

LEARNING & TEACHING STRATEGY 2008-2012

Approved by Senate Wednesday 6th February 2008

1. Introduction

The University of Hull's Learning & Teaching Strategy (LTS) for 2008-12 supports the University's mission and strategic objectives as presented in the Strategic Plan 2007-2012. The fundamental aim of the Learning & Teaching Strategy is to ensure that high standards of Learning & Teaching will be valued, sustained and enhanced within all aspects of the student learning experience.

2. Context

2.1. An Institutional Framework

The University of Hull's Strategic Plan 2007-2012 provides clear guidance for the objectives of the Learning & Teaching Strategy (LTS) for 2008-12, setting the strategic aims of:

- providing an outstanding experience for students;
- developing sustainable and distinctive academic provision;
- expanding and promoting research excellence;
- embedding international perspectives across the institution;
- enhancing cultural and intellectual community life.

2.2. Responding to Change and Opportunity

The UK Higher Education sector is a rapidly changing market place, with fluctuations in student expectations and the requirements of employers and statutory bodies. National government policy continues to see changes to quality enhancement funding models and national thematic priorities and initiatives for the development of the Higher Education Academy and the professionalisation of teaching.

Current Government priorities include the national skills agenda and employer engagement, e-learning developments, internationalisation of the curriculum, widening participation, education for sustainable development and the promotion of strategic subjects perceived to be of declining popularity. These national priorities are themselves all subject to inter-governmental initiatives such as the Bologna Process and are set in the broader context of the internationalisation of Higher Education markets.

2.3. Supporting a Research-rich Learning Environment

The University of Hull is a research-rich university, committed to supporting a learning experience which reflects the process of creating and deepening knowledge. We engage students in diverse learning activities that mirror the processes and activities undertaken by staff in the pursuit of research, scholarship and enquiry. Students are encouraged to engage with the key issues and debates of their individual subjects, developing an understanding of both general and discipline-specific research processes, exploring the contested nature of knowledge and engaging in the processes by which knowledge is created.

2.4. Building upon Existing Excellence

The University's Learning & Teaching Strategy for 2008-12 builds upon the extensive progress in enhancing the quality of learning and teaching at the University in recent years. This is reflected in the excellent outcomes of the University's QAA Institutional Audit 2004 and Collaborative Provision Audit 2006, the results of the National Student Satisfaction Survey (2005, 2006 and 2007) and high ranking

amongst international students in the ‘International Student Barometer’ (ISB) survey (2007). Internal excellence has seen the award of two National Teaching Fellowships, the continuous enhancement of programmes and a range of curriculum development projects supported through the University’s Innovations in Student Learning Fund.

The Learning & Teaching Strategy 2008-2012 seeks to develop a framework suitable for promoting educational initiatives that build on this success and to embed wide-scale strategic enhancement supported by, for example, planned changes to the learning and teaching physical infrastructure. The internal context is also one which takes account of the feedback from students and staff and recognises a commitment to discipline-sensitive quality enhancement activities. It is also essential to the success of this strategy that we acknowledge and value the contribution of all University staff, academic and support staff, across campuses and in all Faculties and Services.

3. Vision

To fulfil our vision of the ‘University of Hull Student Experience’, providing opportunities for all students to realise their potential and develop the skills, attributes and values that are essential to entrepreneurship, employment, lifelong learning and global citizenship.

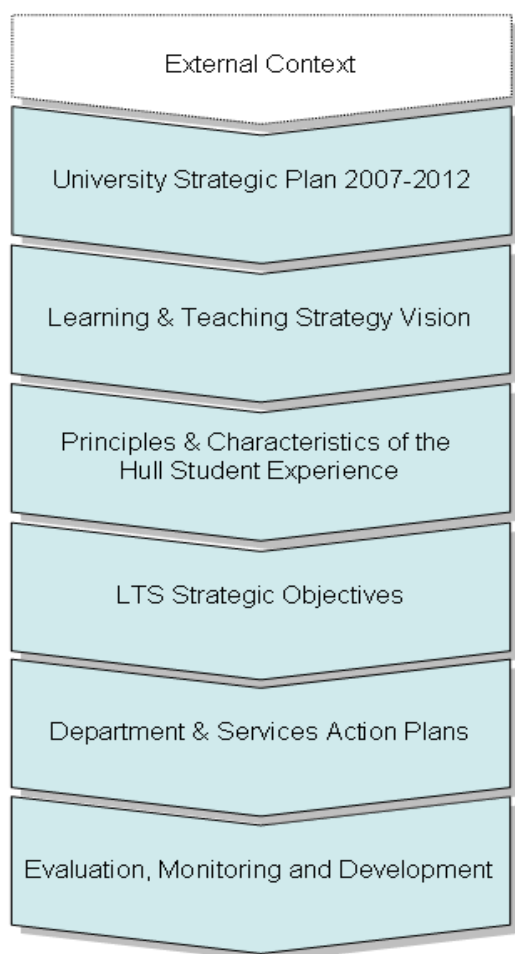


Fig 1. Stages in Strategy Development and Implementation

4. Principles

We will fulfil our vision by:

