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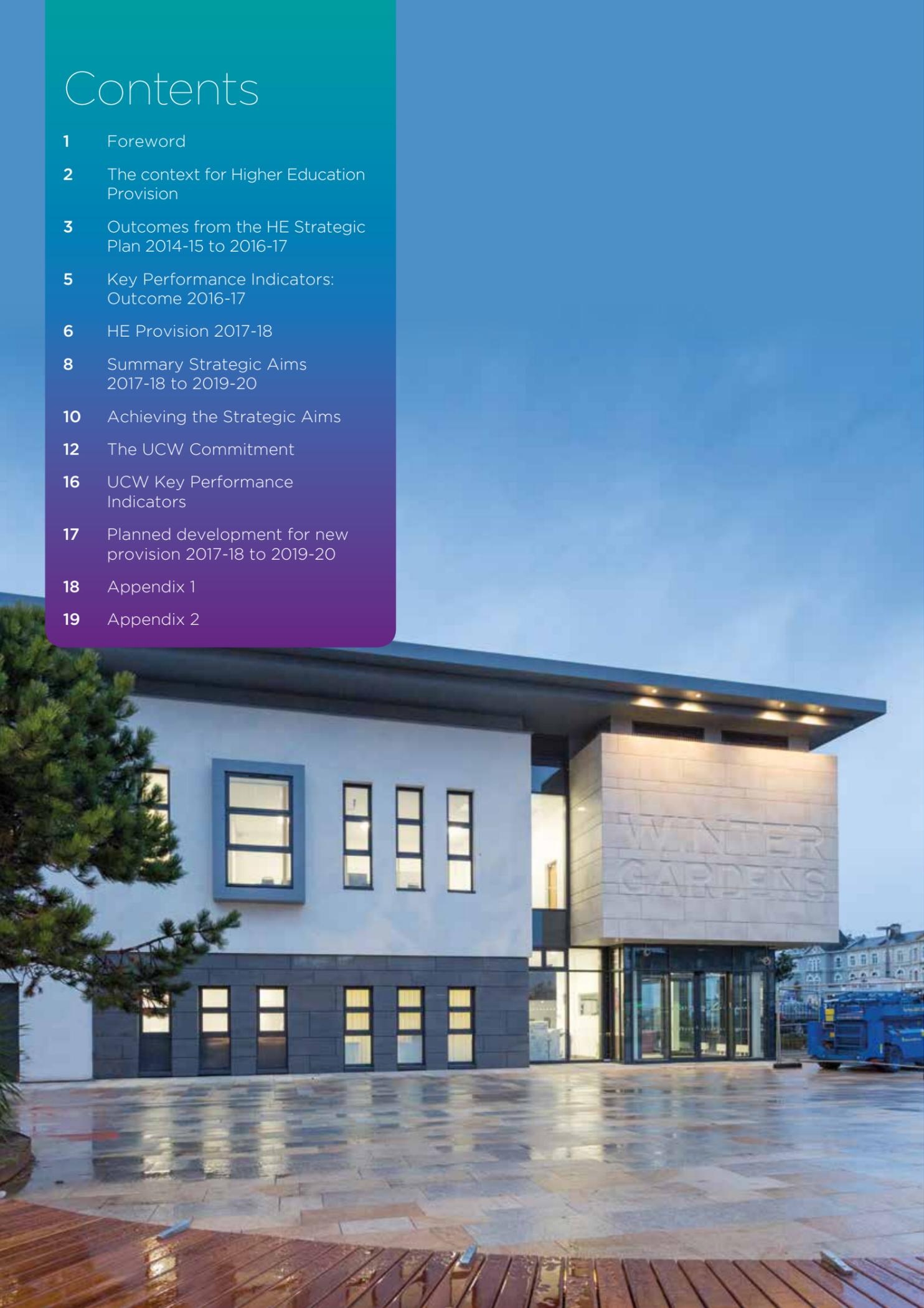
THE HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

2017-18 TO 2019-20



Contents

- 1 Foreword
- 2 The context for Higher Education Provision
- 3 Outcomes from the HE Strategic Plan 2014-15 to 2016-17
- 5 Key Performance Indicators: Outcome 2016-17
- 6 HE Provision 2017-18
- 8 Summary Strategic Aims 2017-18 to 2019-20
- 10 Achieving the Strategic Aims
- 12 The UCW Commitment
- 16 UCW Key Performance Indicators
- 17 Planned development for new provision 2017-18 to 2019-20
- 18 Appendix 1
- 19 Appendix 2



Foreword by the Principal and Chief Executive

Higher education at Weston College has a new name. Since the last Strategic Plan, we now deliver our higher education provision through the University Centre Weston name. In order to achieve this, we had to satisfy the requirements of the Department for Education, and be supported and endorsed to do so by the Vice-Chancellors of our partner universities... So welcome to the Higher Education Strategic Plan for University Centre Weston 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Since the writing of the last Plan, University Centre Weston (or UCW as we refer to it) has experienced significant growth in terms of student numbers as well as unparalleled success through Higher Education Review, and the Teaching Excellence Framework. This is contextualised by achieving the majority of our targets from our previous key performance indicators and of course, the level of success demonstrated by our students.

The continued success of UCW and its students is due in no small part to the effective and supportive relationships with our partner universities. Both Bath Spa University and the University of the West of England, Bristol show commitment to the partnership, as well as a willingness to continue to work with us well into the future.

UCW has not rested on its laurels despite its success: with support from the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, UCW is proud to have delivered in 2017 a “re-purposed” Winter Gardens in Weston-super-Mare. These facilities alongside a Law and Professional Services Academy include a state-of-the-art higher education facility; adding to the quality of the student academic experience.

