching portfolio.
- We will enable students to gain key skills for employment and life through the curriculum, such as digital literacy and citizenship.

KPI: Employability

- We will increase opportunities for students to engage in research, including through the Birmingham Project.
- We will enhance interaction between students across academic disciplines, exchanging points of view and learning to work with others with different skills and interests, including through the new CTL facility.

## **We will develop and value excellence in teaching**

- We will provide facilities which encourage the best teaching, facilitating advances such as lecture capture, flipped classrooms, small group study space. The new Library will increase the availability of student-led learning space.
- The University's Teaching Academy will continue to develop and ensure that our staff and graduate teaching assistants benefit from outstanding training and development opportunities and CPD. We will share educational best practice.
- We will reward staff for excellence in education, both through promotion and through the Outstanding Teaching Awards.

KPI: NSS (teaching and learning resources)

The Strategic Framework therefore functions primarily as a compass, setting a direction of travel for the institution, in which the more detailed roadmap for education is captured in the Education Strategy. The central philosophy underpinning our Education Strategy 2015-20 is that through successful delivery of the 'education action statements' and KPIs all of our students will acquire and be able to demonstrate a common set of attributes that together characterise the 'Birmingham Graduate':

1. **Subject specialists in a research-led learning environment** – Our strong research environment, which is used to inform our teaching, will continue to allow students to experience their chosen subject in great depth, engaging with world leading experts and referencing contemporary research findings. As research and pedagogic technologies and the media through which research findings are shared and communicated advance in the digital era, so too will our learning, teaching and assessment methods.
- **Skilled and experienced beyond their main discipline** – The learning and teaching experience at Birmingham is founded on the principles of depth, breadth and challenge. Our continually evolving curriculum will enshrine these principles through new curricular and extracurricular activities including the 'Birmingham

Project', Widening Horizon modules, 'Languages for All' and the opportunity to study for credit, subjects outside the main discipline.

- **Enterprising, creative and transformative thinkers** – The concepts of 'Enterprise' and 'Entrepreneurship' will be embedded across all subject disciplines, developed in partnership between programme teams and the Careers Network, drawing on our business engagement and alumni networks.
- **Effective problem solvers and communicators** – The established principles of 'Enquiry Based Learning' are fundamental to the Birmingham educational experience, underpinning the development of our students as effective problem-solvers and critical thinkers, with skills to communicate across the range of media.
- **Globally and locally culturally aware** – As an institution regularly ranked in the top 100 global institutions, and one of the original UK civic universities, Birmingham is in a unique position to provide students with opportunities to gain a cultural awareness in both a local and global context. With an international student population from over 150 countries, 30% international faculty, opportunities to 'study abroad', and programmes that address global issues (food supply, health, security), the University can draw on this rich diversity to enable our graduates to contribute in a regional, national and international context.
- **Responsible and ethical citizens** – Our educational philosophy will challenge students to question convention and develop novel approaches to societal needs, with an ethical awareness of individual and collective citizenship.
- **Confident and flexible life-long learners** – The Birmingham education instills a thirst for knowledge that extends beyond graduation. Many of our students continue their education to higher qualifications, enhancing employability with a confidence developed through an inclusive curriculum that is configured around knowledge and skills, appropriately nuanced within subject disciplines.
- **Resilient and effective leaders** – The learning and teaching experience at Birmingham provides an appropriate suite of challenges through the student journey via a diversity of assessments linked to individual and group study, enabling students to acquire an educational resilience and demonstrate effective leadership skills.

These features of the Birmingham Graduate will be acquired progressively through the student journey via a combination of institutional and School-specific educational experiences, through opportunities spanning both curricular and extracurricular activities and thus reflect the rich diversity of the education portfolio at Birmingham.

The principles of the Strategic Framework and the associated Education Strategy will be delivered locally by Colleges and Schools reflecting subject-specific contexts appropriately aligned with the institutional ethos and mission.