- recognising that formal learning is but one dimension of an outstanding experience for students which includes opportunities to engage in a rich and diverse cultural and intellectual community (LTS Strategic Objective 6.1);
- educating students within a research-rich learning environment, designed and delivered by staff working at the frontiers of academic enquiry and professional practice (LTS Strategic Objective 6.2);
- extending fair access to educational opportunities and developing the aspirations of those who wish to participate in higher education (LTS Strategic Objective 6.3);
- engaging learners as partners in learning, sharing responsibility for developing valid and reliable assessment, both formative and summative, together with stimulating and timely feedback (LTS Strategic Objective 6.4);
- enriching the learning experience of all through the creation of accessible and flexible physical, and virtual, learning environments which encourage increased participation in new and enhanced forms of learning (LTS Strategic Objective 6.5);
- extending sustainable and distinctive academic provision that provides opportunities for students to engage in contemporary debates (LTS Strategic Objective 6.6);
- acknowledging that all members of our learning community can benefit from the sharing of good practice (LTS Strategic Objective 6.7).

5. Characteristics of the University of Hull Student Experience

The aspiration of the Learning & Teaching Strategy is to create conditions and opportunities for what the Strategic Plan 2007-2012 describes as an “outstanding experience” for students. The University of Hull Student Experience is one in which students are enabled to complete their programmes of study with the abilities to:

- demonstrate a sound knowledge-base within their academic subject(s), and the skills and competencies to apply that knowledge appropriately;
- carry out extended independent enquiry, formulating relevant questions and engaging critically with a wide range of evidence;
- demonstrate the core capabilities and skills of information literacy, interacting confidently with the nature and structure of information in their subject and handling information in a professional and ethical manner;
- explore the history of and challenge the processes of knowledge creation, applying creativity, enterprise and innovation, to push against the boundaries of current practice;
- be a constructive team member working collaboratively towards a shared goal and demonstrate transferable skills, where appropriate working across academic disciplines, professional, organisational and cultural boundaries;
- communicate effectively, orally, in writing or by other appropriate means and in accordance with agreed conventions, handling ICT packages and specialist software efficiently, effectively and innovatively;
- critically reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, planning their personal and career development to fulfil both personal and work responsibilities and aspirations;
- work independently, setting their own goals and the strategies for achieving them;
- overcome problems through effective planning, monitoring and evaluation whether working independently or as part of a team;
- identify the wider social, cultural and economic context of their academic knowledge and skills base, relating their understanding and practical abilities to the needs of individuals and communities;
- realise their responsibilities as active citizens and apply their knowledge and skills productively, respecting diverse viewpoints and treating others as equals.
- demonstrate that they are fit to practice and progress in their chosen professional field, working responsibly, safely and ethically, recognising their limitations, and meeting the requirements of relevant statutory bodies.

Students share a responsibility as independent lifelong learners to maximize opportunities to fulfil their potential and develop the skills, attributes and values that are essential to make a substantial contribution to their communities. Students will be supported to demonstrate these characteristics through a mixture of assessment (both summative and formative) and through the appropriate use of personal development portfolios.

6. Strategic Objectives

Realising our vision of the University of Hull Student Experience is predicated as a number of strategic objectives:

6.1. To value formal learning as part of the broader student experience

We will achieve our aim by:

- 6.1.1.increasing opportunities for all to learn to communicate effectively through a variety of media and to enhance their communication skills through written and oral presentation opportunities;
- 6.1.2.extending staff and student skills in the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT);
- 6.1.3.developing enterprise, entrepreneurship and employability through participation in work-based learning opportunities such as work shadowing, placement and employment skills development programmes;
- 6.1.4.promoting cultural and social awareness and sensitivity, embracing and promoting the rich diversity in our learning communities;
- 6.1.5.extending staff and students' international horizons through international collaborations, exchanges and placements, or by learning foreign languages, within or outside the Free Electives scheme;
- 6.1.6.providing opportunities to participate in voluntary activities of benefit to the wider community.

