



Executive Summary – Our Future Structures

[Strategy 2030](#) sets out our bold and inspiring vision to use the power of our education and research, to lead progress towards a sustainable, healthy and socially just future through our people, place and partnerships. To help us deliver Strategy 2030, the University Executive Board has concluded that the academic and professional structures that served us so well over the last decade should evolve. These changes to our structures have now been agreed by Senate and Council.

Why change and why now?

These changes will enable the delivery of Strategy 2030.

- The world faces very serious challenges and we intend to play our part in addressing these by reframing the University to focus even more on our significant strengths and expertise in environment and sustainability, social justice and health and wellbeing in ways that are ambitious, clear and impactful.
- Critically, national and international opinion leaders also signalled to us that more resilient and substantial academic groupings would aid our ability to drive discovery, interdisciplinarity and to prepare the leaders of tomorrow, while at the same time weathering any changes in the funding and policy environment.
- We must become more agile and entrepreneurial and improve student and staff experience. The University has almost doubled in size over the past ten years and our structures have not kept pace. They now obscure our purpose and priorities; can hinder interdisciplinary working; and lead to administrative burden and duplication of governance.

By making these changes now, we will be able to drive forward the new strategy, with more clarity of purpose as the World resets following the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan to bring in the changes in a phased way during 2022-23, starting with establishing the faculties and departments and appointing the key leadership roles to start the new structures by 1 September 2022.

What will we achieve together through the changes?

By making changes to the way our academic and professional services structures are organised, we aim to create:

- A simpler structure focused on our three strategic goals, (Environmental Sustainability, Health and Social Justice) and improving interdisciplinary opportunities for colleagues and students and improving our global reputation
- Empowered academic departments with clearer accountability and local decision-making leading to a more inclusive learning community, a better student experience and vibrant research culture
- Fewer departments enabling us to bring professional services support closer to academic and learning communities with improvements to students' and colleagues' experience as a result.

What is changing?

Three new faculties

We are retaining all our current disciplines, in some cases reconfigured in new ways, grouped into three faculties. Each faculty champions one of our strategic goals (Environmental Sustainability, Health and Social Justice) and leads the University-wide approach to tackling these big societal challenges. The new faculties have significant strategic and financial control, and facilitate empowered, academic departments. Two of the faculties also include our two large, accredited schools (Business School and Medical School). Each faculty will host at least one of our Research Institutes, although Research Institutes will retain their roles as flagships of cross-faculty interdisciplinarity.

Empowered academic departments

The scale and focus of departments will vary but they are empowered with greater financial and strategic accountability than currently. Departments will be led by a Head supported by academic Directors of Research, Education, Global and others aligned to the academic portfolio, with support from embedded and aligned professional services teams. In large departments there may be a Deputy Head associated with a key subject area or campus location. These teams will be designed by the faculties and departments to meet their complexity, size and ambitions. Each academic department will have embedded departmental managers to support their activities relative to their size and complexity.

Accredited university schools

Where groups of departments together manage complex, high-value programmes, and have a distinctive outward-facing role or accreditation, they may be known as a school. This is the case for the Business School and the Medical School. These are embedded within faculties and are accountable to the Faculty Executive.

Cornwall

All faculties are represented in the renamed 'University of Exeter, Cornwall' which has a strengthened identity and will have a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor in a largely externally-facing role to drive the reputation and engagement of Cornwall-based activities.

Professional services

We are combining our 12 professional services directorates into 8 divisions that are better aligned to our strategic priorities. Professional services will continue to operate as one service but with the aim of ensuring that academic and professional services colleagues develop a team ethos, working "hand-in-hand" to support delivery of Strategy 2030 with multidisciplinary teams linked more closely to each faculty and department. The professional services will also redirect resources to embed and align more professional services posts into faculties and departments.

What are the benefits?

This approach will build on our academic strengths, improve resilience, enable more local ownership and delivery, enhance agility, encourage even more interdisciplinarity, and provide ownership for driving our strategic goals. It signals a new framework for wider operational and culture changes to bring people together to face the big societal and global challenges of our time.

How will we know we've been successful?

There are two main strands of activity:

The management of the change process will be measured through levels and quality of engagement of colleagues, students and trade unions and other key stakeholders; views of colleagues, students and trade unions on the change process; levels of general colleague satisfaction; and delivery of the programme.

The outcomes of the reorganisation will be measured across the 2030 timeline through indicators around improved student and colleague experience and satisfaction; support for proposals to manage wellbeing, inclusion and culture; improved external recognition; improved income generation via student recruitment and interdisciplinary research and education; and increased investment in student and staff-facing roles enabled by reduced expenditure on senior leadership roles.

Whilst the consultation focusses on our future structures we received feedback and questions on other topics including culture, wellbeing and inclusion, processes and workload. Changing the structures alone will not of course resolve these issues, but it will provide a stronger framework for addressing them. We are already actively considering many of these as part of the Strategy 2030 "ways of working" priorities led by the Wellbeing, Inclusion and Culture Board.