Our new Higher Education Strategic Plan sets out exciting aims for the future, relating to academic standards, growth, sustainability and critically, the student experience. We will continue to set challenging targets for ourselves that will ensure we maintain outstanding higher education provision. Our mission remains clear:

“ TO DELIVER AN OUTSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE, ENABLING SUCCESS AND INSPIRING AMBITION. ”

*Dr Paul Phillips CBE,
Principal and
Chief Executive, Weston
College Group*



University Centre Weston: The Context for Higher Education Provision

UCW is the part of Weston College Group, led by Dr Paul Phillips CBE, Principal and Chief Executive, which delivers higher education (HE) provision. UCW is managed by the HE Directorate, where all staff (academic and support) have a role in supporting teaching excellence.

The HE Directorate consists of 25 members of staff under the Vice Principal: Higher Education and is responsible for developing and driving the HE strategy. Weston College is a Further and Higher Education College serving the needs of the people of North Somerset which is an area covering 145 square miles. UCW recruits a broad mix of students with a significant proportion from disadvantaged backgrounds (Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) quintile one and two) and high numbers of students who declare a disability. Higher education has been growing steadily in the past 5 years, and has benefitted from being awarded directly-funded places in 2012. UCW's awarding partners are Bath Spa University and the University of the West of England, Bristol. UCW has mature, established and effective relationships with its awarding partners enshrined in long-term collaborative agreements. Use of the University Centre Weston name began in September 2016 following agreement from the Department for Education.

UCW has a management and support infrastructure that is bespoke to higher education provision. This is characterised by a committee structure that has defined responsibilities to ensure the maintenance of academic standards, and assure the quality of learning opportunities and student experience. There is also a Higher Education Governance Committee providing assurance to both Corporation and the relevant regulatory bodies for higher education.

UCW has been extremely successful in terms of external reviews. UCW underwent Higher Education Review (HER) from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in April 2016, and good practice was noted in the following:

- The use of student and employer involvement in design, development and validation, which is particularly effective in ensuring that programmes are focused on their needs.
- The effective processes in place to support higher education teaching practices, which ensure the distinctiveness of the quality of learning opportunities.
- The professional and proactive approach of the higher education support team, which enables student development and achievement.

- The close working relationship with the awarding bodies, which facilitates a reflective and responsive approach to assessment design and practice.

At the Review, the HER team identified no recommendations or affirmations. The Review concluded that the quality of student learning opportunities is commended. As a result QAA published UCW as an exemplar in having "An innovative approach to enabling student development and achievement" in their 'Good Practice in Higher Education Review: A Collection of Case Studies 2016'.

In 2017, UCW was awarded the highest outcome from the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) that of the Gold Award, matching its higher education provision with some of the best in country.

UCW has experienced growth in student numbers compared to the national picture, with a 16 % increase over a five-year period compared with a national average of a decrease of 18.6%. The last five years show the following: in 2013-14 there were 761 FTE students; in 2014-15, 804 FTE students; in 2015-16, 822 FTE students; and in 2016-17 there were 831 FTE students. The current number of FTE students in 2017-18 is 883.

UCW currently runs 23 Foundation Degrees, 13 Honours top-ups, four Degree Apprenticeships, six Higher Apprenticeships, the PG-Cert in Higher Education, and Masters in Education. The provision is diverse in nature with a range of subject disciplines on offer.



Outcomes from the HE Strategic Plan 2014-15 to 2016-17

The outcomes from the previous HE Strategic Plan are considered below. The previous Strategic Aims are provided with a commentary on each. As well as this, the key performance indicators associated with the previous plan are also given, along with how successful UCW has been in achieving them.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To develop and deliver sustainable, high quality higher education which reflects the needs of students, employers, partner universities, and both the local and national economy.

OUTCOME:

UCW succeeded in delivering this Strategic Aim. As well as maintaining and building on existing provision, new provision was introduced. These underwent a course planning process, ensuring viability and relevance that reflected economic and market need, taking into account students, employers and the strengths of partner universities. Programmes introduced included a BA (Hons) Business Management with Sustainability (Top-up) in 2014-15, FdSc in Games and Animation Production in 2015-16, HNC Construction and the Built Environment (Civil Engineering), FdA Professional and Commercial Dance and a BA (Hons) Professional Music Performance and Production (Top-up) in 2016-17. In addition, UCW is now engaging with both the Higher and Degree Apprenticeship schemes.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To recruit high calibre students in sufficient numbers to ensure the ongoing financial viability of HE programmes. To have a total of 893 FTE HE students studying at Weston College by 2016/17.

OUTCOME:

UCW succeeded in recruiting high calibre students as identified by students' entry qualifications, and student success and achievement is recognised in the proportion of students achieving high grades, as well as employment and destination data. However, while the number of students grew to 830 in 2016/17 representing a 9.2% increase in student numbers over the duration of the plan, it did not meet the 893 FTE target figure. A key reason for this was the removal of the cap on Student Number Control places (SNC) in 2015-16, which was not announced at the time of the writing of the last HE Strategic Plan. This decision resulted in a significant increase in the competition to recruit students from the university sector.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To engage with, and reflect the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education in all aspects. To achieve commended through Higher Education Review (HER).

OUTCOME:

UCW was subject to HER in April 2016. The Review, which used the UK Quality Code as the basis of its scrutiny, was particularly successful, with the QAA identifying several areas of good practice and identifying no recommendations. The Review concluded that the quality of student learning opportunities is commended. The Strategic Aim was fulfilled.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To focus on the student experience and to ensure that it continues to be positive and varied. To enhance the student experience through acting on student feedback and increased student engagement.

