

Steps to growth

Faculty of Business, Law, Humanities,
and Social Sciences *Three Year Strategy*



Photography

THIS IS KEELE



Introduction

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive
Dean of the Faculty of Business,
Law, Humanities, and Social Sciences
from Professor Donna Lee

Professor Donna Lee
BA (HONS), MA, PHD

PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR AND
EXECUTIVE DEAN OF THE FACULTY
OF BUSINESS, LAW, HUMANITIES,
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Our Faculty of Business, Law, Humanities, and Social Sciences (BLHUMSS) has charted a roadmap for a successful future: bold in ambition, grounded in our values, and focused on making a difference.

This is our Strategic Plan to face the severe challenges affecting UK higher education and to continue thriving. Universities everywhere are navigating funding constraints and responding to intensifying competition for students, the rapid rise of digital technologies, and growing demands from employers for graduates with adaptable, future-ready skills. At the same time, societal challenges from climate change and inequality to political instability, social injustice, and cultural change require the kind of nuanced, multidisciplinary thinking that our disciplines are uniquely placed to provide.

For our Faculty, these challenges also harbour opportunities. Student recruitment and retention are more competitive than ever, requiring us to differentiate ourselves through innovative programmes and curricula, high-quality teaching, and an outstanding student experience. Financial pressures necessitate that we use our resources wisely, while also exploring new and diverse income streams to ensure our long-term resilience. Yet the opportunities before us are equally compelling. The creative industries continue to grow as a dynamic global sector, and the demand for cultural knowledge and communication skills is only increasing in an interconnected world.

Business and law remain cornerstones of social and economic development, while the social sciences and humanities are crucial for societies to understand and respond to change through critical analysis, creativity, problem-solving, and inclusivity.

Our Faculty's greatest strength lies in bringing these fields together. We work across disciplinary and geographical boundaries to address real-world challenges in ways no single discipline could achieve alone. By bridging business with law, humanities with social sciences, and creative industries with languages, our teaching and research transcend boundaries, impact communities, and prepare graduates to thrive and generate ideas with real-world impact. Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary are not just what we do; they are our signature strengths.

BLHUMSS's Strategic Plan has four strategic priorities. The first is student growth, where we will expand our community by ensuring that our existing and new programmes are attractive, distinctive, and responsive to the needs of a diverse and global cohort. Growth will not only be in numbers, but also in the quality of the student experience and the success of our graduates. The second priority is financial sustainability, which requires us to diversify income streams, manage our resources wisely, and invest strategically in people and in areas of greatest potential.

A third priority is research, innovation, and enterprise. Here, we will strengthen our reputation as a hub of knowledge creation and application by fostering a culture of innovation, supporting enterprise, and deepening collaboration across disciplines and with our partners, generating research that is both excellent and impactful. It shapes debates, influences practice, and contributes solutions to regional, national, and global challenges. Finally, raising regional ambition and participation is central to our mission. We will play a leading role in inspiring, supporting, and enabling the economic, social, and cultural growth of our region. This includes increasing participation in higher education, raising aspirations, widening access, and ensuring that learners from all backgrounds can benefit from the opportunities our Faculty provides.

To deliver on these priorities, we will enhance our programmes and curricula so that they remain distinctive, future-focused, and aligned with the needs of students, employers, and society. We will expand our reach by working with local schools, partnership colleges, and new transnational education providers to broaden access and extend our influence globally. We will enrich the student experience by providing excellent teaching, tailored academic support, and opportunities for experiential learning that enable every student to succeed both academically and professionally.

We will forge new partnerships with industry, community, and education sectors to ensure that our research and teaching remain relevant, connected, and impactful. Finally, we will embed financial sustainability by managing our resources carefully, diversifying revenue, and reinvesting in areas that will secure long-term resilience and growth.

