



The Higher Education Academy

Draft 2008–2013 Strategic Plan

Our vision is for UK higher education to provide students with the highest quality learning experience in the world.

Introduction

This is the Higher Education Academy's second strategic plan. It describes our ambitions for the next five years. The plan sets out our main aims and priorities in the light of revised mission and values statements.

Context

Higher education in the United Kingdom is renowned worldwide for its excellent teaching and research. The Higher Education Academy's distinctive role is to work with the higher education sector to enhance the quality of students' learning experiences.

Uniquely, we:

- **provide national leadership** in developing and disseminating evidence-informed practice about enhancing the student learning experience
- operate as an **independent broker**, enabling expertise to be shared across institutions and subject areas
- work at **multiple levels** – through individual academics, subject communities and institutions – because the best available evidence shows that this is the most useful way to bring about sustainable change
- work **across the four nations**, recognising the distinctive policy contexts and priorities of the devolved administrations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but also providing opportunities to share expertise among them.

The next five years represent an unprecedented opportunity to develop the quality of learning and teaching against the background set out below.

- **A changing student population:** more mature students, more international students, and more based in the work place or in part time employment
- **Greater internationalisation** of the curriculum, of the student body, of staff, of subject and institutional associations, and of institutions
- **New financial challenges** for students, institutions and funding bodies
- **Increasing competition** from international providers
- **Institutional diversity**, represented by types of student, types of programme, level of resources,

focus of mission, and learning experiences offered

- **Continuing challenges to academic values and new demands on academic staff**, including changing expectations of academic roles, emerging new disciplines, new ways of relating to business and the professions, pressure for greater student participation, and a target-driven culture
 - Changes in teaching and learning arising from **the ubiquitous use of networked technologies** in business and society
 - **Legislative changes**, including equality and diversity and employment law.
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Mission

The Higher Education Academy's mission is to work with the higher education sector to provide the best learning experience for students.

We will accomplish this by providing services to:

- **Individual academics**, who can expect us to add value through recognition of their achievements in teaching and learning and by sharing effective practice
- **Staff in subject communities**, who can expect us to focus on subject-specific aspects of teaching and learning
- **Universities and colleges**, who can expect us to support their strategic initiatives for improving the student learning experience.

We will respond to the interests of our other stakeholders:

- **Students**, who can expect us to champion their involvement in quality enhancement and the improvement of teaching
 - **Professional bodies and employer organisations**, who can expect us to inform and influence policy related to the student learning experience
 - **Sector agencies and our owners**, who can expect us to inform and influence policy related to the student learning experience and to work with them to maintain the outstanding quality of UK higher education
 - **Government and devolved administrations**, who can expect us to support the continuous improvement of teaching and learning in national contexts whilst delivering value for money.
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Values

We value:

- **High academic and professional standards** (we are committed to the application of the highest academic and professional standards in all we do)
- **Independence** (we will act with integrity and impartiality)
- **Responsiveness** (we will engage with and anticipate the needs of our client groups and stakeholders,

both external and internal)

- **Willingness to share** (we will encourage sharing of knowledge across the sector)
- **Inclusiveness** (we will work with everyone who has a significant role in improving the student learning experience)
- **Openness to student participation** (we will engage students in enhancing quality)
- **Self-evaluation** (we will review what we do in order to improve its effectiveness)
- **Accountability, transparency and value for money** (we will make clear what we do, for whom, at what cost).

VISION

Our vision is for UK higher education to provide students with the highest quality learning experience in the world

MISSION

Work with the sector to provide the best learning experience for students

We will realise our mission through the following strategic aims

Identify, develop and disseminate **evidence-informed** approaches to enhance the student learning experience

Broker and encourage the sharing of **effective practice** in learning and teaching

Support universities and colleges in bringing about **strategic change** to enhance the student learning experience

Inform and **influence policy** to enhance the student learning experience

Raise the **status of teaching** in higher education

This is how we operate

Providing national leadership

Operating as an independent broker

Working at multiple levels

Working across the four nations

Strategic Aims

The concept of evidence-informed practice underpins all our work. It means using the best available evidence to inform decisions that influence the quality of the student learning experience.