OUTCOME:

Student feedback continues to inform the student experience, with UCW acting on the student voice. Students are involved at all levels and are equal partners in their learning. One aspect of this was recognised as good practice in the 2016 HER: "The use of student and employer involvement in design, development and validation, which is particularly effective in ensuring that programmes are focused on their needs." UCW was successful in achieving this Strategic Aim.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To develop staff skills, scholarship, and innovative approaches to teaching and learning including the use of technology enhanced learning.

OUTCOME:

This Strategic Aim has been achieved. Staff skills are developed through a mature and embedded HECPD programme and Scholarly Activity supported and successful as scrutinised by Higher Education Board of Study. In 2016-17, a UCW Teaching Fellow scheme was introduced to encourage focus on HE teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice. UCW has also embraced technology enhanced learning, introduced VLE standards, and improved support for staff through the Digital Teaching and Learning Development Officer. This remains an ongoing activity as technology changes along with innovation and opportunities in teaching and learning. Development of activities such as event capture and the potential use of Office 365 was supported for the planning period.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To focus on graduate employability and the development of those skills needed to ensure that individuals are ready and able to enter the world of work or self-employment.

OUTCOME:

Data states that this Strategic Aim was achieved over the duration of the Plan. The Destination of Leavers HE (DLHE) report states UCW's average figure for graduates in the cycle in 'Employment or Further Study' is at 95.6% compared with the benchmark of 94.4%, and in the 'Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study' the figure is 73.5% compared with the benchmark of 68.8%.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To deliver quality enhancement that enables continuous improvement, standards to be safeguarded, and higher education to flourish.

OUTCOME:

Quality enhancement was, and is a feature of UCW. Overseen by Governors, an Enhancement Report concentrated on how the approach taken by UCW led to continued improvement and the maintenance of academic standards. This was supported by the positive outcome from HER. The outcomes of the key performance indicators further support that this Strategic Aim has been achieved.

STRATEGIC AIM:

To continue to support the widening participation agenda by providing increased opportunities for a wider range of students to participate in HE programmes.

OUTCOME:

UCW remains committed to the widening participation agenda. Measures were put in place to support the agenda over the planning period, and new posts introduced included a HE Welfare and Retention Officer, a HE Recruitment and Widening Participation Officer, a National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) Officer, and a HE Mental Health Specialist. Data supports the success of this Strategic Aim. In 2016-17, 27% of students declared a disability, while 14% of HE students were from the most deprived neighbourhoods (POLAR quintile one). 47.5% of HE students were from the two most deprived neighbourhoods (POLAR quintiles one and two) compared with a 30% figure nationally.

Key Performance Indicators: Outcome 2016-17**1. RECRUITMENT**

- 1.1 Overall student numbers to increase by a minimum of 5% annually.

Outcome: Over the three year period the increases were as follows 2014-15: 6.4% increase; 2015-16: 1.6% increase; 2016-17: 1% increase. Although the level of growth was impacted upon by increased competition, growth over the three year period was still up by 9.2% compared to 2013-14. An increased focus on recruitment has resulted, and challenging recruitment targets remain as a feature of the KPIs.

- 1.2 For student gender reported under OFFA table 7, no.6, an annual increase on baseline male participation data of 36%.

Outcome: Male participation increased to 40.8% in 2014-15, dropped slightly to 40.1% in 2015-16 and reached 41% in 2016-17.

- 1.3 For all students, the proportion recruited from the state school system remains above 90%.

Outcome: State school students 2014-5: 89.1%; 2015-16: 95.9%; 2016-17: 95%.

2. ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY

- 2.1 QAA reviews remain 'above the line' in all judgements.

Outcome: HER outcome: Commended; TEF outcome Gold.

- 2.2 National Student Survey (NSS) Overall Satisfaction to be in the top quartile for Further Education Colleges (FECs) by 2016-17.

Outcome: Top quartile: 90%. Score for UCW 2014-15: 86%; 2015-16: 88%; 2016-17: 83%. While the top quartile has not been achieved, UCW remains consistently above benchmark.

- 2.3 The NSS satisfaction for "The teaching on my course" to be in the top quartile of HECs by 2016-17.

Outcome: Top quartile: 90%. Score for UCW 2014-15: 89%; 2015-16: 87%; 2016-17: 84%. While the top quartile has not been achieved, UCW remains consistently above benchmark.

- 2.4 Continuation rate from year one to year two to be higher than national average for mature entrants to HE. (N.B. College-based HE benchmarks did not exist at the time of writing the previous plan, however the comparisons are made using national benchmarks now available through TEF data).

Outcome: UCW continuation rate 2014-15: 86.2% (benchmark 85.6%); 2015-16: 90.0% (benchmark 86.9%); 2016-17: 87.6% (benchmark not available at time of writing).

- 2.5 Proportion of higher education staff who are fellows of the HE Academy to increase from 10% in 2013/14, to 20% in 2014-15, 25% in 2015-16 and 30% in 2016-17.

Outcome: Engagement by staff has been successful. This has culminated in 62% of staff achieving fellowship of the HE Academy by 2016-17.

3. QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

- 3.1 On Honours programmes, overall student success of First and Upper Second Class Degrees to be at national benchmark or above 69%.

Outcome: UCW 2014-15: 67%; 2015-16: 69%; 2016-17: 74%. Student success remained above and the national benchmark for the duration of the Plan, and above the 69% figure for the last two years of the Plan.

- 3.2 For graduates in employment and/or further study after six months, to be greater than the latest DLHE published data.

Outcome: UCW 2014-15: 95.8% (national benchmark 94.7%); UCW 2015-16 95.1% (national benchmark 94.6%); 2016-17, not available.

4. FINANCIAL DATA

- 4.1 Overall higher education income to increase by 5% annually.

Outcome: Income increase 2014-15: 11.8%; 2015-16: increase 5.4%; 2016-17: increase 5.9%.