6.2. To educate students within a research-rich learning environment

We will achieve our aim by:

- 6.2.1.providing increased opportunity for learners to develop their understanding of the processes of knowledge creation and of the fluidity, uncertainty and contested nature of knowledge in their discipline(s);
- 6.2.2.promoting critical engagement with the intellectual and creative works that constitute the focus or evidence base of the chosen discipline(s), including the problems it poses and the questions it raises;
- 6.2.3.enhancing opportunities for staff and students to work collaboratively and participate actively with peers, researchers, and employers;
- 6.2.4.promoting student confidence and abilities in

the application of research methodologies and techniques, and in interacting with diverse sources and formats of information.

6.3. To provide fair access and increased participation

We will achieve our aim by:

- 6.3.1.actively working with employers, colleges and schools to maximize the opportunities of all lifelong learners to engage in University learning;
- 6.3.2.enhancing pre-access initiatives and induction practices as well as continuing to develop effective information, advice and guidance services to enhance retention and completion;
- 6.3.3.developing a flexible framework for the award of University credit which encourages learners to engage in programmes which value diverse forms of learning;
- 6.3.4.seeking to widen participation by enabling our physical learning environments to be an inviting and stimulating resource for local communities;
- 6.3.5.developing effective partnerships with educational providers in our region, our Associate Institutions, University Federation of Colleges and the Yorkshire Humber East Lifelong Learning Network (YHELLN) to inform our dynamic and vibrant academic provision;
- 6.3.6.by designing more inclusive programmes and continuing to make reasonable adjustments as required to existing programmes thus ensuring disabled students are able to participate fully in learning and teaching activities.

6.4. To enhance students' achievement of the learning outcomes of their study through valid, reliable and accessible assessment offering stimulating and timely feedback

We will achieve our aim by:

- 6.4.1.enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes of their study, and reflect upon that achievement with the help of appropriate assessment and timely feedback, undertaken in the spirit of shared responsibility and

partnership;

6.4.2.responding to evolving student need through provision of a range of rich and varied assessment opportunities which are integral to the learning process, fit for purpose in a changing environment, and which enhance the development of the diverse skills required by contemporary societies;

6.4.3.supporting the development of innovative modes of assessment which value diverse forms of learning and enhance student engagement with learning opportunities involving active enquiry into the questions and problems of their discipline(s);

6.4.4.encouraging learners in effective planning for career development and the conscious engagement with planning their own personal development, reflecting on their progress as learners, identifying and developing capabilities that are essential to scholarship, employability and lifelong learning.

6.5. To enrich our learning environments

We will achieve our aim by:

6.5.1.enhancing access to high quality learning and information resources in a variety of accessible formats, encouraging information literacy and the effective and ethical use of sources in a critical engagement with the discipline;

6.5.2.continuously improving the physical infrastructure of our campuses, and the associated support structures, to ensure learning takes place in modern, flexible, comfortable, accessible and well equipped learning spaces;

6.5.3.creating and maintaining a flexible and responsive technology environment, which enables staff and students to collaborate effectively, create and share knowledge and manage the learning process effectively.

6.6. To extend sustainable and distinctive academic provision

We will achieve our aim by:

6.6.1.maintaining our diverse portfolio of provision and the heterogeneous nature of our community whilst recognising and taking advantage of the pedagogical and social opportunities that such diversity offers to staff and students alike;

6.6.2.actively identifying emerging market demands for innovative programmes of learning;

6.6.3.extending our cooperative arrangements with employers in order to respond to increased demands for flexible, work-based, work-related and vocational learning opportunities;

6.6.4.extending opportunities for involvement in inquiry-based learning, as a means of actively engaging with the questions and problems of their discipline(s) and of developing a range of inquiry-related capabilities and skills;

6.6.5.providing opportunities through which learners can develop the awareness, knowledge and skills required to engage in critical debates about the issues relating to sustainable development;

6.6.6.promoting curriculum development which takes advantage of the internationalisation of the Higher Education Sector;

6.6.7.promoting pedagogic innovation and experimentation in inter-disciplinary provision on the Scarborough campus, acknowledging the opportunities represented by its size and location;

6.6.8.providing support for staff and students to engage in the development of innovative modes of learning, teaching and assessment.

6.7. To ensure staff and students benefit from the sharing of good practice.

We will achieve our aim by:

6.7.1.ensuring staff and students are able to share responsibility and influence their learning communities through participation in departmental and institutional activities;

6.7.2.encouraging scholarship and research into professional practice, including the pedagogy of specific disciplines with a view to disseminating this experience amongst colleagues and the wider community;

6.7.3.promoting the engagement of staff in discipline and generic activity provided by the Higher Education Academy and its Subject Centres and other professional bodies.

