

TEACHING, LEARNING

— AND —

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

2015 - 2020



University College Birmingham

UCB

ACCREDITED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

NOVEMBER 2015

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a visible and relevant framework for the development of Teaching, Learning and Assessment practice at University College Birmingham (UCB) for the period 2015-2020. In doing so, it will provide direction for all key stakeholders, but particularly for staff and students in terms of delivering and engaging with an effective teaching and learning experience. The strategy sits within the wider Corporate Strategy 2012-2017¹ (particularly with reference to Teaching and Learning) and alongside other key strategic plans of the University, including, but not limited to the Human Resources Strategy, the Widening Participation Strategy, the E-learning Development Plan and the UCB Research and Scholarly Activity Strategy.

1.2 SECTOR CONTEXT - TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT IN THE UNIVERSITY SECTOR

'In recent years there have been major changes in higher education that influence the ways in which we teach and how students learn – the student population is more diverse, teaching and learning takes place in a digital world and there are new ways of delivering programmes, e.g. distance learning. Innovations such as the flipped classroom, online assessment and feedback, technology-enhanced learning, collaborative learning and learning analytics are transforming university education'² Sector Influences at the time of writing are very much around the need for student engagement, students as partners in their learning and providing for an equitable, and inclusive experience for our students.³

For Further Education, 'The importance of consistently good or outstanding teaching, combined with high quality assessment, which leads to very effective learning, has never been more significant...'⁴

1.3 LOCAL CONTEXT - UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM (UCB)

The University is committed to providing our students with a rich and diverse educational experience that will support and shape both their personal and professional growth. Our purpose is facilitating our graduates in developing and applying the required knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to equip them for life in a complex and rapidly changing world.⁵

UCB has a number of distinctive characteristics;

- First and foremost, UCB is a teaching and learning institution. UCB is committed to supporting its staff in the application or appropriate teaching and learning methods in line with its objective of attaining high quality and excellence in terms of teaching. The quality of teaching and learning has been recognised through independent audit, not least by the QAA and OFSTED.

1. University College Birmingham Corporate Strategy 2012-2017 Available at www.ucb.ac.uk/downloads/strategic-plans/corporate-plan.pdf

2. Focus on the Teaching Academy, University of Birmingham 2015

3. Supporting and Enhancing the experience of International Students in the UK, Quality Assurance Agency Available at www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/International-Students-Guide-15.pdf

4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Further Education – What works and why. OFSTED September 2014

5. UCB Assessment Procedures 2013-2014

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- UCB specialises in subjects related to Hospitality, Tourism and Events, Food and Drink; Education and Community, Sport, Business and the 'service to people' sectors, to include Hair, Beauty and Specialist Make-up
 - UCB maintains a vocational/practical element in all programmes
 - UCB offers a structured curriculum that spans Further Education skills based programmes (to include Maths and English provision), Apprenticeships, Higher Education programmes (to include Masters level study) in most of our specialist subjects.
 - UCB maintains strong links with industry
 - UCB has a longstanding international reputation
 - UCB has long standing success in supporting students in their study, including those whose families have little prior experience of Higher Education and/or are from neighbourhoods with considerable social and economic deprivation.

1.4 STUDENT NUMBERS

We have planned that in 2015/2016 we will have approximately 1720 full-time equivalent new Home/EU entrants to UCB; this number we would expect to grow by 10% year on year. UCB recruit approximately 400 International Students per year, with growth in our European markets expected to develop over the duration of this strategy.

In terms of learning resources, UCB continues to invest heavily to ensure that our students have access to the very best practical facilities, as well as attractive, modern and comfortable learning environments. In the Academic Year 2014/2015 McIntyre House was opened; the first phase of our new Jewellery Quarter campus. In addition, a new Food Science and Innovation Suite was developed and opened in our Summer Row building, to support existing courses, but also to launch a range of food science, product development and nutrition programmes. Further state-of-the-art facilities have also been created for Specialist Hair and Media make-up courses, and our range of Bakery programmes.

Significant investment in our facilities will continue for the foreseeable future, with the University already committed to the second phase of the new campus, with work due to commence in 2016. During all of these developments, it is recognised that there is a need to ensure maximum flexibility of teaching and learning accommodation to ensure that the student experience is at the heart of our offer.