Higher Education Provision 2017-18

In the academic year 2017-18 the following HE programmes were running at UCW (student numbers as a FTE):



COURSE	FRANCHISED OR DIRECTLY-FUNDED	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
FdSc Animal Management	Franchised UWE	32
FdSc Applied Computing	Directly-funded	51
FdA Business with Management	Franchised UWE	31
FdA Care Management in the Community	Directly-funded	10
FdA Contemporary Art and Professional Studies	Franchised BSU	16
FdA Counselling	Directly-funded	29
FdA Early Childhood Studies	Franchised BSU	16
FdA Early Years	Franchised BSU	29
FdA Events Production and Management	Directly-funded	7
FdA Film and Media Arts Production	Directly-funded	19
FdSc Games and Animation Production	Directly-funded	37
FdA Graphic Design	Franchised BSU	25
FdA Hair, Make-up and Prosthetics for Production	Directly-funded	15
FdSc Health and Social Care Practice	Directly-funded	70
FdA Inclusive Practice	Franchised UWE	26
FdSc Integrated Mental Health and Social Care	Directly-funded	29
FdA Music Production	Franchised BSU	13
FdA Musical Theatre	Franchised BSU	20
FdA Performing Arts	Franchised BSU	21
FdA Photography in Practice	Directly-funded	13
FdA Popular Music	Franchised BSU	14
FdA Professional and Commercial Dance	Franchised BSU	15
FdSc Public and Environmental Health	Franchised UWE	22
FdSc Sports Studies	Directly-funded	21
FdA Tourism Management	Directly-funded	11
FdA Uniformed and Public Services	Franchised UWE	31
HNC Construction and the Built Environment (Civil Engineering)	Directly-funded	9
HNC Engineering (all pathways)	Directly-funded	10
BEng (Hons) Aerospace Engineering	Directly-funded	4
BSc (Hons) Digital Technology Solutions	Directly-funded	15
BEng (Hons) Electronic Engineering (all pathways)	Directly-funded	11
BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering (all pathways)	Directly-funded	18
Hons Top-up Applied Computing	Directly-funded	25
Hons Top-up Business Management with Sustainability	Directly-funded	14
Hons Top-up Contemporary Art and Professional Studies	Franchised BSU	15
Hons Top-up Counselling	Directly-funded	20
Hons Top-up Early Years Education	Franchised BSU	16
Hons Top-up Games and Animation Production	Directly-funded	8
Hons Top-up Graphic Design	Franchised BSU	6
Hons Top-up Lens-based Media	Directly-funded	13
Hons Top-up Musical Theatre	Franchised BSU	8
Hons Top-up Performing Arts	Franchised BSU	11
Hons Top-up Professional Music Performance and Production	Franchised BSU	17
Hons Top-up Public and Environmental Health	Franchised UWE	6
Hons Top-up Uniformed and Public Services	Franchised UWE	19
PG-Cert. in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education	Directly-funded	6
MA Education: PG-Cert stage	Franchised UWE	2
MSci Environmental Health and Practice	Franchised UWE	5
TOTAL FTE STUDENTS		881

Summary Strategic Aims 2017-18 to 2019-20

The Higher Education Strategic Plan 2017-18 to 2019-20 has been developed with the involvement of the Principal and senior staff, and a working group convened to progress the activity. The working group comprised of HE Directorate staff (from both the Academic Registry Team and the Curriculum and Quality Team), Heads of Faculty, student representatives and staff from partner universities.

The Weston College Group Strategic Plan 2017-2020 was used to ensure that the Higher Education Strategic Plan remained convergent with the wider aims and values of the Weston College Group. To further inform the Plan, developments in the higher education sector since the last plan were identified, and possible developments for the term of the new Plan highlighted. Internally, a higher education risk register has been developed, noting what Governors will be looking at in terms of risks to UCW.

To complete the development of the new Plan, the success of the previous Strategic Aims and Commitments were discussed, as was their currency and relevance. This also included a review of the Commitments that underpin the Strategic Aims, as well as leading to updated key performance indicators.



The following represent the Strategic Aims which represent the key aspects of an overall strategy for higher education development at UCW:

1. To provide a positive, vibrant student experience characterised by excellence in learning and teaching, and a supportive, nurturing learning environment.
2. To grow the student intake by 25 per cent over the duration of the strategic planning period by attracting, recruiting and retaining diverse and ambitious students.
3. Through excellence in quality assurance, effective governance and academic management, ensure that standards are maintained and the student experience is safeguarded.
4. To engage with the widening participation agenda and successfully recruit non-traditional or disadvantaged students by making higher education accessible to them.
5. To focus on employability and nurture resilient, self-assured individuals with graduate attributes who demonstrate the skills to enter employment, self-employment, as well as enterprise and innovation.
6. Ensure that UCW is an attractive place to work, with an academic community that engenders a culture of enhancing staff knowledge, research, scholarship, innovation and collegiality.
7. To collaborate effectively with university partners, employers and key stakeholders in the development of new provision and the sharing of best practice.
8. To demonstrate financial probity, viability and sustainability in all UCW activities.



Achieving the Strategic Aims 2017-18 to 2019-20

This section provides information indicating operational measures suggesting how each of UCW's Strategic Aims might be realised during the term of the Plan.

1. To provide a positive, vibrant student experience characterised by excellence in learning and teaching, and a supportive, nurturing learning environment.

