

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

EDUCATION STRATEGY 2019-25

Our mission

The University's mission is excellence in education and research, for the benefit of individuals and communities.

Our Education vision for 2025

At Essex, student success is at the heart of our mission. We are proud to offer a transformational, research-led education. Our students are not defined or constrained by their past but welcomed on the basis of their potential. We support them to shape and fulfil their ambitions and to achieve outstanding outcomes. We offer consistently excellent learning opportunities, responsive to the needs and aspirations of our diverse student community.

By 2025, our reputation for education excellence, both nationally and internationally, will attract more students with the potential and ambition to succeed. Every student at every level of study will be a member of our inclusive community. They will have access to meaningful transformational support, framed around their own needs and ambitions, through our skilled educators. We will empower and nurture all our students as individuals and as partners as they make the transition into our global learning community. We will support them to develop throughout their educational experience. They will have the study skills and wider personal development opportunities to achieve their potential. We will enable them to build confidence and experience to thrive in the lifelong task of self-education. We will maximise their resilience, ambition and capacity to strive for excellence. Our curriculum will be developed in collaboration with our students through a transformational shift in partnership working. Our research-led education will focus on enhancing our students' ability to articulate and apply their creative and analytical research mind-set to the benefit of their studies, their future lives and communities. The opportunities offered by our research excellence and our commitment to knowledge and its application will be integral to our students' experiences.

All members of our staff community will be transformational educators to promote and shape our students' success alongside their own achievement. We will celebrate their outstanding contributions to education and will maintain a culture of excellence and continuous enhancement across our community of learning. The responsible use of data by our skilled community will be fully embedded as a powerful tool for the development, wellbeing and success of all our students. Our focus will be on meaningful impact and a shared understanding of how the opportunities and experiences of an Essex education enable our students to realise their potential and to transform their lives. Our shared commitment to belonging and social action will be integral to our living and learning communities. Our students and educators will work collaboratively and constructively to challenge assumptions in the pursuit of learning as they realise the potential of their Essex Spirit.

Our Education Priorities

Our priorities reflect those of the University Strategy 2019-25: people, knowledge and communities. Our commitment is to a transformational, research-led education, underpinned by personal support, where each individual belongs to, participates in and contributes to our enabling living and learning community.

Priority 1: People

We will inspire, empower and support all our students and our community of educators to fulfil their potential in contributing to the University's mission of excellence in education.

Our University Strategy pledges that “bigness will be reconciled with intimacy”. Through our skilled educators, we will offer each and every student at every level of study meaningful transformational support, framed around their own needs and ambitions, to enable them to reach their potential.

1.1. Supporting and celebrating student success

Supporting our students to achieve their potential is at the heart of our mission. We celebrate the diversity of their backgrounds, their circumstances and their aspirations. We will nurture them as individuals as they transition into our global learning community. We will maximise their resilience, ambition and capacity to succeed and develop. Our students are active participants in their own education. We encourage and support them to take responsibility for their own learning in partnership with each other, our educators and with the Students' Union. They will have access to data and information to support informed decision-making and engagement. We will support them to build the necessary skills and experience to progress successfully into the next stage of their lives and career, including further study, social action and the world of work.

We will:

- a. provide a consistently excellent transformational education experience for all students across all courses and levels of study, measured by developing and strengthening:
 - i. the responsible and effective use of data to provide a robust, evidence-based indication of our educational performance
 - ii. a culture that uses data to motivate continuous improvement and impactful innovation
 - iii. our frameworks for identifying and monitoring implementation of actions across our educational performance

- b. deliver our commitment to supporting every student from every background to achieve success, enabling equality of opportunity across sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability, gender assignment, religion and socio-economic group, measured by developing and strengthening:
 - i. the responsible and effective use of data to provide a robust indication of our students' performance
 - ii. a supportive culture that maintains personal relationships while enabling data to be an effective tool in stretching and encouraging our students to strive for excellence and maximise their achievements

- iii. interventions in pursuit of individual student success and an understanding of their impact
- c. engage our students as active participants in their own education by providing them with tailored information and support, in partnership with our educators.
- d. support our students to achieve their full potential through the development of a robust, transformational system of personal tutoring and supervision, which is student-centred, data-informed, sustainable and scalable.
- e. enable our students to develop confidence in preparing for the workplace by enhancing and expanding their opportunities to apply their learning, including the integration of experiential, work-related and entrepreneurial learning in the curriculum, study abroad and student mobility.
- f. build confidence, resilience and experience among our students to support them to make the transition to the next stage of their lives by maintaining, evaluating and innovating in the development of skills and wider personal development opportunities, and by recognising the full range of our students' achievements.

