



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University



2025

STRATEGY

2025

CONTENTS

5	Vice-Chancellor's message
6	Background
8	Our mission
10	Academic excellence
12	Our people and our values
14	Partnerships
16	Delivering the University Strategy



VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF OUR CITY FOR OVER 175 YEARS. FOUNDED IN 1843 AS THE BIRMINGHAM GOVERNMENT SCHOOL OF DESIGN, THE UNIVERSITY HAS BUILT ON THAT STRONG HERITAGE IN PRACTICE-LED EDUCATION.

The award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize, in recognition of the outstanding work of the university's School of Jewellery, which dates back to 1890, emphasises the continuing importance of that heritage.

One great strength of BCU is its clear sense of its identity. Our "I Am BCU" campaign has its roots in our pride in our university – this strategy captures those values of ambition, collegiality and community.

We are a university that has invested significantly in its estate, most visibly in our stunning new campus in the heart of Birmingham. The university is growing, markedly, notwithstanding the current decline in the number of 18 year olds. However, we have also seen a falling away of many areas of part-time study – and our ability to reach out to those who are in work but want to study is increasingly limited. At the same time, we are seeing a significant expansion in our international engagement, both in the form of increasing international student numbers on campus, but also in our partnership provision overseas.

This strategy aims to build on the existing strengths of the university.

- It recognises the significant **challenges of growth** which the university will face over the next five years, and the need to balance both local and international demand across our programmes.
- It focuses on the need to ensure that **our portfolio** remains relevant to the changes in professional practice that will be driven by AI and digital working.
- It anticipates that the challenge for any government of maintaining **funding for Higher Education** in the face of increasing numbers and increases in participation will mean that there is a continuing focus on delivering efficiencies in how universities work.
- And, most importantly of all, this strategy also recognises the need to respond to the challenge of **environmental sustainability**. We need to ensure that in every aspect of our work we minimise the adverse impact of operations, and that we work with our students to create sustainable futures.

The goals in this strategy are ambitious. The strategy sets targets both for growth and for continuing improvements in quality. But in the strategy, we recognise that higher education is becoming central part of life experience for increasing numbers of people from a wide range of backgrounds – it is right we should challenge ourselves to meet their aspirations.

We will hold ourselves to account for our progress against the measures of success in this Strategy, putting it at the heart of our planning. And we will ensure that the Strategy remains current by treating it as a living document – reviewing the assumptions that underpin the Strategy on a regular basis and ensuring that it remains relevant to the context in which the university operates.

Professor Philip Plowden
Vice-Chancellor

BCU IN 2020

Overall size:
26,878
STUDENTS

PORTFOLIO BCU currently
delivers across
more than
1,000
COURSES

3,600
STAFF

TURNOVER
c.£257M ^{19/20}

45%
of our students
originate from
IMD quartile 1
(Full-time UG entrants)

69%
are from the
West Midlands

54%
of our students
are BME
(Full-time UG entrants)

EMPLOYABILITY
93%
in work or study
within six months;
68% in graduate jobs

INTERNATIONAL We recruit students
from just under
100
different countries

THE UNIVERSITY *FOR* BIRMINGHAM

We are the university for Birmingham. The majority of our students are from Birmingham and the broader West Midlands. They are the future of our city: its engineers, and its health care professionals; its accountants and lawyers; its teachers and its artists. We are Birmingham to our core.

The university has grown with the city. Each year we help over 25,000 students to achieve their ambitions. Our diversity as a university reflects that of our city, and our growth during the last decade reflects the ambitions of those in our city and region for an education which can transform their life opportunities. We know that the number of young people in our city and region is going to grow markedly. This will create significant additional demand for higher education at our university. We recognise that BCU will need to continue to grow to meet that demand.

If we are to achieve our ambition of an education which transforms lives, what we offer must be relevant and of the highest standard. We must ensure that our graduates enter their future careers ready to achieve their potential.

