

# University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2008-2013

*“The learner is at the heart of the University’s mission and vision. We aim to create an environment that integrates student learning and personal and career development into a fully-rounded educational experience across all levels and courses.”*

Strategic Plan 2008-2013 (updated October 2010)

## 1. Introduction and Context:

This University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has been developed in alignment with our Strategic Plan 2008-2013 and in support of our ambitious project of managed change. It represents an important building block in our quest to become the foremost employer engaged university in the country.

## 2. Principles

The University’s mission is “To raise aspiration through the pursuit of excellence” and the revised Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy is designed to build an evidence-driven and scholarly approach to teaching and learner support in both HE and FE provision. It reflects national priorities informing teaching enhancement as outlined in the following principles:

- the development of national professional teaching standards in higher and further education
- the development of clear expectations regarding graduate attributes in HE and functional skills in FE
- the development of closer links between teaching, scholarship and research and supporting the needs of a diverse student population
- improved progression, retention and full participation through more flexible and responsive patterns in combining work and learning
- the enhancement of the learning experience through a staged increase in programmes that use flexible, blended and e-learning modes
- the development of supporting strategies and policies, particularly regarding e-learning and distant access to a variety of learning resources and university processes
- assurance of the highest quality and standards in all our learning, teaching and assessment activities

Learning, teaching and assessment in further education has to respond to a number of different drivers than in higher education. Further education is tightly managed to externally set targets. This document therefore seeks to complement good practice within our FE activity, not to supersede it.

We are currently experiencing a shift to a 'knowledge market'. This means that students and employers, as our 'clients' or 'customers', expect increasingly to have an ever greater choice in what they learn and how they learn, whether as full-time, part-time, FE, undergraduate, postgraduate, or as CPD students. One of the challenges of this scenario is to ensure the active engagement of all students in the learning process.

It is clear that student expectations have changed. The JISC Student Expectations Survey (Sept. 2007) shows that students come to University from schools that are often well ahead in ICT and expect online support including online backup for taught sessions, course notes and other resources. Technology has become all pervasive in their everyday life, and they expect their studies to be similarly supported by technology.

Our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy will inform, and will in turn be informed by, a number of other strategic and operational documents. This strategy should be read with reference to them. They include:

- University of West London Strategic Plan 2008-2013
- Enterprise and Employer Engagement Strategy
- International Strategy
- Research and Scholarship Strategy
- Research in Teaching Environment (RiTE) initiative (completed)
- University of West London Sustainability Strategy
- Strategic Directions for Library Services (*in progress*)
- IT Strategy (*under review*)
- Human Resource Strategy (*under review*)
- Estate Strategy
- Annual plans developed to improve FE
- Specific quality enhancement strategies and action plans for HE

Our key objectives will have to be achieved in incremental stages over a number of years, particularly concerning estate development. We recognise the need to continue to benchmark the quality and standards of all of our programmes and modes of delivery against best practice elsewhere.

### 3. Values:

This Strategy is underpinned by the following values:

- **Creativity:** Learning enables the individual and has intrinsic value beyond its potential for vocational outcomes.
- **Quality:** High standards and quality will be embedded in all teaching activity, objectives and processes.
- **Inclusiveness:** We aim for an inclusive learning environment based on dignity and mutual respect.
- **Diversity:** Learning should be accessible to diverse groups, presently underrepresented in formal education.
- **Integrity:** Learning, teaching and professional practice are informed by ethical principles and uphold these at all times.

#### **4. Aims:**

- Provide a high quality learning experience that satisfies the needs of students, employers and other stakeholders.
- Develop a demand-led, business-facing course portfolio, delivered in a flexible learning environment not limited by time, place or mode of study.
- Reach out to students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds through the provision of a seamless education across all levels.
- Support staff by providing flexible professional development opportunities which meet individual and institutional aims for progression.

#### **5. Objectives:**

We have set ourselves the following objectives:

##### **Objective 1:**

**Transform the curriculum to reflect learner and employer needs**

##### **Objective 2:**

**To provide flexible and blended modes of delivery**

##### **Objective 3:**

**To improve learner engagement**

##### **Objective 4:**

**To develop learning from work opportunities**

#### **6. Specific Objectives, Targets and Performance Indicators**

##### **Objective 1:**

**To transform the curriculum to reflect learner and employer needs**

We will

- ensure that all our programmes of study embrace a clear academic, professional and practical focus with particular emphasis on the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for employment, study and life.
- transform the curriculum to reflect this aim developing a new academic offering that is relevant to employer and student needs, flexible in character and based on detailed market research. The offer will be developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders.
- continuously review the currency and appropriateness of curricula to ensure that it meets the needs of a diverse student body.
- embed in our HE programmes clearly expressed graduate attributes.
- embed appropriate reference to the sustainability agenda in our curricula.