1.2. Supporting and celebrating people for their contribution to education excellence

Our commitment to education excellence is realised through the work of our community of educators. All members of our staff community, regardless of their role, are part of this community. Delivering high quality teaching, supervision and research as part of a transformational, inclusive education experience for all our students requires skills, professional knowledge and expertise. Through our People Supporting Strategy, we will focus on building a more inclusive, agile and flexible workforce. We will develop educators who reflect and respond to the internal and external environment with speed and adaptability. We will nurture a culture of continuous development, integrated into our core processes, to ensure that our educators are equipped to transform our students' lives. We will build in flexibility to respond to different learning preferences. We will encourage innovation and evaluate and embed its impact, using student feedback to support and facilitate the development of all those contributing to our students' experiences.

We will:

- a. enable our inclusive community of educators to be responsive to their own needs and those of our students by delivering equality of opportunity across sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability, gender assignment, religion and socio-economic group, through targeted planning, framed by the student profile, early career and pathways to permanency requirements, peer review, skills needs, departmental performance and student feedback.
- b. deliver a step change in our offer to early career educators by evaluating the scope and impact of existing development activities to enable the provision of transformational opportunities shaped by their ambitions and our commitment to lifelong education and personal development.
- c. enable our students to have a strong voice and a partnership role in their educational experience by enhancing and broadening the range of mechanisms available to seek and respond to student feedback.

- d. provide a consistently excellent education experience for all students by recruiting the highest quality educators through robust and innovative recruitment practices and embedding consistently high quality teaching and supervision practice and development into our core processes.
- e. inspire our educators to deliver the highest quality teaching and supervision by demonstrating and embedding firmly into the life of the University our commitment to excellence and leading a transformational shift in its recognition and celebration as a cornerstone of our community.

Priority 2: Knowledge

An Essex education is informed and vitalised by the discovery of new knowledge. The creation, communication, transfer and application of knowledge, ideas and innovation in our curriculum underpin our mission of education excellence, building the highest subject and discipline proficiency. We seek to stimulate curiosity with subjects relevant to social, cultural and scientific realities of today and to our shared future.

We are equally committed to excellence in education and research. We will further develop our transformational research-led education, with a focus on enhancing our students' ability to articulate and apply a creative and analytical research mind-set to the benefit of both their studies and their future lives and communities.

2.1. Transformational curriculum

Our research-led curriculum lies at the centre of our transformational education. We will harness the power of our research (including pedagogical research), our intellectual assets, discipline mix and interdisciplinary strengths both to shape our curricula and to inspire the curiosity of our students. Our curricula will demonstrate to our students the relevance of their studies to the problems of the world they live in, to social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges, and to their future lives and careers. We recognise the value of our students' ideas in this work. We will ensure that every student has opportunities to gain a creative and analytical research mind-set.

We will:

- a. enable all our students to articulate and apply their research skills during and beyond their studies by reviewing and developing our curricula to incorporate a clearly articulated developmental trajectory for research skills across all courses and levels, which is explicit and visible to students.
- b. support every student from every background to achieve outstanding outcomes by supporting them to contribute as partners in shaping and diversifying our curricula, establishing new and innovative mechanisms for student engagement and securing a transformational shift in partnership working with students.
- c. inspire and motivate our applicants and students to succeed by offering the highest quality modules and courses that draw on areas of our research strength and expertise from across the University and ensure we integrate and expand interdisciplinarity in our curriculum.

2.2. Education innovation

Our educational offer is based on our founding principle, to be “*freer, more daring, more experimental*”. Innovation is not an end in itself but a path to delivering our commitment to education excellence and the transformation of lives. We will encourage innovative and experimental approaches to learning and assessment. We will draw on a wide range of stakeholder expertise, including our own research strengths, to shape our education practice to meet the needs of our growing and diverse student community in an ever-changing external environment. Assessing our students’ skills and knowledge will be undertaken through inclusive and creative methods. Students are partners in this work and we will assess impact systematically to enable us to promote and disseminate the benefit for all our students.