This Strategic Plan is the collective outcome of an inclusive process in which all staff were encouraged to contribute ideas and comments through a Faculty forum. It has been co-created by academic and professional services colleagues across the Faculty. Growth will require innovation and adaptability. Sustainability will demand that we act strategically, collaboratively, and with agility. Above all, success will depend on collective effort. Every member of our Faculty including academic and professional staff, students, and partners, has a vital role to play. Together, we will ensure that our Faculty remains a vibrant hub of discovery, creativity, and opportunity, driving the success of Keele University.



Our Mission:

The Faculty exists to develop critical and creative thinking, cultural understanding and social awareness to support the full and inclusive development of talent in our communities. Our teaching and research across our many disciplines fosters knowledge and discovery about cultures, societies, social and legal justice, business, markets, and the complexities of being human in an uncertain and changing world.

Our students are at the heart of everything we do, and we enable their success, at Keele and beyond, through an accessible and transformative experience.

We serve our local communities in the Potteries, contributing to economic growth, cultural richness, and educational pipeline, and benefit the nation and world at large through outstanding, interdisciplinary education and research. Through collaborative partnerships with other educational institutions, cultural organisations, and businesses, we enrich lives, benefit society, and foster a better world.





Our Vision:

Over the next five years, we will fulfil our mission by:



Inspiring more people to study at Keele, enabling access, promoting diversity, and transforming lives through innovative, inclusive education;



Increasing the scale and reach of our world-class, high impact research, addressing essential questions and urgent challenges that face society;



Developing existing and new partnerships – in the local region, nationally, and globally – to deliver on the civic, economic, and cultural purpose of the University;



Prioritising the individuals that comprise our academic community, enabling all staff and students to thrive and achieve their potential;



Providing strategic leadership within Keele and the academy, and among its partners in different sectors, that focuses on achieving financial sustainability of the Faculty and University.



Ten steps to growth

The Faculty comprises 3 schools – Business, Law, Humanities and Social Sciences – as well as the Language and International Centre. We have a bold and ambitious Faculty growth strategy aimed at expanding our student body, enhancing academic capacity and research excellence, and enriching the student experience. Our focus over the next three years is to increase each School's financial contribution and play a full part in the University's future financial sustainability. We will achieve this by working collaboratively across our disciplines and across the institution to attract and retain top talent. Together, we can build a stronger, more dynamic and sustainable academic and student community.

To increase our financial contribution through income growth over the next years, we will:



Restructure and rebrand the Faculty, promote its visibility, maximise its capacity for collaborative working, and unlock the potential of its Schools.



Review our portfolio and curriculum to seize opportunities for student growth, educational innovation, and interdisciplinary learning.



Implement our KBS Accreditations Plan to support student recruitment, especially in overseas markets, and prepare students for success.



4

Embed the legal advice clinic into the Law curriculum to provide an extensive, market-leading student experience for our students.



8

Implement the Faculty strategy to improve retention and progression on all programmes above benchmark norms.



5

Design an exciting portfolio in the creative and cultural industries that meets regional needs and equips graduates with technical, creative, and professional skills.



9

Generate more high quality, sustainable, and equitable international partnerships to inspire global students to choose Keele.



6

Develop our curricula to embed more digital learning, supporting analytical social sciences to align with the skills needs of the UK and international economies.



10

Increase research income and enhance our performance in the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) through delivery of our ambitious Research Strategy.



7

Enable the Language and International Centre to provide a language offer that supports home and international student recruitment, student learning and skills development.

Key areas of *intervention*

To deliver on our growth ambitions, we will focus on key areas of intervention by placing students at the core of our strategy; championing collaboration and interdisciplinarity in research to drive innovation; enhancing our external engagement and visibility locally and globally. We will align our resources strategically to ensure excellence, sustainability and impact while fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-thinking academic environment for staff and students.