- promote learning approaches that involve reflection, open-mindedness, creativity, curiosity, risk-taking, team work, resilience and relationships.

#### Targets:

- Produce a new, attractive and relevant academic portfolio by summer 2009.
- Streamline course validation and approval process by January 2009.
- Map graduate attributes across the curricula by 2011
- Achieve highest possible results in external assessments of courses (QAA, professional bodies)
- Develop appropriate reward schemes for outstanding staff contributions to LTA by 2011

#### Performance indicators:

- Improved application rate
- Improved graduate employment rate
- Results of external assessments– measured by latest assessment results.
- Revised HR strategy and policies completed by 2011

### **Objective 2:**

#### **To provide flexible and blended modes of delivery**

We recognise that learning, teaching and assessment are inextricably linked processes, which take place in a range of environments and can be delivered through increasingly flexible modes of study, appropriate to the disciplines and the type of learner. A number of successful flexible and open learning programmes already operate in the university and e-learning will provide an additional enhancement to these courses.

#### We will

- enable and encourage student engagement through the development and implementation of flexible and personalised modes of delivery.
- provide a mix of learning opportunities through a university-wide virtual learning environment coupled with the use of a range of Information Communications Technology (ICT) tools.
- offer increased opportunities to use resources remotely and mobile learning through continued IT infrastructure developments.
- develop flagship blended learning programmes in all schools.
- ensure that all programmes develop a minimum online support facility for their students to include: electronic copies of essential documents including the programme handbook, module study guides, handouts and PowerPoint presentations used in lectures or workshops.

- engage with external research led initiatives (e.g. HEFCE, HEA, JISC, ALT, CETL's and Subject Centres) concerning e-pedagogies and technologies to inform and support developments.

#### Targets:

- Maintain all teaching rooms and other learning spaces with suitable ICT infrastructure by summer 2011.
- All programmes supported through a minimum platform of on-line support provision by September 2010.
- Substantially increase the number of university processes and procedures that can be completed online.

#### Performance indicators:

- Teaching rooms appropriately equipped by 2011
- Each school will have at least one flagship blended learning programme by September 2010
- Efficacy of online enrolment improved by summer 2009

### **Objective 3:**

#### **To improve learner engagement**

##### We will

- support and empower learners to take responsibility for their own learning and for the acquisition of those skills which prepare them for life, employability and self-fulfilment.
- help learners to develop independence and autonomy as they progress through their programmes of study.
- provide appropriate learning support including e-portfolio facilities to enable students to keep a comprehensive and personal record of their learning achievements.
- improve and increase the provision of social, cultural, recreational and learning spaces across the university.
- increase retention and student satisfaction
- strengthen pastoral and academic guidance.
- develop a fully-integrated learner support system, which will include: academic skills' support (learning skills, academic English, language support, numeric and information skills); a mentor and peer support scheme; student advisors; specialised student services support.
- ensure that online submission of assessment will (where appropriate) become the norm across the University.
- ensure that assessment is not merely summative but is also used in a formative manner to support further learning.
- review mechanisms for collecting student opinion and measuring student satisfaction and strengthen procedures for acting on these.

## Targets:

- Increase levels of student satisfaction year by year.
- Raise retention and success rates (value added) year by year.
- Create social learning spaces on every campus by 2011.

## Performance indicators:

- Student satisfaction – measured by:  
National Student Survey results,  
Internal survey results,
- Student retention – measured by:  
HESA PIs  
Internal retention monitoring data
- Student achievement – measured by LSC success rate data

## **Objective 4:**

### **To develop learning from work opportunities**

In line with the recommendations of the CIHE report *Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates – Putting entrepreneurship at the centre of higher education*, published in September 2008, we are building important relationships with large and smaller companies through active collaboration, with a partnership approach that goes further than a reactive supply and demand relationship

#### We will

- enhance our reputation for student employment through:  
the provision of new opportunities for work-focused and work-based learning;  
access to negotiated provision ;joint curriculum design with employers;  
integrated work based learning opportunities for learners; clear graduate attributes.
- create and embed a formative method of recording and presenting achievement across the curriculum.
- create and embed clear expectations of employability skills/graduate attributes for all our students.
- appoint Work-based Learning Fellows/Readers in each school to promote and speed up the development of work-based learning.
- overhaul our templates for Foundation degree delivery to include predominantly work- based and employer co-delivered modes.

## Targets:

- PDP embedded in all appropriate programmes by 2011
- Opportunities for University of West London students to enrol on work-based learning modules by 2011.

Performance Indicators:

- PDP embedded in all programmes by 2011
- Substantially increased opportunities for work-based learning and work placements
- Work-based Learning Fellows/Readers in place by January 2009.