1. Identify, develop and disseminate evidence-informed approaches to enhance the student learning experience

Objective 1

Gather, synthesise and make available relevant evidence

Objective 2

Promote the use of evidence-informed approaches to the student learning experience

We aim to engage academics, subject communities and institutions in examining, prior to making decisions about teaching, assessment, content or support for students, existing evidence about effective practice – and to use this evidence to inform their policies and practices. We will enable this by providing easy access to information and syntheses of research and effective practice. We will also enter into dialogue with individuals and institutions about how they can best deploy this evidence thereby developing a culture in which evidence informed decision-making becomes normal practice.

Key Performance indicators

- 1.1 Growth in the active use of the Academy's research services demonstrated by a 10% annual increase in use by individual academic staff from a starting position of 30,000 (subject centres' mailing lists).
 - 1.2 50% of those academic staff surveyed in an annual Academy impact survey say that evidence-informed decision making is part of their normal practice at the end of the planning period.
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2. Broker and encourage the sharing of effective practice in learning and teaching

Objective 1

Establish, build on and promote networks and communities of practice including those from emerging subject communities

Objective 2

Promote professional standards and their continuing development

Networks of individuals and linkages of systems for sharing effective practice help to improve the student learning experience. The Academy will support external networks which add value both to the participants and to the wider community. Acting as an independent agency, we will broker relationships at different levels to promote the sharing of effective practice. We recognise that expertise is widespread in the sector but a major challenge is to distribute it widely. We will also enhance and simplify our processes for accreditation of teaching and learning programmes and for continuing professional development (CPD). We will work to develop synergies between the needs of individuals for professional

recognition and the desire of institutions, governments and students for a better-trained academic workforce.

Key performance indicators

- 2.1 Demonstrate a 10% annual increase (baseline 13,000) in the number of academic and support staff that engage with the Subject Centres.
 - 2.2 Increase in the number of Fellows of the Academy from 18,000 to 40,000 (this represents 20% of the estimated number of those supporting the student learning experience) over the planning period, including an increase of associates by 10% per annum (baseline 500), fellows in HE in FE by 20% per annum (baseline 100) and applications for senior fellowship by 25% per annum (baseline 64).
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3. Support universities and colleges in bringing about strategic change to enhance the student learning experience

Objective 1

Facilitate effective change management in learning and teaching at institutional level

Objective 2

Address strategic change affecting the student learning experience by working with individuals and subject communities

There is evidence that addressing significant change in the student learning experience requires coherent activity at several levels, including the individual and the institution. The Academy is uniquely placed to add value to the student learning experience through its capacity to operate at multiple levels – the sector, institutions, subject communities and individuals. The Academy will build on its distinctive network of subject centres to make certain that subject specific-support for strategic change is widely available (through, e.g., national subject profiles) and will work to integrate the support offered by higher education institutions through educational development units and the discipline-based support that is such a valued part of the subject network.

Key performance indicators

- 3.1 Improvement in institutions' positive perception of the Academy measured through the institutional partnership programme from 55% in 2006-2007 (current baseline) to 80% by the end of the planning period.
 - 3.2 Growth in annual departmental contacts with subject centres from baseline in 2006-2007(95%) to 98% cover by the end of the planning period.
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4. Inform and influence policy to enhance the student learning experience

Objective 1

Use our knowledge base and networks to influence the development of national policies

Objective 2

Work at multiple levels to interpret and implement national policies relevant to the student learning experience

The Academy will develop its existing work at policy level through ensuring access to appropriate forums across the four nations of the United Kingdom. These include existing bodies such as the Higher Education Quality Working Group of the Scottish Funding Council, the Quality in Assessment of Learning and Teaching Committee of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Learning and Teaching Committee of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the National Student Survey (NSS) Steering Group. We will ensure excellent communication channels with partner organisations and the national bodies that inform policy such as the Quality Assurance Agency, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, Higher Education Wales, Universities UK, GuildHE and Universities Scotland. We will facilitate policy debates through our annual lecture, publications and web portal, and provide opportunities for institutions to inform national policy through forums such as our network of Pro Vice Chancellors. The Academy will work with institutions, subject communities and individuals to make certain that national initiatives such as the NSS and Post Graduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) make as large a contribution as possible to improving the student learning experience.