UCW will stay focused on providing an interesting, varied, worthwhile and enjoyable student experience. The HE Directorate will ensure that staff are supported in delivering an exceptional academic experience, and that the student voice is heard and acted upon. Teaching staff will deliver the curriculum in an innovative, inclusive and varied fashion. Scholarly activity will ensure currency of subject knowledge and qualifications of lecturers. All new teaching staff not in possession of a postgraduate teaching qualification will be required to undertake one. The curriculum will include input from guest lecturers, industry experts and where possible, supplemented with educational visits. The HE Directorate will monitor the effectiveness of learning and teaching, and the accommodation and learning environment will be subject to review to ensure fitness for purpose. UCW will 'put the student first'.

2. To grow the student intake by 25 per cent over the duration of the strategic planning period by attracting, recruiting and retaining diverse and ambitious students.

UCW aspires to grow its student intake through the development of attractive new provision, including: Degree Apprenticeships, three-year full Honours Degrees, taught Masters programmes, and continued efforts on attracting students to existing provision. Teaching and faculty staff will be required to engage in significant recruitment activity with 'feeder' institutions and the effectiveness of these activities will be monitored and supported by the HE Directorate and Marketing. Measures such as scholarships will remain in place, and there will be a focus on encouraging Weston College Level 3 students to consider applying to UCW. The HE Directorate will monitor student continuation, and ensure that students are retained.

3. Through excellence in quality assurance, effective governance and academic management, ensure that standards are maintained and the student experience is safeguarded.

Academic standards and the quality of the student experience will stay under scrutiny with a view to continuous improvement and enhancement. HE Governance will reflect the requirements of the regulatory framework for higher education, and include the oversight of a HE Risk Register. Key reports relating to academic standards and the quality of the student experience, including feedback relating to the National Student Survey, will be received by Higher Education Board of Study and HE Governance Committee. Follow-up activity will be monitored and supported by the HE Directorate.

4. To engage with the widening participation agenda and successfully recruit non-traditional or disadvantaged students by making higher education accessible to them.

UCW will remain committed to the concept of widening participation within its higher education provision. Effective engagement with the National Collaborative Outreach Programme will help to promote the benefits of higher education in neighbourhoods where participation rates are low. HE students at UCW will be enabled to succeed through an inclusive approach to learning, and for students with specific learning differences (SpLD) support will be provided by a specialist team of staff. The HE provision at UCW is well-resourced and will enable students to reach their full potential regardless of characteristics or backgrounds.

5. To focus on employability and nurture resilient, self-assured individuals with graduate attributes who demonstrate the skills to enter employment, self-employment, as well as Enterprise and innovation.

UCW will develop its own Graduate Attributes. All programmes will use 'live' scenarios for assignments where possible. Careers education, information and guidance (CEIAG) support from dedicated careers staff, as well as teaching staff through tutorials, will ensure that UCW employment data for alumni remains high. Work-based and placement learning will be monitored and reviewed by the HE Directorate, ensuring that the activity is fit-for-purpose in terms of contributing to the learning outcomes of the programme, developing employability skills, and meeting health and safety requirements.

6. Ensure that UCW is an attractive place to work, with an academic community that engenders a culture of enhancing staff knowledge, research, scholarship, innovation and collegiality.

Staff will be encouraged to engage in professional development activities, and a staff voice will support a higher education academic community at UCW. The annual HE Conference will feature keynote speakers reflecting the development of staff knowledge and understanding. There will continue to be a scholarly activity requirement for staff to maintain their currency and to encourage research and innovation. Staff will engage in the peer review of teaching, and a professional dialogue with colleagues underpinning a culture of critical self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

7. To collaborate effectively with university partners, employers and key stakeholders in the development of new provision and the sharing of best practice.

UCW will maintain consistent and effective relationships with Bath Spa University and the University of the West of England, Bristol at institutional and programme levels. HE Directorate and programme staff will respond swiftly and professionally to partner requests. UCW staff will work with employers and other key stakeholders to identify and develop new provision including Degree Apprenticeships, Higher Apprenticeships, taught Masters and the move to three-year full Honours Degree programmes. Opportunities for joint staff development and the sharing best practice will be explored and undertaken.

8. To demonstrate financial probity, viability and sustainability in all UCW activities.

All UCW activities will be subject to scrutiny in terms of financial probity, viability and sustainability. Programme developments will be fully costed for viability and sustainability, and existing programmes will be subject to scrutiny in terms of viability of student numbers. The HE Directorate will make a contribution of at least 40% to income of Weston College Group central funds.



The UCW Commitment

In addition to the Strategic Aims, UCW makes a commitment to five key areas that underpin the aims and ensure they are deliverable. These are as follows:

1. A HIGH QUALITY STUDENT ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE.

The quality of the student academic experience is central to the Weston College Group and UCW ethos of 'putting the student first'. It is reflected in these strategic aims:

- To provide a positive, vibrant student experience characterised by excellence in learning and teaching, and a supportive, nurturing learning environment.
- Through excellence in quality assurance, effective governance and academic management, ensure that standards and the student experience are safeguarded.
- To focus on employability and nurture resilient, self-assured individuals with graduate attributes who demonstrate the skills to enter employment, self-employment, as well as enterprise and innovation.
- Ensure that UCW is an attractive place to work, with an academic community that engenders a culture of enhancing staff knowledge, research, scholarship, innovation and collegiality.

The commitment: The following will underpin this strategy in assuring a high quality student academic experience:

- Ensure that the quality of teaching experienced by students is of the highest calibre, demonstrating inclusivity, variety and innovation, and supported by staff development, training, scholarly activity and peer review. The HE Directorate will monitor and review the effectiveness of teaching, and measure its performance through the NSS and module evaluations.
- Listen and act on the student voice.
- Develop and be innovative in the use of technology as a learning and teaching tool, and to audit and measure its effectiveness.
- Ensure that teaching spaces remain high quality; being fit for purpose and an enjoyable place to work and study. Teaching accommodation, along with study spaces including the library are well-resourced, and provide a genuine higher education experience.