7. Implementation

The objectives will be achieved through a fiscally responsible and fully integrated implementation plan. We consider that all staff should be able to recognise within the strategic objectives outlined above how they will be able to make a contribution to enhancing the student experience. We also believe in subsidiarity, that is to say that issues and actions should be the responsibility of the competent authority at the lowest level.

With these principles in mind, the integrated implementation plan, illustrated in Fig 2 below, will:

- promote the development of departmental action planning as the primary, and most appropriate, tool for enhancing the quality of the student learning experience;
- require service departments and University Committees to provide responses to the objectives of this strategy to be reflected in their annual action plans;
- support networks of champions and special focus groups to encourage the sharing of good practice within and beyond institutional boundaries, to undertake institution-wide projects to develop key themes of the Strategy and to provide consistent and cohesive support, guidance and resourcing;
- assure the quality of the student learning experience through rigorous internal and external review mechanisms;
- promote professional teaching standards, providing opportunities for all staff engaged with students through teaching or learner support, to develop, as appropriate to their role and teaching responsibilities.

7.1. Academic Departmental Learning & Teaching Action Plans

Academic departments will develop their own action plans, in consultation with their Dean and sensitive to the developments taking place in cognate disciplines. These plans will be based upon the institutional framework, encourage reflection on current provision, identify areas of existing strength and areas for improvement and enhancement. Departments will develop localised, forward-looking, quadrennial plans to identify priority areas for improvement and enhancement and proposals for how to achieve those goals in the context of the institutional framework. This approach will ensure that quality enhancement activity is

discipline sensitive and focused upon local needs where the maximum impact can be achieved.

7.2. Services & Committee Support Plans

The support services are a necessary element in the delivery of this strategy. All service departments and University Committees will be expected to respond to the objectives of this strategy. These responses will be reflected in their annual action plans and planning statements.

7.3. Networks and Special Focus Groups

The University will support the sharing of good practice and build upon existing excellence through the development of internal networks. The Faculty-based Deputy Deans (Learning & Teaching), or equivalent, will facilitate Faculty-level networks of departmental Learning and Teaching Development champions to share experiences, issues and ideas.

Particular aspects of the University of Hull learning experience which require additional attention will be dealt with by University Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee Special Focus Groups, led by the Deputy Deans (ex officio members of ULTAC) or ULTAC Sub-Committee Chairs as appropriate. These might include issues such as inquiry-based learning, Personal Development Planning, Virtual Learning Environments, student support and information literacy. These networks will draw upon resources and expertise available within the University, facilitated where appropriate by the Learning and Teaching Support Unit (LTSU). Expertise and support offered by the Higher Education Academy and other external professional bodies and associations will also be considered.

7.4. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

We will continue to maintain standards and enhance the student learning experience, through the use of quality processes, making deliberate efforts to bring about continuous improvement. The University Quality and Standards Framework reflects external expectations, including the Bologna process and the Quality Assurance Agency's Academic Infrastructure, and provides for input by employers, external subject specialists, external examiners and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and is developed in partnership with staff and

students. It addresses all our provision - on and off campus, provided directly or through our network of partner institutions. New programmes are subject to thorough approvals processes, and annual and periodic reviews ensure that they continue to remain current, meet the needs and expectations of students and employers, and reflect good practice in the sector.

7.5. Promoting Professional Standards in Learning and Teaching

The University offers a structured programme of staff development for all new lecturers on the theme of learning, teaching and assessment: the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (PGCertHE). This programme supports the development of practice, awareness of change in learning and teaching and reflection through portfolio centred assessment. We will support and encourage staff to develop their professional practice through engagement in internal networks, special focus groups and developmental projects outlined above (see 7.3) and to take advantage of external opportunities including membership of the Higher Education Academy (for which the University will fund individual joining fees).