Student Learning, Experience, *and* Success

- **Review and enhance our curricula, update programmes, and develop new provision**, responding to students' needs, and feedback from industry stakeholders. Working with Keele's partner colleges we will develop programmes that provide routes into higher education for the local community.
- **Improve retention and progression** through targeted, early interventions, and providing the academic and pastoral support students need to thrive on their course.
- Using the University curriculum expectations, graduate attributes and the I-D-E-A framework we will ensure that we:
 - **Embed the University's Inclusive Education Framework** across all our education provision and through this building a supportive environment and a sense of community, equity, and opportunity.
 - **Build more digital learning** into our programmes, supporting analytical social sciences to align with the skills needs of the UK and international economies.
 - **Secure the professional accreditations** that assure the quality and robustness of our programmes.
 - **Provide work-based and experiential learning** in all programmes, sustaining and growing partnerships and placements, helping our graduates to succeed in life.
 - **Grant credit bearing personal and professional development** opportunities for all students.
- **Enhance teaching practice and support staff** to undertake development programmes and obtain recognition (e.g. HEA fellowship; discipline specific accreditation).



Research, Innovation, *and* Enterprise

- **Increase research income** through three distinct, school-specific funding strategies with defined KPIs.
- **Enhance the quality of our research outputs** and overall REF performance through the established pre-publication review.
- **Implement our Impact Strategy** to support ICS authors and boost stakeholder engagement for impact case studies.
- **Cultivate a strong, cohesive, open and inclusive research culture** which supports people at different career stages.
- **Foster a vibrant, collaborative and cross-disciplinary environment** for our PGRs to thrive academically and professionally.
- **Implement our Enhanced Research Allocation Scheme (ERAS)** to strategically support research excellence.



International Activity and Standing

- **Build strategic partnerships** that speak to Schools' priorities, are high-quality and equitable.
- **Offer a learning and social experience** that engages with international and partnership students as equals by decentring pedagogical and organisational processes.
- **Prepare our students to thrive in a global world** by strategically deploying the Turing scheme to design and fund mobility options.
- **Nurture and increase international research** by building research partnerships with partners worldwide, to grow our research profile and to improve research outputs.
- **Increase our engagement with alumni** to build our reputation in countries and regions which are of strategic importance to the Faculty's internationalisation ambitions.



Expansion *and* Inclusive Recruitment

- **Inspire more students from the local area** to choose Keele through strategic cooperation with schools and colleges, raising participation and aspiration in Staffordshire.
- **Facilitate diverse means of entry to Higher Education**, including top-up programmes, continuous professional development, and online study.
- **Review, enhance, and increase our engagement and recruitment activities** to signal Keele's openness to learners from all backgrounds.
- **Evolve a diverse and personalised approach** to Apprenticeships and on-the-job training, based on employer and student needs.



People *and* Community

- **Develop a people strategy** for professional development and capacity building.
- **Set clear expectations for all staff**, annually set and review objectives that are aligned to Faculty and School strategies.
- **Reduce** the academic gender pay gap.
- **Support staff retention** and improve job satisfaction.
- **Implement and review** the academic staff mentoring scheme.
- **Embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** in all activities and processes.
- **Devise a space strategy** that fosters an inclusive and dynamic environment.
- **Foster an agile culture in our Professional Services team**, optimising opportunities for efficiency and innovation and ensuring alignment with strategic and operational objectives.



Conclusions

This strategy positions the Faculty to respond to emerging challenges, seize new opportunities, and deliver meaningful contributions to society, both locally and globally. Rooted in our values, we work collaboratively across our many disciplines to serve our communities near and far, supporting inclusive economic and business growth, cultural enrichment, and social justice. Our research and education transforms lives and communities locally, regionally, nationally and globally.





From left to right: Sarah Lane (Head of Faculty Operations), Professor Mariangela Palladino (Dean of Research, Professor of Postcolonial and Cultural Studies), Professor Donna Lee (Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business, Law, Humanities and Social Sciences), Professor Dan Herbert (Dean of Education) and Dr Kristen Brill (Dean of Internationalisation and Partnerships).



Faculty of Business,
Law, Humanities
and Social Sciences

keele.ac.uk/blhums