The key performance indicators relating to this commitment are as follows:

- 2.1: For Annual Provider Review, the outcome for UCW is judged as "Meets requirements. No action required" for quality and standards matters.
- 2.2: NSS overall satisfaction to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20

2.3: NSS satisfaction for "The teaching on my course" to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.

2.4: NSS satisfaction for "Assessment and feedback" to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20

2.5: NSS satisfaction for "Academic support" to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.

2. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS.

The higher education sector in England has become very competitive. In order to achieve the growth targeted, UCW must engage in a series of measures to achieve the following related Strategic Aims:

- To grow the student intake by 25 per cent over the duration of the strategic planning period by attracting, recruiting and retaining diverse and ambitious students.
- To engage with the widening participation agenda and successfully recruit non-traditional or disadvantaged students by making higher education accessible to them.
- To collaborate effectively with university partners, employers and key stakeholders in the development of new provision and the sharing of best practice.
- To demonstrate financial probity, viability and sustainability in all UCW activities.

The commitment: The following will underpin the recruitment and retention of students.

- Programme teams will engage in regular, planned recruitment activity, targeting "feeder" institutions and existing Level 3 students at Weston College. This will be supported and monitored by the HE Directorate.
- The Marketing Department and HE Directorate will devise and support activities to increase recruitment in terms of numbers and calibre of students.
- Programmes teams will be required to incorporate and promote activities which are attractive to potential students. This will include educational visits, workshops, and placements.
- The HE Directorate will keep the curriculum offer of UCW under review to ensure it remains attractive to potential students. This will involve the introduction of three-year full Honours Degrees, Master's programmes and more Degree and Higher Apprenticeships.

- Measures such as scholarships will be offered to encourage students to apply to UCW.
- The HE Directorate will monitor continuation rates. Programme teams will ensure that the HE Retention Strategy is implemented in full, and reflect on continuation rates at team meetings and act as appropriate.
- Recruitment and continuation rates will be reported to HE Governance Committee and Higher Education Board of Study through established reporting routes. Additionally, recruitment and continuation will be considered as part of the HE Risk Register.

The key performance indicators relating to this commitment are as follows:

- 1.1: Overall student recruitment to increase by 25% over the duration of the Plan.
- 1.2: For student gender reported under OFFA table 7, no.1, an annual male baseline participation of 41%, to increase to 44% by 2019-20.
- 1.3: For all students, proportion of students under the "ethnicity" category to increase from 6.8% to 7.3% by 2019-20.
- 2.1: For Annual Provider Review, the outcome for UCW is judged as "Meets requirements. No action required" for quality and standards matters.
- 2.5: NSS satisfaction for "Academic support" to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.6: Continuation rate from year one to year two to be higher than the national benchmark for college higher education overall, and in each category.
- 4.1 Overall higher education income to increase by 5% annually.

3. STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AT ALL LEVELS.

UCW recognises that its students are 'partners in their learning'. The student voice should be heard. Students should be involved in the development, review and monitoring of higher education provision. There should be student representation at key committees and at all levels. Student involvement is reflected in the following Strategic Aims:

- To provide a positive, vibrant student experience characterised by excellence in learning and teaching, and a supportive, nurturing learning environment.
- Through excellence in quality assurance, effective governance and academic management, ensure that standards and the student experience are safeguarded.
- To collaborate effectively with university partners, employers and key stakeholders in the development of new provision and the sharing of best practice.

The commitment: To underpin the strategic Aims through student involvement at all levels, UCW will:

- Ensure that there is student representation at key decision-making committees, programme teams and liaison committees, and that student issues and concerns are heard at each of these.
- Listen and respond to student opinions, providing feedback on any actions taken by UCW using a range of media.
- Students are to be involved in the development of programmes, ensuring that programme development and modifications reflect a student perspective and influence.
- Scrutinise the outcomes of the NSS and target those areas where students have highlighted issues. Following this analysis, the HE Directorate will



intervene where students have signified concerns. The HE Directorate will then monitor and review effectiveness of improvement measures using subsequent student NSS feedback.

- A standing agenda item at Higher Education Board of Study will relate to student engagement and feedback.

The key performance indicators relating to this commitment are as follows:

- 2.1: For Annual Provider Review, the outcome for UCW is judged as “Meets requirements. No action required” for quality and standards matters.
- 2.2: NSS overall satisfaction to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.3: NSS satisfaction for “The teaching on my course” to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.4: NSS satisfaction for “Assessment and feedback” to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20
- 2.5: NSS satisfaction for “Academic support” to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.6: Continuation rate from year one to year two to be higher than the national benchmark for college higher education overall, and in each category.

4. WIDENING PARTICIPATION.

UCW is committed to supporting the Widening Participation (WP) agenda. UCW has been successful in a number of WP areas, and engages with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) on a number of WP targets. Over the period of this Strategic Plan, OFFA will merge with HEFCE to form the Office for Students (OfS). UCW will continue to engage in WP with the OfS. WP is reflected in the following Strategic Aims:

- To grow the student intake by 25 per cent over the duration of the strategic planning period by attracting, recruiting and retaining diverse and ambitious students.
- To engage with the widening participation agenda and successfully recruit non-traditional or disadvantaged students by making higher education accessible to them.

The commitment: To achieve the Strategic Aims, UCW will:

- Work with the new OfS to achieve the already agreed participation rates and when required, to establish and agree new challenging WP targets for UCW.
- Engage effectively with the NCOP to encourage applications from those in educationally disadvantaged areas, where progression to HE is low.
- Remain committed to equality and diversity and in line with the Weston College Group Strategic Plan, with everyone treated without discrimination, and to celebrate diversity.
- Continue to recruit students with different characteristics from a broad and diverse community.