Key performance indicators

- 4.1 Evidence of Academy contributions to policy forums across the four nations, by way of briefings and formal written responses.
 - 4.2 In an attitudinal survey, the majority of those surveyed recognise that the Academy has influenced the impact of national policies in improving the student learning experience.
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5. Raise the status of teaching in higher education

Objective 1

Celebrate good teaching through national initiatives

Objective 2

Encourage the recognition and reward of teaching at institutional level

The quality of learning and teaching in UK higher education is already widely respected across the world. By promoting initiatives that recognise and reward good teaching at national level, such as Academy fellowships and subject centre teaching awards, and by offering support to institutions to develop effective practices associated with its reward and recognition, the Academy will ensure that enhancing the status of teaching as a scholarly activity continues to be a priority across the UK.

Key performance indicators

- 5.1 Applications for National Teaching Fellowships remain at the same or greater than current levels (4 to 1) over the planning period and Scottish and Welsh initiatives supported by the Academy have similar levels of interest; increase in Academy fellowships and senior fellowships applications (see also 2.2).
- 5.2 In an attitudinal survey, at least 60% of those surveyed recognise that the Academy has influenced systems for recognising and rewarding teaching at institutional level.

Impact

We will undertake regular assessment of the impact of our activities. Impact evaluation addresses the extent to which our aims have influenced others. It will explore the effect that we have had on institutions, subject groups and individual academics. We will carry out impact evaluation at several levels, recognising that the work of the Academy will have direct and indirect effects on improving the student learning experience.

Risks

The strategic risks described below relate to the strategic objectives and to the achievement of the Academy's mission. Other risks specific to the existence of the Academy are included in its risk register.

- 1.1 The Academy is unable to gather and synthesise enough evidence to satisfy demand for the research service.
 - 1.2 Increasing pressures on academics in the other parts of their roles reduces the time available to use evidence to improve their teaching and learning.
 - 2.1 The Academy fails to convince Vice Chancellors and other senior staff of the benefits of its networks, resulting in a decline in subscription income.
 - 2.2 Professional standards and development for teaching staff are not perceived as a priority by institutions.
 - 3.1 There is a reduction in funding for strategic change to the student learning experience that reduces demand for support in this area.
 - 3.2 The target audience (individuals and subject communities) do not participate in the change processes.
 - 4.1 Policy makers do not value or take note of Academy policy submissions.
 - 4.2 The link between the measure used for improving the student learning experience and the Academy's work is not clearly understood.
 - 5.1 Withdrawal of National Teaching Fellowship initiative by HEFCE.
 - 5.2 Conflicting demands on institutions influence the recognition and reward of teaching.
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Priorities

The following table outlines activity areas for the Academy, grouped by strategic aim and objective. It identifies target clients and defines an outcome and performance indicator for each activity area.

Throughout our work, we will give appropriate consideration to the implementation of the Academy's single equality scheme and to improving organisational effectiveness, including the management of risk.

Aim 1: Identify, develop and disseminate evidence-informed approaches to enhance the student learning experience.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY AREA	TARGET GROUP	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Gather, synthesise and make available relevant evidence	Research service, including portal	Individuals and institutions	Growth in the use of the research services	Number of resources available/downloaded
	Resources supporting practical application of research	Individuals in subject communities	Research service recognised as effective source of evidence on teaching and learning	High awareness of service in sector
	Small grants for pedagogic research	Individuals	Greater research capacity within subject communities	Number of grants made
Promote the use of evidence-informed approaches to the student learning experience	Publications	Individuals	Greater awareness of benefits of evidence informed approaches.	
	Workshops and events	Individuals and Institutions	Evidence-informed decision making is part of normal practice	Service is used by individuals at all levels