We will:

- a. deliver a transformational education by encouraging impactful and innovative approaches, using learning from research (including pedagogical research) and national and international experiences, facilitating the meaningful dissemination and adoption of good and best practice.
- b. ensure our curriculum and education practice advance our mission to benefit individuals and communities by:
 - i. bringing in new ideas and fostering innovation in our thinking through collaboration with schools, employers, industry, our Knowledge Gateway and with our national and international partners, including the establishment and development of joint degrees and wider joint education provision
 - ii. broadening access to the opportunities offered by an Essex education through the expansion and establishment of new modes of study, including apprenticeships, summer schools and continuing professional development
 - iii. reflecting current and future social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges in our academic disciplines
- c. meet the evolving needs of our diverse community of learners by undertaking a wholesale review of our approach to assessment, ensuring that the knowledge and skills gained by our students are appropriately recognised and rewarded.

2.3. Transformational environments

Our success in delivering a transformational education is founded on the environments in which we live, learn and work and the services we provide. Through the creative use of our estate, technology and digital innovation, our learning environment will meet the needs and expectations of our educators and our students, whose expectations and ambitions are shaped by the 21st century.

We will:

- a. keep pace with the needs of our evolving research-led curriculum by transforming our processes to integrate curriculum design with the shaping of our estate plans.

- b. deliver consistent education excellence in the rapidly evolving digital world of the 21st century by reviewing our use of learning technology, focused on the need to integrate with and complement our curriculum and the development of our learning and teaching spaces.
- c. offer our students a transformational experience by maintaining, developing and promoting integrated and student-focused services across all our campuses that are scalable, streamlined and efficient and have at their core our focus on excellence and our students reaching their full potential.

Priority 3: Communities

Our mission is to improve people's lives through excellence in education, transforming communities and benefiting society. Developing and harnessing the power, impact and benefit of our inclusive communities - local, national and global - are at the heart of our education mission.

The University of Essex as a "living and learning community" was part of our founding vision. We will support and foster life-long membership of our community, where all can thrive as a valued member, with a strong focus on belonging and the contribution to, and participation in, the wealth of communities in which our members live and study across the world.

3.1. Nurturing our living and learning communities

As a diverse, international and inclusive community of learning, we work together to harness the benefit of belonging and collaborative working. We will work with our educators, our students, our Students' Union, and with our national and international partners to develop our global living and learning community and the role it plays in transforming lives across the world.

We will:

- a. inspire educators and students to join our ambitious community by promoting the excellence of an Essex education nationally and internationally.
- b. support our students to integrate into and thrive in our global learning community by transforming our approach to inducting and welcoming all our students, enhancing our use of data to inform actions, interventions and an approach that safeguards and promotes belonging.
- c. expand the reach and impact of our global community and enrich our educational offer by:
 - i. maintaining, fostering and establishing partnerships locally, nationally and internationally with those who share our values and our commitment to improving people's lives
 - ii. maintaining and expanding our links in Europe through our commitment to the Young European Research Universities Network and to the Young Universities for the Future of Europe.

- d. foster our learning community and a sense of belonging by developing our curriculum and assessment methods to include activities based around shared ownership, group activity and collaborative work.

3.2. Transformational education through our enabling environment

Our transformational education seeks to equip our students to reach their full potential and to thrive in their future lives. Positive mental and physical wellbeing, resilience and a growth mind-set empowers our educators and our students to progress in an uncertain world. The value of our community and the power of belonging are fundamental to our ambitions.

We will:

- a. transform the sense of belonging across our community by developing our physical and cultural environment, networks, policies and practice to break down barriers and engage all who join and work with us.
- b. inspire and empower our students and our educators to reach their potential in contributing to our ambitions by promoting and embedding a cultural shift in our physical and mental wellbeing across our community, rooted in our commitment to an enabling environment and recognising the role that sport and physical activity can play in supporting our ambitions.
- c. maximise the resilience, ambition and capacity of all members of our community to strive for excellence by maintaining and developing our professional and integrated wellbeing services and fostering a safe, healthy and inclusive environment.

3.3. The impact of our Essex Spirit

Our students' fulfilment of their Essex Spirit is a cornerstone of our mission. We equip them to apply their learning for the benefit of people and communities. We prepare them to put their knowledge and ideas into action to meet current and future social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges. In a rapidly changing and sometimes unpredictable world, we will support them to work constructively, disagree agreeably and to discover and define their own Essex Spirit. We will enable the sense of belonging within our community to bring lifelong benefit to our students, our educators and communities.

We will:

- a. support and facilitate our students' commitment to social action through the transformational Essex Change Makers programme and take steps to expand other opportunities, maximising the formal recognition of all our students' achievements.
- b. expand the reach, impact and development of our global learning community in delivering the University's mission by enabling our alumni to contribute to curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to our students.