2.0 PROCESS FOR THIS STRATEGY

Initial scoping of other strategies in the sector were used to draw upon contextual indicators and wider influences around teaching and learning. Influence was drawn from key documents such as the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, (Chapter B3 Learning and Teaching),⁶ the Common Inspection Framework for Further Education (Better Inspection for all consultation),⁷ as well as UCB staff research^{8,9}. Relevant internal strategies were also considered, to include the existing Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy.

The approach used in developing this strategy involved a number of University wide consultations. Senior Lecturers for teaching and learning led a number of focus groups and the opportunity was given for all staff to provide input and responses used to inform the strategy. Specific consultation also took place with students (from FE, HE and Postgraduate programmes, our Deans and Assistant Deans of Schools and Department Heads as appropriate, e.g. [Hired@UCB](#), admissions etc. Staff involved in a Higher Education Academy (HEA) working group around Internationalisation were also consulted. Our accrediting institution, the University of Birmingham also reviewed this strategy.

3.0 CORPORATE INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Our Corporate Strategy 2012-2017 set out our mission and values, to include outstanding teaching and learning, and a highly professional, well-qualified staff. Further core areas of the Strategy include:

- **THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**
- **PARTNERSHIPS**
- **TEACHING AND LEARNING**
- **INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**
- **RESOURCES**



6. UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B3 Available at www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Quality-Code-Chapter-B3.aspx
7. OFSTED Better Inspection for all Report available at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/400625/Better_inspection_for_all_consultation_response_FINAL_2_.pdf
8. Edwards, S (2014) Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Distributed Leadership Available at <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/66060/>
9. Mighty, L (2014) Internationalisation: Differing Interpretations and Associated Student Experience Implications

4.0 FURTHER INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

With regard to indicators of success for Learning and Teaching within our corporate plan, these are;

- That UCB maintains its local, national and international reputation as a provider of high quality, specialist, vocational teaching and learning.
- That the proportion of students in employment six months post-graduation exceeds national benchmarks.
- That part-time and distance learning student numbers are greater than in 2012 as a result of various courses being offered.
- Increased retention and student satisfaction due to additional qualifications and modes of learning.
- National Student Survey results show that students feel assessment is appropriate and well designed, is returned to students promptly within the agreed timescale and feedback includes strengths and weaknesses.

- Internal and external scrutiny of teaching and learning shows a high proportion of lessons graded good and outstanding.
- Staff feel valued by UCB.
- Employers actively participate in and help to extend UCB provision.

In addition, it is expected that key performance areas and measures of success to be reported to the Board of Governors will include improved student retention, progression and achievement. These will form part of the annual Performance, Measures and Targets document.

5.0 OVERALL STRATEGIC AIM

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy aims to:

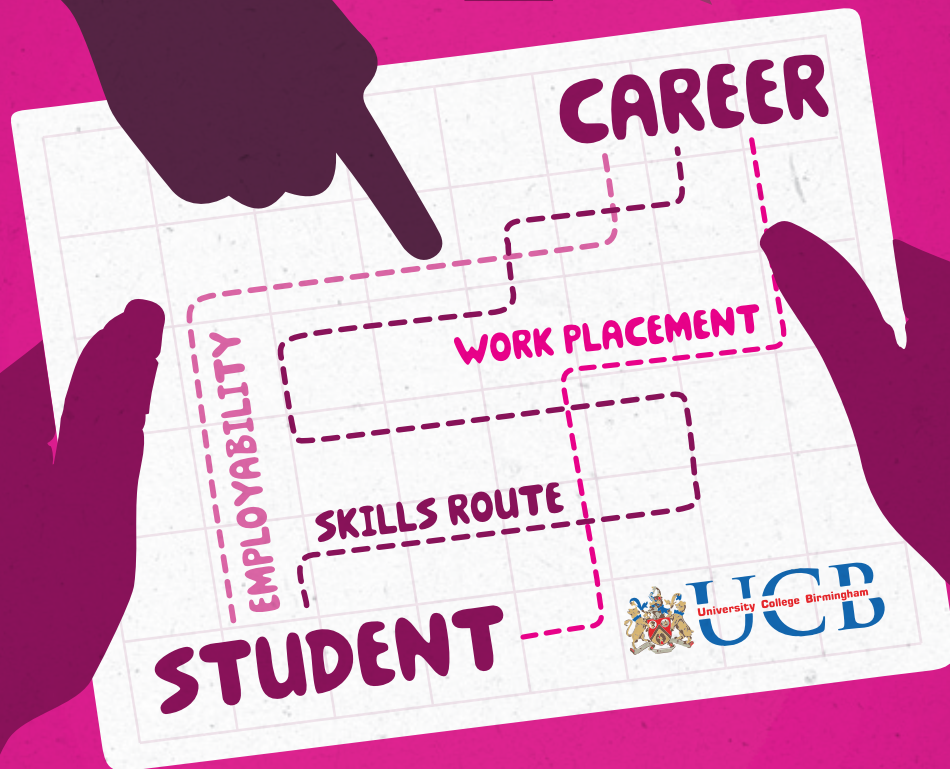
Support and enable students to develop their full potential, through providing an engaging and high quality learning experience which acts as a foundation for lifelong learning and development