- Ensure that the application process is clear and supportive. Information advice and guidance for potential students is comprehensive. Guidance and support for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is clear and effective.
- Ensure that access, support for students and the measuring of success takes place. There will be monitoring of the effectiveness of measures in place for WP students.

The key performance indicators relating to this commitment are as follows:

- 1.2: For student gender reported under OFFA table 7, no.1, an annual male baseline participation of 41%, to increase to 44% by 2019-20.
- 1.3: For all students, proportion of students under the “ethnicity” category to increase from 6.8% to 7.3% by 2019-20.
- 2.1: For Annual Provider Review, the outcome for UCW is judged as “Meets requirements. No action required” for quality and standards matters.
- 2.5: NSS satisfaction for “Academic support” to maintain the top quartile for college higher education by 2019-20

5. GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY.

The curriculum offer of UCW has always had employability skills as a feature. Programmes are developed with employability in mind, with ‘live’ scenarios as assignments and work-based and placement learning featuring in many cases. In addition, UCW supports graduate employability with dedicated CEIAG to help students to secure work or self-employment. This commitment is reflected in the following Strategic Aims:

- To provide a positive, vibrant student experience characterised by excellence in learning and teaching, and a supportive, nurturing learning environment
- To focus on employability and nurture resilient, self-assured individuals with graduate attributes who demonstrate the skills to enter employment, self-employment, as well as enterprise and innovation.

The commitment: UCW will support graduate employability and underpin the Strategic Aims in the following ways:

- Ensure that the curriculum has employability embedded in all programmes, and that new programme developments include activity, content, and support related to employability.
- UCW will provide a CEIAG support facility which will help students and graduates with employability skills, source employment and self-employment opportunities, and secure graduate-level positions.
- During the term of this Strategic Plan, UCW will establish and introduce its own set of “Graduate Attributes”.

- UCW will encourage all programmes to include accreditation by professional bodies where possible, and endorsement by related Sector Skills Councils (SSC).
- Assignments and assessments for UCW programmes will be encouraged to include ‘live’ briefs wherever possible in order to reflect the ‘real-work’ environment.
- Destination data will be monitored by the HE Directorate and reported to key committees. Where action is needed, the HE Directorate will work with the area to form an action plan.
- UCW will encourage, support and monitor work-based and placement learning.

The key performance indicators relating to this commitment are as follows:

- 2.1: For Annual Provider Review, the outcome for UCW is judged as “Meets requirements. No action required” for quality and standards matters.
- 2.6: Continuation rate from year one to year two to be higher than the national benchmark for college higher education overall, and in each category.
- 3.1: On Honours programmes, overall student success of First and Upper Second Degrees to be at national benchmark for college higher education (if available) or above 70%.
- 3.2: For all graduating students, the percentage in highly skilled employment and/or further study after 6 months is higher than the latest DLHE published national benchmark data for college higher education.



UCW Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

These key performance indicators (KPIs) have been devised to monitor and assess the performance of the provision, and to share information with Corporation, Governors and senior staff. They are monitored by the HE Governance Committee, which provides assurance to the Corporation about academic standards and the quality of the student experience. KPIs and annual targets are outlined in full in Appendix 2. The KPIs are grouped into four areas:

1. RECRUITMENT

- 1.1: Overall student recruitment to increase by 25% over the duration of the Plan.
- 1.2: For student gender reported under OFFA table 7, no.1, an annual male baseline participation of 41%, to increase to 44% by 2019-20.
- 1.3: For all students, proportion of students under the "ethnicity" category to increase from 6.8% to 7.3% by 2019-20.

2. ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY

- 2.1: For Annual Provider Review, the outcome for UCW is judged as "Meets requirements. No action required" for quality and standards matters.
- 2.2: NSS overall satisfaction to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.3: NSS satisfaction for "The teaching on my course" to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.4: NSS satisfaction for "Assessment and feedback" to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.5: NSS satisfaction for "Academic support" to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.
- 2.6: Continuation rate from year one to year two to be higher than the national benchmark for college higher education overall, and in each category.

3. QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

- 3.1: On Honours programmes, overall student success of First and Upper Second Degrees to be at national benchmark for college higher education (if available) or above 70%.
- 3.2: For all graduating students, the percentage in highly skilled employment and/or further study after 6 months is higher than the latest DLHE published national benchmark data for college higher education.

4. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 4.1: Overall higher education income to increase by 5% annually.



Planned development for new provision 2017-18 to 2019-20

In identifying new developments for the current strategic planning period, UCW has taken into account a range of considerations; as well as the Strategic Aims, these include the changing nature of the HE sector, student expectations, and economic and social factors. In addition to this, UCW has taken cognisance of the priorities as identified by the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP):

- Advanced engineering and aerospace
- Construction
- Creative and digital
- High tech
- Low carbon
- Professional services

The LEP priorities have influenced developments and new provision in the previous planning period and relate to the West of England Strategic Economic Plan 2015-2030.

The Weston College Group offers higher education equivalent non-prescribed provision, which reflect the LEP priorities. While at the same level as UCW provision, it is not subject to Annual Provider Review. The provision is delivered through Weston College Group's Law and Professional Services Academy.

As such, it is not subject to oversight from the HE Directorate, and detail regarding this provision is incorporated into the Weston College Group's overarching strategic plan rather than this one.

UCW current HE Strategic Plan has also been influenced by the Baroness Wolf report "Where are we now: Higher Education" February 2015, and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) report January 2017.

As a consequence of the removal of SNC, and analysis of the January 2017 HESA report, UCW has taken the strategic decision to convert as many Foundation Degrees and Honours Top-ups to three-year Full Honours Degree programmes. Through dialogue with partner universities, this process will commence during the current planning cycle.