We recognise that digital technologies are transforming the future workplace and future careers: we will ensure that our portfolio reflects these changes. We need to ensure that our own operations reflect this transformation too – and that we take full advantage of new technologies to support students.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

Our students join us from a diverse range of backgrounds and circumstances. We draw strength from that breadth of experiences and motivations, and we are proud that our university is an engine of personal transformation. We commit to delivering a student experience that enables our students to develop as individuals while they master their disciplines.

We are a university with a strong orientation to practice, industry and the professions. We will continue to reflect this across our portfolio. The award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2020 celebrated the work of our historic School of Jewellery. Our university is one of the largest providers of Arts education in the UK and we will continue to celebrate and build

on this long heritage because we recognise the importance of creative disciplines which enrich our society. By bringing together Arts and STEM disciplines through our focus on the STEAM agenda we will ensure that our students study and work across formal discipline boundaries, ensuring that they have the graduate attributes needed for their future careers.

COMMUNITIES

This is a strategy which, above all, recognises the role of BCU in transforming lives, particularly lives of our students. But the strategy goes further by articulating our ambition to work as an integral part of our communities, not only responding to their needs and aspirations but also providing a resource and an impetus for change. This has a particular significance as the region responds to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. We need to ask the question: how can we open up the university so that its resources are available across our communities? This strategy places our communities at the heart of our practice.

OUR MISSION

TO BE THE UNIVERSITY *FOR* BIRMINGHAM AND TO WORK WITH INDIVIDUALS TO ENABLE THEM TO TRANSFORM THEIR LIVES AND TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

1. MEETING DEMAND

We will grow and diversify our student numbers so that by 2025 we have over 30,000 students studying on our campuses, and 5,000 students studying with our partners.

2. THE STEAM AGENDA

By 2025 all of our students will have an opportunity to work across discipline boundaries, ensuring that they graduate with the ability to think both critically and creatively. We will fund a further 100 STEAM PhD scholarships to support the cross-disciplinary researchers of the future.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

By 2025 all university decisions at main governance committees will explicitly address sustainability. All staff will have completed environmental awareness training. All courses will have been assessed for sustainability using the Sustainable Development Goals.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IS CENTRAL TO THE DELIVERY OF OUR MISSION.

THE UNIVERSITY WILL ENSURE THAT OUR STUDENTS ARE READY TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL, THROUGH A STRONG GROUNDING IN THEIR DISCIPLINES, WITH THE ABILITY TO THINK CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY, TO WORK TOGETHER AND TO APPLY THEIR KNOWLEDGE.

We recognise the diversity of our student body, and commit to ensuring that we support all of our students. We will achieve this by ensuring that our academics are both experts in their discipline and in their teaching practices. We will deliver an experience that is personalised and inclusive, enabling individual achievement.

We also recognise the expectation that learning and teaching will be flexible, and will increasingly follow the student. Through the development of our digital platforms we will embed flexibility into our academic offer so as to give our students choice in how they study.

Research is integral to academic excellence. We recognise that our research will range from the creation of new knowledge to the articulation of new practice. We particularly recognise the importance of inter-disciplinarity, and the STEAM agenda. We will ensure that we continue to support research and scholarship across the academic disciplines in the university.

Our portfolio will anticipate the future, responsive to our changing world, while also meeting the needs of our city, region and country. We see our strong heritage in practice-led education as a strength, and will continue to build on this.

We will ensure that we continue to work closely with our external stakeholders to ensure that our programmes retain their relevance.

We cannot be excellent in our teaching without working closely with our students, and we commit to continuing close engagement with the Students Union. We will ensure that the student voice is heard on all of our decision-making committees. Working in partnership with our students, we will maintain our strong commitment to supporting their wellbeing.

We recognise that our students benefit significantly from external engagement, from placements and internships to international visits and exchanges. We recognise that the value of a university experience will be broader than the academic qualification, and we will support both volunteering and social enterprise. We will ensure that all students have access to opportunities outside the university which will broaden their understanding, and support their achievement.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

1. ACADEMIC QUALITY

The university will be assessed as Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework.

2. EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

50 % of our academic staff will be categorised as research active and will produce research outputs. External grant capture over the period 2020-2025 will achieve £40M. Every undergraduate programme will offer students the opportunity to engage in knowledge discovery and applied research.

3. STUDENT EXPERIENCE

We will deliver the targets set out in our access and participation plan (2020-25), whilst ensuring that we maintain high levels of disadvantaged and underrepresented groups at entry. Alongside this we will reduce the gaps in continuation and degree attainment to ensure successful outcomes for all of our students including positive graduate destinations.

We will ensure that our students are supported by an extracurricular programme with mental health and wellbeing at its heart.

WE WILL ENSURE THAT OUR STAFF ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK.

WE WANT OUR STAFF TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER AN EXCELLENT EXPERIENCE FOR OUR STUDENTS AND THESE AMBITIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE WORK OF AN OUTSTANDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY OF STAFF ACROSS ALL AREAS OF THE UNIVERSITY.

In order to achieve our goals we will ensure that we work in partnership with all staff, recognising that their wellbeing is integral to the university's future success.

We will ensure that we attract and retain a workforce that is able, motivated and enthusiastic to make our university excellent. In our recruitment we will have particular regard to our role as the university for our city by supporting recruitment from our communities, including our graduating students.

We will continue to work to ensure that our processes for recognising and developing the talents of our staff are visible and that there are pathways for career development clearly signposted for all groups of staff in the university. We will have particular regard to the need to support and develop the careers of groups that are under-represented at all levels in the university.

We will make a strong commitment to staff wellbeing, recognising the importance of a positive work environment in ensuring that the university is an employer of choice. Our approach to wellbeing will be inclusive, recognising that wellbeing issues may range from both physical and mental health, to social and financial wellbeing. Our ambition is to be known as an institution which focuses on its staff.

We will work in partnership with our staff to create and implement an agile workplace that meets the needs of, and delivers the best outcomes for, the university, its staff and its students and reflects the most innovative of working practices.

We will ensure that our overall reward package recognises the key contribution made by our staff in delivering success for the university.

VALUES

We recognise that our values sit at the heart of our Mission. The values that we share need to be seen to be lived in every part of our university, and they underpin every element of this 2025 Strategy.

We have set out our Values in a separate Values Statement which articulates the behaviours and actions through which we will be seen to deliver our values.



PEOPLE AND VALUES



MEASURE OF SUCCESS

1. STAFF ENGAGEMENT

By 2025 the university will be in the top quartile of employers for staff satisfaction.

2. AN INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION

As part of our drive to ensure equality of opportunity for all of our staff, the university will achieve external accreditations by Stonewall, Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter.

3. STAFF WELLBEING

We will be externally accredited by the Wellbeing Charter as a top quartile employer, reflecting practices that place staff health and wellbeing at the core of its employment model.



PARTNERSHIPS

THE UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP UNDERPINS ITS ROLE AS AN ANCHOR INSTITUTION. STRONG PARTNERSHIPS ARE CENTRAL TO THE UNIVERSITY'S STATUS AS THE UNIVERSITY FOR BIRMINGHAM AS WELL AS TO ITS GLOBAL REACH.

BCU will be positioned as the partner of choice for knowledge generation and exchange with industry, cultural organisations and public service providers, based on distinctive partnerships of mutual value.

We recognise our important role within our city and region in engaging in partnerships that ensure that industry, the cultural sector and our public service providers are able to thrive. We will continue to work closely with all parts of our city and region, its corporates, policy makers and its communities, to ensure that the University plays an active role in facilitating growth, innovation and productivity.

Our BCU Advantage scheme helps us to maintain strong strategic partnerships with employers, ensuring that the knowledge and skills within the university enable regional businesses to succeed. Through these relationships our graduates enter the workplace ready for the roles that they will take on. Within our courses we will grow our provision of placements and sandwich years to give our students the opportunity to gain valuable experience, and our employers the opportunity to shape the workforce that they will need for the future. We will engage closely with the opportunities to deliver workplace learning, and to further develop our apprenticeship offer.

