



# OUR STRATEGY 2016-2021

## MAKING THE EXCEPTIONAL HAPPEN



**We make the exceptional  
happen** by challenging  
traditional thinking and defying  
conventional boundaries



Universities are truly special places which transform lives. At the University of Exeter we want to make the exceptional happen, and have a real and lasting impact on the world around us. We are already firmly at the forefront of universities worldwide and our ambition is to increase that position, particularly as a Global 100 institution.

Our strategy is designed to support that aim, by challenging our talented students to achieve more than they ever thought possible, and by recruiting the very best people from around the world to reach greater heights in research excellence, innovation and impact.

We want to find solutions for some of humankind's greatest challenges and, through the establishment of our Global Vision 2050 project, we are already enabling academics from different disciplines to work more closely together to challenge conventional thinking about the world we want to live in, and change it for the better.

To ensure we pass our enthusiasm for learning to the next generation, our students will have even more opportunities to work alongside our gifted academics. We'll also be working to grow our international partnerships so we can continue to increase the reach and impact of the research we undertake.

Our values – ambition, challenge, collaboration, community, impact and rigour – are at the very heart of everything we do. We've used them to guide the creation of our strategy ensuring our goals and future successes reflect the type of institution we are - ambitious, co-operative, ethical, professional and environmentally conscious – above all, one that makes the exceptional happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Professor Sir Steve Smith, Vice-Chancellor

# About our strategy

The University of Exeter's vision is to be a global 100 research leader and create graduates of distinction within a community of the most talented and creative minds.

To do this we will use our collective talents to shape our future world and find innovative solutions to the challenges faced by humankind. We will seek to create greater understanding and share our knowledge with others, encouraging them to discover new possibilities.

We will nurture our students, colleagues and communities giving future generations the ability to change the world around us through skills, intellectual resources, courage and resilience.

We are driven by a desire to realise a future where our researchers, other colleagues, students, graduates, supporters and partners unite to tackle the most pressing global issues.

We will make the exceptional happen: from predicting and mitigating the complicated effects of climate change, to new innovative approaches to understanding diseases; from studying the complexities of memory, to understanding extrasolar planets; from identifying what causes radicalisation, to curing neurophysiological conditions.

Our strategy establishes how we will work towards achieving our vision over the next five years, as well as our Global Vision 2050 – through to our 100th anniversary in 2055. The actions we need to take will be implemented through what we have called 'sovereign strategies'; which are a series of key strategies that set out our detailed plans, for example our Education and our Research and Impact Strategies.

## We will achieve this by:

- Building research power to solve global challenges;
- Delivering an internationally excellent education;
- Creating an impact regionally, nationally and globally;
- Supporting our people to make the exceptional happen;
- Making the most of our resources.

## We'll know if we've succeeded in 2021 by:

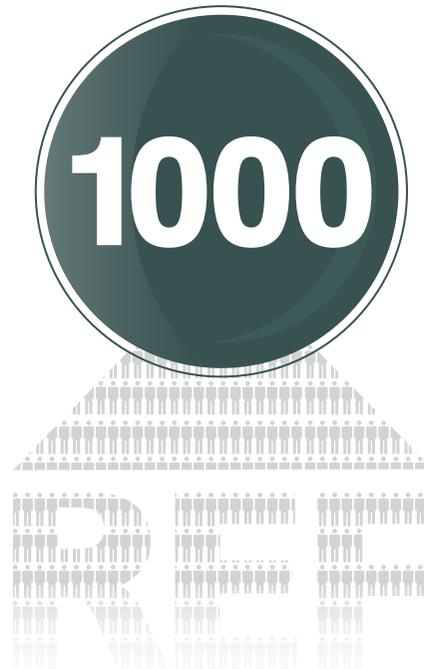
- Consistently achieving a top 10 position in all UK rankings;
- Sustainably achieving Global 100 status;
- Submission of at least 1000 colleagues to the next Research Excellence Framework (REF).



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a top **10** position  
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Eco-toxicologist Professor Tamara Galloway's research is leading to policy change on the global problem of pollution from microbeads and nanoplastics.