6.0 STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

In order to deliver this aim, the following principles for Teaching, Learning and Assessment at UCB have been developed:



PRINCIPLE 1



1. Working in partnership with our students, we will engage them in their own learning and assessment and develop and enhance appropriate skills which will enable them to compete, with advantage.

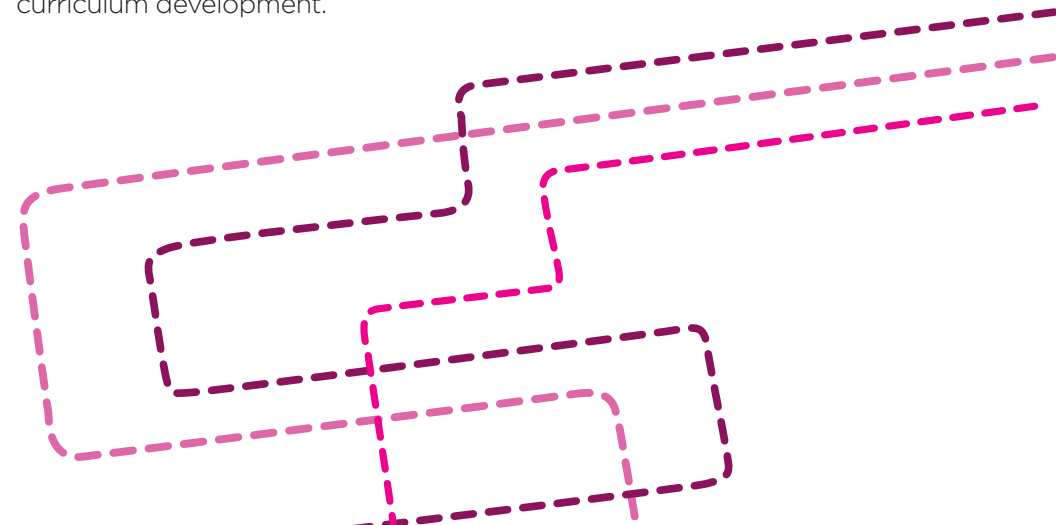
PRINCIPLE 1

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS:

- 1.1 We will support quality systems that are inclusive of the student body and which enable the regular review of teaching, learning and assessment
- 1.2 We will consider the student voice as integral to the enhancement of their learning and teaching
- 1.3 We will develop assessment that develops appropriate and contextual attributes, whilst being both varied and inclusive
- 1.4 We will develop consistent and clearly communicated assessment guidelines
- 1.5 We will provide students with appropriate academic and pastoral support that develops them as partners in their education

HOW THIS PRINCIPLE MIGHT BE EVIDENCED AT UCB:

Innovative assessment. Assessment as learning. Consistent use of grading criteria and methods of giving timely feedback. Graduate attributes cited within assessment remits. Student representation at Programme validations. Student led inductions. Student collaboration around teaching and learning feedback. Enhanced tutorials. Student involvement with curriculum development.





2. We will develop students' employability and continue to equip them as lifelong learners capable of responding to industry changes. They will be able to contribute effectively to their future employers, to the sectors they serve and to the wider community.

