

RESPONSE TO STUDENT CONSULTATION ON THE UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

SUMMARY

This is a response to the consultation on 'University Strategy – shaping the future OU' which took place in March 2021 as part of the Student Consultation Meetings and with the Student Consultation Panel. The summary of student feedback is available [here](#).

We received thought provoking feedback from across the OU community and wanted to let you know that your contributions, along with all the responses from around the University, have been carefully reviewed and used to inform the development of the strategy and how we describe our goals.

The headline feedback we received included that:

- Overall, the proposed strategic goals reflected the student perception of the University's ethos
- As a student community, you were looking for a strategy that is inspiring and aspirational and that truly reflects all that is unique about the OU
- Our strategy should reflect our role as an advocate for part-time learning and commitment to social justice, as well as emphasising our research activities.

The University's Strategy Office reviewed all the contributions received and incorporated feedback as they worked with stakeholders across the University to refine the Strategy and move it through the formal governance approval processes, with both the [University Council](#) and [Senate](#) having opportunities to consider the feedback you provided to ensure it was addressed.

Throughout the process we have worked to ensure that our strategy sets a strong agenda for the next five years; that it reflects and advances the distinctiveness of the OU, and is capable of guiding major decisions every year, and maintaining our focus.

In November 2021 the University Council approved the Strategy for 2022-27. In early 2022 there will be a launch of the strategy to the OU community, and the work to implement it, making the words within the strategy, the lived reality of the OU will begin, so that we can continue in our mission serving you, our students, now and long into the future.

In the New Year we will be sharing a digital format of the strategy which will be publicly available on our website, with alternative formats available on request. Ahead of that we are happy to share a copy of the approved text with students who participated in the engagement on request. Please email strategy-office@open.ac.uk

RESPONSE

This section responds to the feedback received within the student consultation, as outlined in the summary of student feedback available [here](#).

We sought feedback on five strategic goals and five enabling areas of activity that we do as a University to support our work with learners and our research. A copy of the original wording is available [here](#).

As detailed in the summary, through the refinement and development of the strategy the wording of the goals and enablers has evolved, as has the detail of the activity and action which underpins them in the final strategy text.

The full strategy narrative document will be available as part of the launch activity in early 2022, ahead of that the framework which underpins it is outlined below:

Learn and Live

The Open University's Strategy for 2022-2027

Our enduring mission

Open to people, places, methods and ideas

Our vision

Life-changing learning that enriches society

The values we live

Inclusive, innovative, responsive

Through the power of learning we aim to transform lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone. This strategy sets out what we will do over the next five years to progress our mission.

Our five goals

- **greater reach**, offering unrivalled choice, quality, and flexibility to more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities, with the University's core offer of qualifications and accredited learning at its centre.
- **success for our students**, supporting them to achieve their goals, whoever and wherever they are, with outcomes that are equitable and open up new opportunities in life and work.
- **societal impact** locally and globally through research, enterprise and skills development that shape the future.
- **equity**, greater diversity at all levels, and inclusion in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve.
- environmental and social **sustainability**.

The seven enablers to reach our goals

- **living our values**, being inclusive, innovative and responsive in all we do.
- **supporting each other** to do our best work.
- **continuously improving** how we work and manage change.
- employing **secure and effective technologies** with the best possible user experience.
- **using data and evidence** in all our decision-making.
- **building on our uniqueness** as a university for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- **stewarding our finances** so that we can invest in our goals.

An overview of some of the key feedback and how we have responded in finalising the strategy is as follows:

You said

OU response

Reference to 'online learning' had negative connotations and 'distance learning' was preferred.

The Strategy refers to the University as a provider of world leading supported distance learning.

The reference to students from the Nations and beyond the UK should be more broadly reflected

Our uniqueness as a four nations university is reflected throughout the strategy with a new commitment to use our presence, experience, and expertise for the benefit of all four nations. In the longer term we expect to develop and increase our international role.

Students expressed a desire to see 'equity' reflected in the strategy, rather than equality.

The wording of the goal has been changed to equity with specific references to an equitable student experience being of paramount importance.

There was some feedback that when describing 'reach', the emphasis could be broader to achieve the goals and tell more people about the University.

Within the Strategy the goal 'greater reach' intends to ensure that we will reach more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities. We will build on our comprehensive provision of degrees, diplomas, certificates and accredited modules.

We acknowledge that the way people want to learn is changing and the strategy identifies the need to plan for changing trends and factors like students wanting to study at a more intensive rate or studying shorter courses to meet a short-term need or interest.

Under the heading of managing finances, some students told us that they would like more to be done to help lobby regarding financial help for students

The Strategy gives a strong commitment that the OU will continue to advocate for policy and funding systems which support lifelong learning for all. It's in the reach section rather than the finance section.

Tuition delivery and study materials available in ways accessible to the student

This is addressed in the Strategy with reference to designing our courses to be truly inclusive and accessible.

Date: December 2021