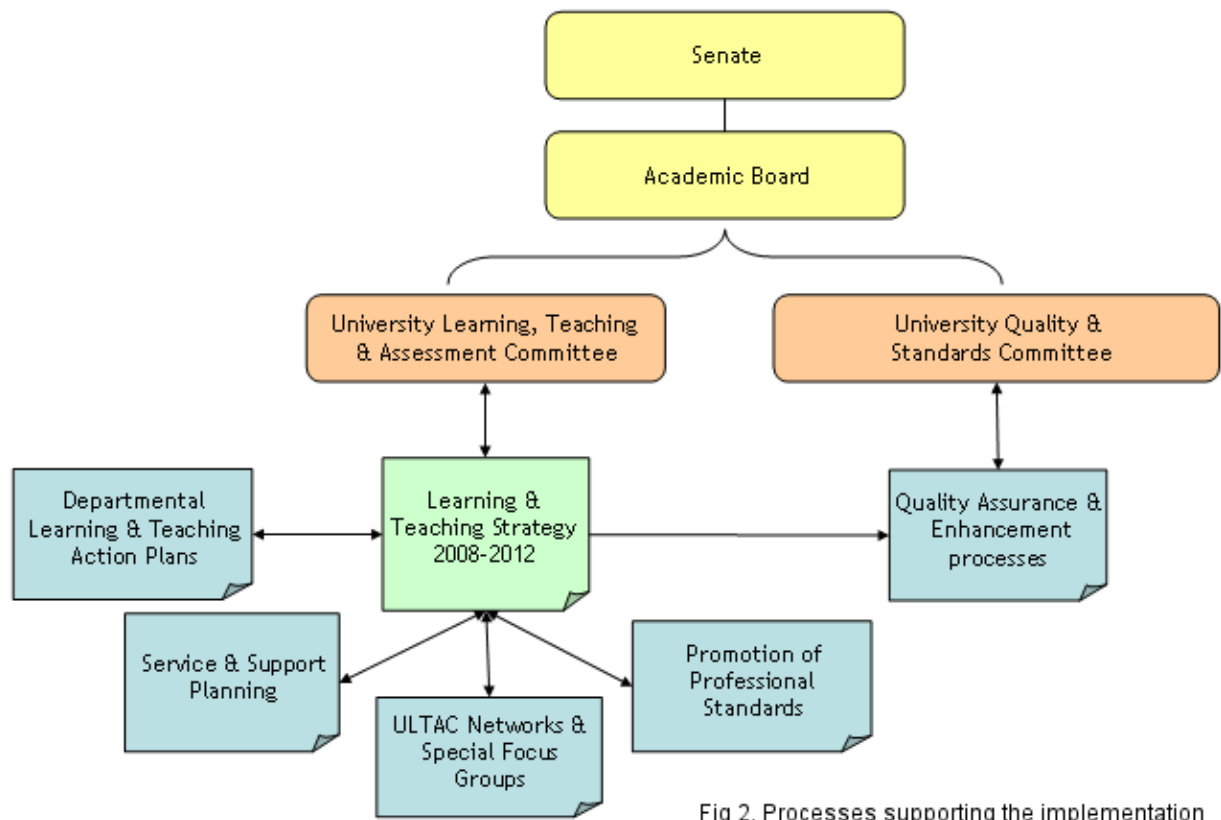


Fig 2. Processes supporting the implementation of the Learning & Teaching Strategy

8. Inter-relationship with other Strategies

The Strategic Plan 2007-2012 makes it clear that its successful implementation will require the development of a series of complementary strategies of which the Learning & Teaching Strategy 2008-2012 is of one.

Other strategies which directly impact upon the profile of the student body and the quality of the learning experience include the University's Widening Participation (WP) and Human Resources (HR) Strategies. Consistent with the approach taken in developing the University's Strategic Plan, the importance of the inter-relationship between the various strategies is recognised. The Learning & Teaching Strategy is presented with close reference to those associated strategies, reflecting shared goals and sensitive to specific interdependencies.

Specific overlaps are recognised with regard to:

	Focus
Widening Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance to students from WP groups regarding the transition into higher education• Academic skills support enabling students to fulfil their potential
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rewards and recognition for excellence in learning and teaching• Staff development with reference to learning and teaching• Recognition of professional teaching standards
'Our Approach to Quality and Standards' document	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rigorous maintenance of academic standards• Working with academic areas to assure quality• Engaging with academic areas, externals and students to enhance quality
Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivery of learning through information technology including e-learning strategy and virtual learning environments• Availability and effective use of learning resources
Estates & Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General physical learning and teaching infrastructure• Opportunities for experimentation with physical space• Changing space requirements arising out of changes in flexible modes of programme delivery

9. Management, Evaluation and Development

Each Strategic Objective will have a series of departmental, service and committee action plans which will identify milestones, actions and resources required to ensure that the objectives of the strategy are met. These action plans will be project managed by the relevant Deans, Director or Committee Chair, and progress will be monitored and evaluated regularly through the existing reporting structure to University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee. This will ensure ongoing development of the process of delivering and embedding the strategic vision.

Responsibility for overall management of the Learning & Teaching Strategy lies with the University Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee, a sub-committee of Academic Board. Progress against targets is reported regularly internally to Senate, the Senior Management Team and externally to HEFCE via the University's Annual Monitoring Statement.