# Building research power to tackle global challenges

Our world faces many challenges. These challenges include improving health, securing our food and water supplies, and making a positive impact upon environmental changes, global conflicts and terrorism. World-class research can make real inroads into finding solutions for these and other issues.

Exeter already has a strong track record in delivering excellent research across all disciplines with 98 per cent of our research being assessed as of international quality in the most recent industry-recognised analysis, the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

We believe in looking at new ways of carrying out research, such as bringing together academics from all subject areas to tackle a problem in the round; known as interdisciplinary research. For example, understanding the role of communities in tackling environmental issues alongside engineering, policy and/or economic solutions.

Our ambition is to generate research power; to build up our already strong research teams by increasing their numbers and the collaborations we have with other organisations around the world.

## We will achieve this by:

- Increasing the number of academics, particularly within science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine. We will continue to develop partnerships with other organisations around the world across all our disciplines;
- Continuing to build interdisciplinary research to tackle the most urgent problems of the 21st century. Our innovative Living Systems Institute and Environment and Sustainability Institute will lead the way;
- Creating a new Institute for Advanced Study. The job of its researchers will be to pioneer creative, innovative approaches to help build Exeter's international reputation;
- Demonstrating through a project called Global Vision 2050, our long-term commitment to solving the challenges of environmental change from a scientific, societal and cultural perspective;
- Investing in state-of-the-art specialist buildings and equipment. We will create world-class new facilities for Digital Humanities, our special collections and digital library resources;

- Creating a vibrant, supportive culture for the next generation of leading researchers, led by the Exeter Doctoral College;
- Giving students more opportunities to carry out their own ground-breaking research and work alongside world-leading academics
- Working closely with other academics, business and industry experts across the globe to deliver research which has value and impact.

## We'll know if we've succeeded by:

- By the end of 2020, we will be recognised as a world leading university for research and will be consistently ranked within the top 15 UK Higher Education Institutions within the global league tables;
- Putting forward at least 1000 colleagues to the next REF exercise, with high levels of internationally excellent and world leading research and impact;
- Growing the number of postgraduate researchers and achieving satisfaction levels higher than the Russell Group average in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

# Delivering an internationally excellent education

We want our graduates to stand out from the crowd and be among the best in the world. That's why at Exeter it's a person's ability that matters most, not their family circumstances or their background.

We are creating an internationally excellent education, which gives our talented students the ability to go on to make a difference in the world. To become graduates of real distinction we must stretch, challenge and engage with our students. Our education is characterised by the partnership we have with our students in developing their own learning and helping them to become agents of change. We are working hard to create programmes which instil a life-long love of learning, stimulate creativity, a worldwide outlook, leadership, the ability to work with others, analytical skills, resilience and imagination.

We plan to increase the opportunities for students to learn alongside top academics, carry out research and take part in work experience around the world.

The experience our students gain while studying at Exeter doesn't end on graduation day but continues throughout their lives through our excellent graduate career and social networks.

## We will achieve this by:

- Partnering with students across and between our vibrant campuses, including working closely with the Students' Guild and FXU;
- Delivering outstanding interdisciplinary courses, with leading academic and industry partners;
- Instilling a passion for learning in our students, through more opportunities to work alongside our top academics;
- Increasing opportunities for overseas study and work and a curriculum with a global outlook;
- Promoting social mobility by encouraging diversity, where ability and potential are valued. Helping all students pursue their intellectual, sporting and cultural passions;
- Creating new opportunities for postgraduate study via the Exeter Doctoral College, which will give our students a competitive advantage;
- Embracing the digital transformation of education to complement face-to-face learning through online learning.

## We'll know if we've succeeded by:

- Consistently achieving the highest classification within the Teaching Excellence Framework;
- Ranking in the UK top 10 for undergraduate student satisfaction, plus scoring above average Russell Group results for postgraduate taught experience;
- A top 10 UK ranking for how successful our graduates are at securing graduate level jobs or further study and attaining a sector-leading position in terms of graduate earnings;
- Growing our international student population to 25 per cent of the total. Making sure a fifth of 2020 graduates took part in at least one international opportunity;
- Achieving our Fair Access Targets, which help talented students come to Exeter, irrespective of their background;
- Increasing postgraduate student numbers with a bigger proportion of taught students;
- Increasing the amount of shared research between students and academics which appears in industry-recognised publications.