Aim 2: Broker and encourage the sharing of effective practice in learning and teaching

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY AREA	TARGET GROUP	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	
Establish, build on and promote networks and communities of practice including those from emerging subject communities	Monitor demand for new networks	Individuals and subject communities	Improved practice-sharing in subject and discipline communities and institutions	Participants believe networks significantly benefit their practice	
	Build on existing networks such as:			A high demand to join Academy-supported networks	
	Subject Centre networks	Subject communities			
	CETL network	Institutions			
	PVC network	Institutions			
	HE in FE network	Institutions and subject communities			
	SC support for special interest groups and communities of practice at the subject level			Increase in cross-Subject Centre activity	
	Facilitate both physical events and the provision of technological infrastructures			Participants use Academy virtual networks to contribute and discover effective practice	A high demand for Academy-supported events
	Initial and Continuing Professional Development Accreditation		Institutions	Institutions value professional recognition for their staff as a process for encouraging sharing of effective practice	Increase in accreditation of institutional CPD frameworks
	Academy fellowships		Individuals	Individuals seek professional recognition because it has a positive effect on practice	Increase in number of Academy Fellows
Promote professional standards and their continuing development	Subject Centre I&CPD events and resources	Individuals, subject communities and educational development units	Production of events, web resources and print publications promoting professional standards		

Aim 3: Support universities and colleges in bringing about strategic change to enhance the student learning experience

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY AREA	TARGET GROUP	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Facilitate effective change management in learning and teaching at institutional level	Change initiatives such as Change Academy	Institutions	Institutions perceive that the Academy increases their capacity and capability to innovate and change	Applications for Academy supported change initiatives increase
	Work on institutional learning and teaching plans (e.g. in the Welsh Learning and Teaching strategies)	Institutions		
Address strategic change affecting the student learning experience by working with individuals and subject communities	Subject specific-support for strategic change, e.g. development of national subject profiles, work with individual members of the subject communities as advocates and change agents in departments, SC events to support change management initiatives at departmental level	Subject communities	Improved support for individuals and subject communities engaged in managing change, including greater awareness of effective change processes and development of improved or new support networks for advocates	Increased number of requests for subject centre support with change management
	Sharing experience and expertise of the subject network with educational development units	Educational development units	Increased collaboration with educational development units	Number of links between educational development units and subject centres

Aim 4: Inform and influence policy to enhance the student learning experience

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY AREA	TARGET GROUP	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Use our knowledge base and networks to influence national policies	Representation on and contribution to policy making committees and other forums in each of the four nations	All groups	Academy plays an increased brokering and advisory role in both generic and subject-specific debates on national education policy	The Academy is invited to contribute to all national policy discussions that affect learning and teaching
	Engagement through formal and informal means with other relevant agencies including QAA, QCA, SSCs, etc.	Institutions and other stakeholders		
Work at multiple levels to interpret and implement national policies on teaching and learning relevant to the student learning experience	Respond appropriately to government, professional and regulatory body initiatives following collation of stakeholder views	All groups	Improved understanding at multiple levels of the impacts of national education policy on the student learning experience	Number of policy responses
	Work with subject associations, relevant regulatory and professional bodies, employers' organisations and academic departments to identify, evaluate and address the impact of national policies on teaching and learning	Subject communities and other stakeholders		

Aim 5: Raise the status of teaching in higher education

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY AREA	TARGET GROUP	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Celebrate good teaching through national initiatives	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme	Institutions and individuals	National initiatives supported by the Academy are independently evaluated and shown to raise the status of teaching successfully	The same or increased levels of application for NTF and subject centre teaching awards
	Subject Centre teaching awards			
	Academy fellowships	Individuals		
Encourage the recognition and reward of teaching at institutional level	Reward and recognition through personnel and related processes	Institutions	The status of teaching at an institutional level increases	Improved staff perceptions of changes to promotion procedures within HEIs