Achieving our ambitions

In order to ensure that we are making progress towards our aspirations, we have set ourselves the following ambitious targets (KPIs):

- a. By 2025, we will be recognised nationally (top 25 Times Good University Guide: KPI 1) and globally (top 200 Times Higher Education World Rankings: KPI 2) for the quality and impact of our transformational education.
- b. We will retain the TEF Gold award and each subject area offered by the University will obtain TEF Gold subject level at each assessment point (KPI 3).
- c. We will remain firmly established in the top 25 of UK institutions through the period 2019-2025 for the National Student Survey, and each subject area offered by the University will reach the top 20% of their subject area through the period 2019-2025 (KPI 4).
- d. For Graduate Outcomes, we will be firmly established in the top 25 of UK institutions and each subject area offered by the University to be in the top 20% of their subject area by 2022, and will sustain these positions through the period 2022-2025 (KPI 5).
- e. We will have no significant equality attainment gaps for measures of student success at institutional level and will maintain it through the period 2022-25 (KPI 6).
- f. For research degree completions (KPI 7), we will exceed the UKRI minimum submission threshold (submission within 12 active terms) at the institutional level by 2022 and will maintain this performance and consistently to meet the minimum threshold in all departments by 2025.

Our approach to achieving our targets will be evidence-based, and supported by the responsible use of appropriate data. Progress with our ambitions will be monitored through robust lead indicators for the measures of TEF (KPI 3), NSS (KPI 4), Graduate Outcomes (KPI 5), Student Outcomes (Equality & Diversity) (KPI 6) and research degree completion and awards (KPI 7), which will enable us to intervene in order to enhance our performance.

Summary of Education Objectives, 2019-25

No.	Objective	Cross- reference to University strategy
People		
EO1	<p>To provide a consistently excellent transformational education experience for all students across all courses and levels of study, measured by developing and strengthening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the responsible and effective use of data to provide a robust, evidence-based indication of our educational performance ▪ a culture that uses data to motivate continuous improvement and impactful innovation ▪ our frameworks for identifying and monitoring implementation of actions across our educational performance 	O1.1; O2.1; O2.2; O2.4; O2.6; O2.8; O3.1
EO2	<p>To deliver our commitment to supporting every student from every background to achieve success, enabling equality of opportunity across sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability, gender assignment, religion and socio-economic group and measured by developing and strengthening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the responsible and effective use of data to provide a robust indication of our students' performance ▪ a supportive culture that maintains personal relationships while enabling data to be an effective tool in stretching and encouraging our students to strive for excellence and maximise their achievements ▪ interventions in pursuit of individual student success and an understanding of their impact 	O1.1; O1.2; O1.5; O2.1; O2.2
EO3	To engage our students as active participants in their own education by providing them with tailored information and support, in partnership with our educators.	O1.2; O1.5; O2.1; O2.2; O3.1
EO4	To support our students to achieve their full potential through the development of a robust, transformational system of personal tutoring and supervision, which is student-centred, data-informed, sustainable and scalable.	O1.1; O3.1
EO5	To enable our students to develop confidence in preparing for the workplace by enhancing and expanding their opportunities to apply their learning, including the integration of experiential, work-related and entrepreneurial learning in the curriculum, study abroad and student mobility.	O1.1; O1.10; O2.1; O2.3; O2.7; O3.2
EO6	To build confidence, resilience and experience among our students to support them to make the transition to the next stage of their lives by maintaining, evaluating and innovating in the development of skills and wider personal development opportunities, and by recognising the full range of our students' achievements.	O1.1; O1.10; O3.2;
EO7	To enable the development of our inclusive community of educators to be responsive to their own needs and those of our students by delivering equality of opportunity across sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability, gender assignment, religion and socio-economic group, through targeted planning, framed by the student profile, early career and pathways to permanency requirements, peer review, skills needs, departmental performance and student feedback	O1.1; O1.3; O1.6; O1.7
EO8	To deliver a step change in our offer to early career educators by evaluating the scope and impact of existing development activities to enable the provision of transformational opportunities shaped by their	O1.3; O1.4; O1.6