We produce graduates of distinction who are wanted by employers.



Our events and research inspire the local communities we work with and raise the aspirations of the next generation.

# Our mission, vision and values

## Our Mission

We make the exceptional happen by challenging traditional thinking and defying conventional boundaries.

## Our Vision

Our driving ambition is to be a global 100 research leader and create graduates of distinction within a community of the most talented and creative minds.

## Our Values

Alongside great success comes responsibility and at Exeter we have developed a core set of values, which are central to everything we do. These values are important to us because they define who we are and are shared by our students, colleagues, graduates, stakeholders and supporters. We use our values to set strategy and to guide us in making day-to-day decisions.

## Our values are:

### Ambition

Ambition has driven us to where we are today, and will help us to sustain a position within the global 100.

### Collaboration

We work at our best in active collaboration between students, colleagues and external partners.

### Challenge

We relish challenge and reach for the previously unachievable.

### Community

We support and inspire each other to be the best that we can be.

### Impact

Making the exceptional happen requires disruptive thinking, fresh ways of working and solutions with impact.

### Rigour

We strive to reach the highest standards of scholarship and service.



# Creating an impact regionally, nationally and globally

As a vibrant knowledge hub, we have an important role to play both locally and globally. The University is a large employer and economic contributor in Devon and Cornwall and we can help support local growth and build on the region's strengths and potential.

We have already played a big part in driving improvements in the region's economy, community and healthcare.

We realise that engaging with the communities we serve locally, across the UK, the world and in the digital realm strengthens us and increases the benefits for society.

By working closely with our extensive group of partners, our world-leading research can tackle major global issues, generating real and lasting impact.

To achieve this, we will make sure the international viewpoint is included in everything we do. We will also continue to actively engage with our impressive graduate network, which is spread all over the world.

## We will achieve this by:

- Carrying out research with a strong focus on impact for the economy, society and health. This will include working with partners from business, industry and the public sector on research and other innovative projects;
- Working with policy-makers on evidence-based policy and strengthening good governance, both nationally and internationally;
- Connecting with the public through our research and strengthening local links including through an Arts and Culture Strategy and community events;
- Continuing to connect with our stakeholders and graduates to extend our impact;
- Building upon the South West region's strengths to promote local innovation and partnerships; especially through our involvement with groups like GW4 Alliance and the SETSquared partnership;
- Using Innovation Exeter and the Exeter Science Park to promote entrepreneurial activity;

- Developing great education programmes which meet the needs of our local economy and see graduates employed locally, such as Degree Apprenticeships;
- Growing an entrepreneurial and enterprise culture among students, graduates, professional colleagues and academics;
- Developing our work with international partners to generate new opportunities for research and learning for our colleagues and students. These partnerships will also grow our international reputation.

## We'll know if we've succeeded by:

- Submission of high-quality impact case studies to the next Research Excellence Framework (REF), which reflect our impact nationally and internationally;
- A deeper relationship with key international partners;
- An increase in research income from industry (UK and International) by 100 per cent from 2014/15;
- Developing innovation, using our assets as a region to generate income, valued at £5 million per year.



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Our Global Vision 2050 project is confronting climate change – one of the many global challenges we are committed to tackling.



Professor Mark Jackson's research on the history of disease has increased our understanding of health and well-being in the modern world.

# Supporting our people to make the exceptional happen

We believe that we are capable of making exceptional things happen. To achieve this we have to attract, develop and retain outstanding individuals from all around the globe.

We know that in order to achieve our aims more effectively our community must be diverse and representative. We must work together as one group, unified by our shared values. Promoting the wellbeing of all is also crucial. We are committed to supporting both our students and colleagues in order that they may realise their full potential.

If we wish to make the exceptional happen we must bring together all of our collective talents and energy within a positive environment.