Our international partnerships will grow significantly, both through growing research collaborations and through the delivery of our curriculum with partner institutions. Birmingham is a global city, and we will reflect that global reach in our partnerships and in the recruitment of overseas students into the city. We recognise the growing international profile of our work on STEAM as a driver for innovation and enterprise, and we will work closely to build a network of academic and industrial partners who share our commitment to that agenda.

We will use the university's long history of engagement with the communities in our city and region to widen access to the University and its resources. We will enable our students and staff to work with all parts of the city, improving the breadth and depth of our social, community and cultural engagement. We want our resources to be more visible and more available for the broader public good. Through our growing community engagement we will ensure that we use our expertise for the broader benefit of the city.

Within a post-Covid environment, BCU's role in supporting strong public and community engagement will become an increasingly important focus of our place-based approach. The University's Public and Community Engagement Strategy is framed around four thematic areas of engagement and expertise: Partnership to advance growth and innovation; Championing and supporting diversity; Knowledge making, sharing and exchange; and Cultural and creative identity. These themes provide a focus for, and institutional commitment to our knowledge exchange activity both on our campuses and within our communities.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

1. ENTERPRISE

We will achieve KEF outcomes in the upper quartile of our cluster group in at least 80% of the measures by 2025. By 2025 we will have increased our Enterprise Income to £80 million for the period 2020-2025. Innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship support and opportunities will be embedded in each undergraduate programme.

2. INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

By 2025 we have grown our on campus international student recruitment to over 3,000 students and our recruitment will place us among the 10 largest recruiters of international students in the post-92 universities.

3. COMMUNITY PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

The university will have a physical presence (beyond our campuses) in at least three areas of the city which suffer from high disadvantage. These sites will provide facilities for study, for local support for students, and for activities which engage with and support those communities. University staff will be supported to deliver at least 10,000 volunteering hours by 2025. Each university student will be supported to undertake voluntary work in the community and to have that work recognised within the Graduate Plus scheme.

4. GRADUATE OUTCOMES

BCU will be ranked in the top quartile among comparator institutions in relation to overall employment of our full-time UK undergraduates, and in the top 50th percentile in relation to higher level employment.



DELIVERING THE UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

THE STRATEGY HAS WITHIN IT A SET OF CORE DELIVERABLES. THESE WILL PROVIDE HIGH LEVEL MEASURES OF PROGRESS DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE STRATEGY. THEY WILL BE OVERSEEN BY THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE GROUP, AND REPORTED TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD AND TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

The core areas of the Strategy will each be articulated more fully, with clear operational plans and outcome measures. Some of these are already in place, but many now need fuller articulation in order to address strategic targets in the pillars of the Strategy.

For the Strategy to be effective, it needs to be a lived component of decision-making at every level within the University. In addition to the individual strategies below, there will be a full communication plan to cover not only the initial period of familiarisation, but also reporting back to the University community during the lifetime of the Strategy.

THE STRATEGY AS A LIVING DOCUMENT

Underpinning the Strategy is a set of working assumptions. These too will be reviewed on a regular basis in the light of changes to the external environment, and will be used to inform developments to the Strategy during its lifetime. The Strategy will also be used as a consultative document with staff and student communities in order to ensure its continuing relevance. Proposed changes to the Strategy will be subject to Board of Governors' approval.

We have benefited significantly from the input of our external stakeholders in the creation of this Strategy, and will continue to report back to them against its progress in order to understand how we are meeting the needs and expectations of our broader community.

CORE STRATEGIES AND WORK PLANS

Access and
Participation Plan

Environmental Strategy

Equality, Diversity and
Inclusion Strategy

Estates and
Space Strategy

Finance and
Sustainability Strategy

Growth: Marketing and
Recruitment Strategy
IT and Digital Strategy

International Strategy

Learning and Teaching
Enhancement Strategy

People Strategy

Public and Community
Engagement Strategy

Research, Innovation,
Enterprise and
Employability Strategy

Student Experience and
Wellbeing Strategy







2025
STRATEGY