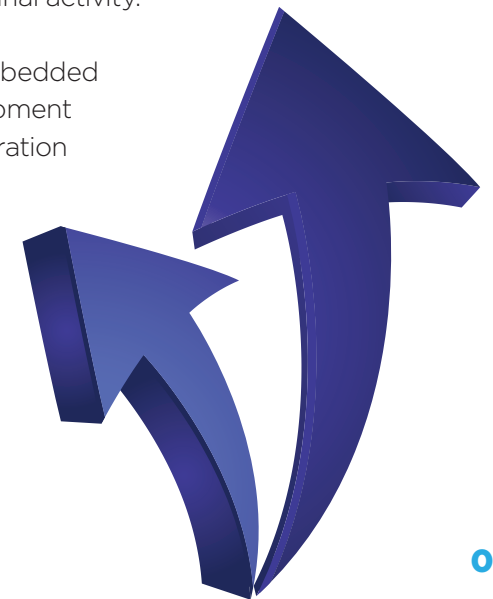
PRINCIPLE 2

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- 2.1 We will improve employability and develop attributes that students will be expected to use when they enter employment, to include professionalism and qualities of enterprise
- 2.2 We will engage learners in appropriate internship and placement learning wherever possible
- 2.3 We will engage employers in Programme development and validation
- 2.4 We will acknowledge the importance of and promote practical skills development relevant to the vocational discipline
- 2.5 We will provide opportunities to supplement students' core programmes, including short courses and volunteering opportunities as appropriate

HOW THIS PRINCIPLE MIGHT BE EVIDENCED AT UCB:

Enhanced Student engagement with Hired@UCB.
Evidence of enterprise and entrepreneurial activity.
Significant contribution in employment.
Work-based learning. Employability embedded in the curriculum. Live projects. Development of graduate attributes. Industry collaboration and partnership. Successful industrial placements. Employer responsive programmes. Apprenticeships.
Industry awards.





PRINCIPLE 3



3. We will develop an internationalised, innovative, and enterprising curriculum that is relevant to the industries we serve.

PRINCIPLE 3

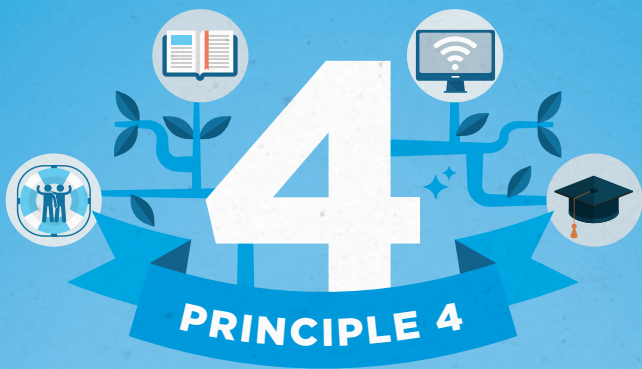
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- 3.1 We will provide an equitable and inclusive learning opportunity for all which supports our students in becoming global citizens
- 3.2 We will create the space, resources and opportunities for intercultural interactions that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences
- 3.3 We will inform our curriculum, delivery and assessment through ongoing staff research and scholarly activity, and where possible draw upon International perspectives
- 3.4 We will encourage and support staff updating for vocational and subject up-skilling that provides for relevant updating of the curriculum
- 3.5 We will look to provide innovative ways of delivery and assessment that meets the needs of our students and the industries they serve
- 3.6 We will continue to prioritise the vocational contextualisation of teaching and learning, to include elements such as sustainability and citizenship

HOW THIS PRINCIPLE MIGHT BE EVIDENCED AT UCB:

Cultural exchange initiatives (e.g Language cafes). Implementation of Global@UCB portal. Incorporating 'Global Mind-set skills' in programme development. Increased opportunities for study and volunteering abroad. Regular publication of staff research through the Research Exchange. Overseas residential trips. Cultural and social events that bring students together from diverse backgrounds. Development of Fundamental British values.





4. We will provide an outstanding learning environment for our students that is responsive to the ways in which students learn and engage and which provides for a positive student experience.

PRINCIPLE 4

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN THIS AREA:

- 4.1 We will provide for the ongoing development and maintenance of physical and virtual learning spaces that meet the needs of both students and staff
- 4.2 We will provide appropriate investments in Information Technology in support of a high quality teaching and learning experience
- 4.3 We will enhance the student experience through the effective use of digital technologies
- 4.4 We will support staff development that encourages the appropriate use of technology to enhance teaching and learning
- 4.5 We will implement a blended approach to course design at module and programme level

HOW THIS PRINCIPLE MIGHT BE EVIDENCED AT UCB:

Specific mobile applications that support student learning, both on and off-site. The effective use of technology (the Virtual Learning Environment) to enhance teaching and assessment. Implementation of a personalised staff and students' portal. Improved access to learning for students off campus. Effective e-submission processes. Blended learning delivery.