	ambitions and our commitment to lifelong education and personal development.	
EO9	To enable our students to have a strong voice and a partnership role in their educational experience by enhancing and broadening the range of mechanisms available to seek and respond to student feedback.	O1.2; O1.6; O2.1; O3.1
EO10	To provide a consistently excellent education experience for all students by recruiting the highest quality educators through robust and innovative recruitment practices and embedding consistently high quality teaching and supervision practice and development into our core processes.	O1.3; O1.4; O1.6; O2.1
EO11	To inspire our educators to deliver the highest quality teaching and supervision by demonstrating and embedding firmly into the life of the University our commitment to excellence and leading a transformational shift in its recognition and celebration as a cornerstone of our community.	O1.3
Knowledge		
EO12	To enable all our students to articulate and apply their research skills during and beyond their studies by reviewing and developing our curricula to incorporate a clearly articulated developmental trajectory for research skills across all courses and levels, which is explicit and visible to students.	O1.5; O2.1
EO13	To support every student from every background to achieve outstanding outcomes by supporting them to contribute as partners in shaping and diversifying our curricula, establishing new and innovative mechanisms for student engagement and securing a transformational shift in partnership working with students.	O1.2; O2.1
EO14	To inspire and motivate our applicants and students to succeed by offering the highest quality modules and courses that draw on areas of our research strength and expertise from across the University and ensure we integrate and expand interdisciplinarity in our curriculum.	O2.2
EO15	To deliver a transformational education by encouraging impactful and innovative approaches, using learning from research (including pedagogical research) and national and international experiences, facilitating the meaningful dissemination and adoption of good and best practice.	O2.1; O2.2
EO16	To ensure our curriculum and education practice advance our mission to benefit individuals and communities by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ bringing in new ideas and fostering innovation in our thinking through collaboration with schools, employers, industry, our Knowledge Gateway and with our national and international partners, including the establishment and development of joint degrees and wider joint education provision ▪ broadening access to the opportunities offered by an Essex education through the expansion and establishment of new modes of study, including apprenticeships, summer schools and continuing professional development ▪ reflecting current and future social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges in our academic disciplines 	O2.1; O2.6; O2.7; O2.8
EO17	To meet the evolving needs of our diverse community of learners by undertaking a wholesale review of our approach to assessment ensuring that the knowledge and skills gained by our students are appropriately recognised and rewarded.	O2.1
EO18	To keep pace with the needs of our evolving research-led curriculum by transforming our processes to integrate curriculum design with the shaping of our estate plans.	O2.1; :O3.4; O3.5

EO19	To deliver consistent education excellence in the rapidly evolving digital world of the 21st century by reviewing our use of learning technology, focused on the need to integrate with and complement our curriculum and the development of our learning and teaching spaces.	O2.4; O3.4; O3.5
EO20	To offer our students a transformational experience by maintaining, developing and promoting integrated and student-focused services across all our campuses that are scalable, streamlined and efficient and have at their core our focus on excellence and our students reaching their full potential.	O2.9
Communities		
EO21	To inspire educators and students to join our ambitious community by promoting the excellence of an Essex education nationally and internationally.	O3.7
EO22	To support our students to integrate into and thrive in our global learning community by transforming our approach to inducting and welcoming all our students, enhancing our use of data to inform actions, interventions and an approach that safeguards and promotes belonging.	O3.1
EO23	To expand the reach and impact of our global community and enrich our educational offer by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maintaining, fostering and establishing partnerships locally, nationally and internationally with those who share our values and our commitment to improving people's lives ▪ maintaining and expanding our links in Europe through our passionate commitment to the Young European Research Universities Network and to the Young Universities for the Future of Europe. 	O3.7
EO24	To foster our learning community and a sense of belonging by developing our curriculum and assessment methods to include activities based around shared ownership, group activity and collaborative work.	O3.1
EO25	To transform the sense of belonging across our community by developing our physical and cultural environment, networks, policies and practice to break down barriers and engage all who join and work with us.	O3.1; O3.5
EO26	To inspire and empower our students and our educators to reach their potential in contributing to our ambitions by promoting and embedding a cultural shift in our physical and mental wellbeing across our community, rooted in our commitment to an enabling environment and to the power of sport and physical activity as a means to transform lives.	O3.1
EO27	To maximise the resilience, ambition and capacity of all members of our community to strive for excellence by maintaining and developing our professional and integrated wellbeing services and fostering a safe, healthy and inclusive environment.	O3.1
EO28	To support and facilitate our students' commitment to social action through the transformational Essex Changemakers programme and take steps to expand other opportunities, maximising the formal recognition of all our students' achievements.	O1.1; O1.10; O2.3; O3.1
EO29	To expand the reach, impact and development of our global learning community in delivering the University's mission by enabling our alumni to contribute to curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to our students.	O3.3; O3.8