Proposed new HE programme developments are outlined in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

2017-18 DEVELOPMENTS:

- HNC Engineering Electrical and Electronic
- HNC Engineering Manufacturing
- HNC Engineering Operations
- FdA Events Production and Management
- FdA Hair, Make-up and Prosthetics for Production
- FdSc Integrated Mental Health and Social Care
- BSc (Hons) Games and Animation Production (Top-up)
- BA (Hons) Lens-based Media (Top-up)

Degree Apprenticeships:

- BEng (Hons) Aerospace Engineering
- BSc (Hons) Digital Technology Solutions
- BEng (Hons) Electronics Engineering
- BEng (Hons) Electronics Engineering (Nuclear)
- BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering
- BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering (Nuclear)

Postgraduate:

- MSci Environmental Health and Practice

2018-19 DEVELOPMENTS:

- FdSc Biological Laboratory Sciences
- Higher Apprenticeship: Nursing Apprenticeship Programme
- BA (Hons) Professional and Commercial Dance (Top-up)
- Degree Apprenticeship: Policing Degree

Three-year Full Honours Degrees

- BA (Hons) Musical Theatre
- BA (Hons) Performing Arts
- BA (Hons) Professional and Commercial Dance

Postgraduate:

- MA Creative Enterprise

2019-20 DEVELOPMENTS:

- FdA Social and Cultural Studies
- BA (Hons) Hair, Make-up and Prosthetics for Production (Top-up)

Degree Apprenticeships:

- Digital Industries: Cyber Security Technical Professional
- Digital: Data Scientist

Three-year Full Honours Degree:

- BSc (Hons) Applied Computing
- BA (Hons) Contemporary Art and Professional Studies
- BSc (Hons) Games and Animation Production
- BA (Hons) Hair, Make-up and Prosthetics for Production
- BA (Hons) Music Production
- BA (Hons) Popular Music

Appendix 2

University Centre Weston: Key Performance Indicators 2017-18 to 2019-20

KPI 1: RECRUITMENT

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	ACTUAL 2016 - 17	TARGET 2017 - 18	TARGET 2018 - 19	TARGET 2019 - 20	COMMENTARY IF REQUIRED
1.1 Overall student recruitment to increase by 25% over the duration of the Plan.	340FTE	370FTE	400FTE	425FTE	While this KPI is subject to annual fluctuation the three year target is the key indicator. However, the interim targets have been derived from an average increase each year to arrive at a 25% figure.
1.2 For student gender reported under OFFA table 7, no.1, an annual male baseline participation of 41%, to increase to 44% by 2019-20.	41%	42%	43%	44%	Reference has been made to the Access Agreement. However since agreeing these with OFFA, UCW considers that it is in a position to exceed this particular target. The new OfS will observe the existing agreement.
1.3 For all students, proportion of students under the "ethnicity" category to increase from 6.8% to 7.3% by 2019 - 20.	6.8%	7.1%	7.2%	7.3%	Targets are based on the UCW Access Agreement

KPI 2: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	ACTUAL 2016 - 17	TARGET 2017 - 18	TARGET 2018 - 19	TARGET 2019 - 20	COMMENTARY IF REQUIRED
2.1: For Annual Provider Review the outcome for UCW is judged as "Meets requirements. No action required" for quality and standards matters.	meets requirements with no action required, with positive commentary.	meets requirements with no action required, with positive commentary.	meets requirements with no action required, with positive commentary.	meets requirements with no action required, with positive commentary.	At the writing of this HE Strategic Plan the Government announced the consultation on the regulatory framework for higher education. The phraseology in the target refers to Annual Provider Review which is commented upon as part of the consultation. Staying above the baseline requirements and minimising the risks to UCW will remain a priority for the duration of the Plan.
2.2: NSS overall satisfaction to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.	83%	86%	89%	91%	Top quartile based on sector-wide figure for 2016-17.
2.3: NSS satisfaction for "The teaching on my course" to be in the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.	84%	86%	88%	90%	Top quartile based on sector-wide figure for 2016-17.
2.4: NSS satisfaction for "Assessment and feedback" to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.	86%	86%	87%	88%	Top quartile based on sector-wide figure for 2016-17.
2.5: NSS satisfaction for "Academic support" to maintain the top quartile sector-wide by 2019-20.	88%	88%	89%	90%	Top quartile based on sector-wide figure for 2016-17.
2.6: Continuation rate from year one to year one to be higher than the national benchmark for college higher education overall, and in each category.	83.9%	87%	88%	89%	Based on latest benchmark available of 86.9%.

KPI 3: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	ACTUAL 2016 - 17	TARGET 2017 - 18	TARGET 2018 - 19	TARGET 2019 - 20	COMMENTARY IF REQUIRED
3.1: On Honours programmes, overall student success of First and Upper Second Degrees to be at national benchmark for college higher education (if available) or above 70%.	74%	75%	75%	75%	Based on the latest benchmark available of 73%.
3.2: For all graduating students, the percentage in highly skilled employment and/or further study after 6 months is higher than the latest DLHE published national benchmark data for college higher education.	71.2%	71.5%	72%	72.5%	Based on the 2015-16 benchmark of 69.7% and using the latest confirmed data for UCW. However, it should be noted that DLHE is being replaced Graduate Outcomes for 2017-18 graduating students.

KPI 4: FINANCIAL DATA

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	ACTUAL 2016 - 17	TARGET 2017 - 18	TARGET 2018 - 19	TARGET 2019 - 20	COMMENTARY IF REQUIRED
4.1 Overall higher education income to increase by 5% annually.	£5.4m	£5.67m	£5.95m	£6.25m	

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