## We will achieve this by:

- Creating a broad international environment of students and colleagues that allows and encourages the sharing and creation of brilliant ideas;
- Encouraging continuous improvement which gives students and colleagues the ability to realise opportunities, forge ahead with change and make the exceptional happen;
- Providing the facilities, spaces and resources to create the best educational experience for our students and work environment for our colleagues;
- Recognising the importance of wellbeing, and promoting the talents of our people. We already have over 250 thriving student societies and sports clubs, plus an active programme of activities for staff across our campuses;
- Enabling all of our colleagues to flourish by creating opportunities for career development. This will be done through externally accredited programmes and a range of internal learning opportunities, such as those championed by the Exeter Academic programme;

- Developing our senior team as Global Leaders of the future;
- Continuing to create a culture which promotes equal opportunities and values diversity, so that everyone can achieve their potential;
- Embedding a positive, supportive culture at the heart of our environment, which changes with the times and helps us to provide the right services for colleagues and students.

## Indicators of our success will include:

- Achieving more Athena SWAN awards and equality charter marks across all applicable departments, and progression towards at least one gold award;
- Increasingly positive feedback from colleagues, which will be monitored through the employee engagement survey;
- Ranking in the top 10 in the UK for student satisfaction and a higher than average score within the Russell Group for postgraduates' taught and research experience.

# Making the most of our resources

To reach our goals we have to manage our resources properly, which means ensuring we are using them efficiently and in the right way. We need to make best use of what we already have, which then allows us to invest in important new infrastructure to get our campuses and digital services into the right place for the next generation.

We are very fortunate to have a large number of generous supporters and will continue to work with them to develop new resources. Our plans must be environmentally responsible; putting into practice the world-leading expertise in climate science which our own researchers generate.

We are committed to making sure our decision-making is transparent, fair and fully informed. By making smart decisions about our resources we can realise our ambition to grow our research and enhance the student experience, whilst still acting responsibly.

## We will achieve this by:

- Choosing a broad range of ways to generate income and making the most of our assets and current resources to generate funds. This will be through working with our stakeholders, industry and, critically, our graduates;
- Developing an ambitious, energy-efficient capital strategy, estate strategy and digital strategy with a programme of investment. This will allow us to create the right spaces to realise our aims;
- Getting the best value from our decision making, ways of working and investments;
- Using resources effectively, whilst assessing risks and evaluating regularly;
- Continuing our practices of good university governance and risk management;
- Promoting the highest standards of professional integrity and considering any ethical, social and environmental issues arising from what we do;
- Thorough assessment of any environmental impacts of our activities and finding innovative ways to reduce our carbon emissions;

- Leading by example, by promoting environmental sustainability to complement our academic expertise in climatic science.

## We'll know if we've succeeded by:

- Improving our financial position to secure £55 million per year of operating profitability, a growth of 38 per cent on 2014/15 levels;
- Broadening the ways we generate income to give us more security, with less dependency upon government funding sources. Generating at least £60 million through our 'Making the Exceptional Happen' fundraising campaign and increasing sustainably our annual development income;
- Investing more than £200 million in infrastructure during this plan;
- Reducing carbon emissions by 43 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050 (from a 2005/06 baseline of 25,000 tonnes).



The Environment and Sustainability Institute at our Penryn Campus is a £30 million interdisciplinary centre that enhances people's lives by improving their relationships with the environment.



As someone who was a student at the University of Exeter, I know what an incredibly valuable, life-enriching experience we provide. Since taking up the position as Chair of the University's Council, I have a new appreciation for all that Exeter does. I have seen first hand the quality of our world-leading research and the impact it has on society, the contribution we make in our sector of the economy, both within the south-west region and nationally, and the lifelong effect that our outstanding education has on our students and graduates.

As we look to the future with this strategy, it is true that we will face uncertainties and challenges posed by external forces outside of our control. The higher education sector, which includes universities, has already experienced enormous changes, such as the move from government-funded teaching grants to £9,000 per year tuition fees. We can expect further shifts with the introduction of a new Higher

Education Bill. Change is inevitable but by staying true to our values and through the vision and strategy set out in this publication, I believe the plans we have put into place will ensure we are in an excellent position to respond to challenges, make an important contribution within the university sector and forge our own future.

I am looking forward to the next stage of our development and along with you all, helping the University of Exeter to go on to even greater things.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Turvill'.

**Sarah Turvill (Law 1975), Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor**



Group Study

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EDUCATION

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