5. We will provide an evidence based critical reflection of teaching, learning and assessment that offers measurable benefits for students, staff, curricula and industry partners.

PRINCIPLE 5

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN THIS AREA:

- 5.1 We will review and disseminate material on current thinking in pedagogic practice and research
- 5.2 We will create an accessible data base of staff research and scholarly activity
- 5.3 We will develop staff confidence, capability and industry informed teaching by promoting and sustaining appropriate Research and Scholarly activity
- 5.4 We will share good practice and disseminate research outcomes through the Research Exchange

HOW THIS PRINCIPLE MIGHT BE EVIDENCED AT UCB:

Annual Staff Conference around best practice. Research Exchange activity. Alignment of research activity with curricula requirements. UCB staff as external examiners. Industry secondments or work shadowing. Teaching Innovation Fund.





6. We will maintain excellence in teaching quality through the recruitment of staff with industry and/or academic credibility and support and engage staff in their ongoing professional development.

PRINCIPLE 6

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN THIS AREA:

- 6.1 We will support staff research around both subject disciplines and pedagogy that further enhances our curriculum
- 6.2 We will provide appropriate professional qualifications around teaching and learning for new staff
- 6.3 We will provide effective and timely communication around our students' feedback, and use this to inform the ongoing development of teaching and learning
- 6.4 We will provide a Teaching Enhancement Plan that provides for effective mentoring for staff, support and identification of staff development needs
- 6.5 We will effectively profile excellent teaching practice and experience across the University
- 6.6 We will develop appropriate online and other support materials for teaching and learning that will be readily available to all academic staff
- 6.7 We will support the application of staff for accreditation of both the Higher Education Academy (through the UK Professional Standards Framework) and The Education and Training Foundation
- 6.8 We will provide career paths for academic staff that recognise excellence in teaching and/or scholarly activity around teaching and learning

HOW THIS PRINCIPLE MIGHT BE EVIDENCED AT UCB:

Year on year increase in number of staff accredited through the UKPSF. Evidence of best practice centrally profiled and available to all staff. Post Graduate teaching certificates awarded to staff. Clear guidelines, to include timely feedback around teaching observations. Evidence informed support material around learning and teaching available centrally. Effective mentoring for staff.





7. We will support all students in becoming independent learners, and provide effective transition and progression opportunities for all, regardless of their background.

PRINCIPLE 7

KEY PERFORMERS INDICATORS IN THIS AREA:

- 7.1 Provide sensitive and expert support that develops students' ability to become independent learners, adding value to their existing capabilities
- 7.2 Offer a system of bursaries, targeted at those from low income groups and disabled people, to encourage the widest range of people to access UCB programmes
- 7.3 Address the needs of mature students and/or students in industry with a flexible approach to learning and the provision of e-learning support materials
- 7.4 Provide for effective support and transition from school to FE, and FE to HE programmes
- 7.5 Support the learning and development of our International Students, whilst integrating them as partners of UCB

HOW THIS PRINCIPLE MIGHT BE EVIDENCED AT UCB:

Effective bridging programmes. Staff training around mentoring and pastoral support for students. Subject advice sessions. Professional and targeted support of students through the Academic Skills Centre. Appropriate welcome and induction for all students. Activities covered by the OFFA Access Agreement including Fee Waivers, Mentoring, Unifest, Vocational Advantage.



7.0 COMMUNICATION AND OPERATION OF THIS STRATEGY

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy will be communicated to students through the UCB website and through other relevant routes. It is expected to be operationalized through clear reference to the Strategic Principles of this strategy in Programme Validations and embedded within Module design and delivery. It should also be embedded within Staff Development Plans and their Professional Development Reviews. The Strategy will be shared with all new academic staff at induction, whilst also informing the Continuing Professional Development of Staff and the Teaching Enhancement Plan.





University College Birmingham,
Summer Row,
Birmingham B3 1JB

0121 232 4300 / 0121 604 1000

www.ucb.ac.uk

marketing@ucb.ac.uk



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