

**Keele University**

## **Strategic Framework for Internationalisation: Principles, Priorities & Key Performance Indicators**

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## 1.0 Strategic Focus:

Keele University has alumni all over the world and research reaching across the North and “Global South”. There is already an increasingly diverse delivery mechanism for Keele – across campus, online, hybrid and in country partners for both education and research. It is building on international student growth, while addressing current headwinds, reducing demand for the UK and in key international recruitment markets. It is even more imperative to establish a more sustainable approach.

Given the focus on becoming a sustainable university, a significant part of Keele’s ambition can only be achieved by focusing on the University's international orientation - in other words, to deliver on income growth in the next 5 years coming from international channels. This strategic framework was approved by the University Executive Committee, Senate and Council over the course of April, May, June 2024.

The Framework supports Keele University to move from a stage of strategic internationalisation (development of an internationalisation agenda) to structural internationalisation (marked by more diverse student, staff body and intercultural engagement).

Developing the brand, the partnerships profile, the stakeholder footprint and internal capacity across education and research are core strategic pillars. These core priorities are supported by technical consultants and partners with both internal and external scrutiny.

Institutional Strategic context and Internationalisation:

Mission: International supports the core University mission, in a global context.

“Making a difference in society by providing innovative, high-quality education for students from all backgrounds and by undertaking world-leading research that transforms understanding and brings benefit to society, communities and individuals”.

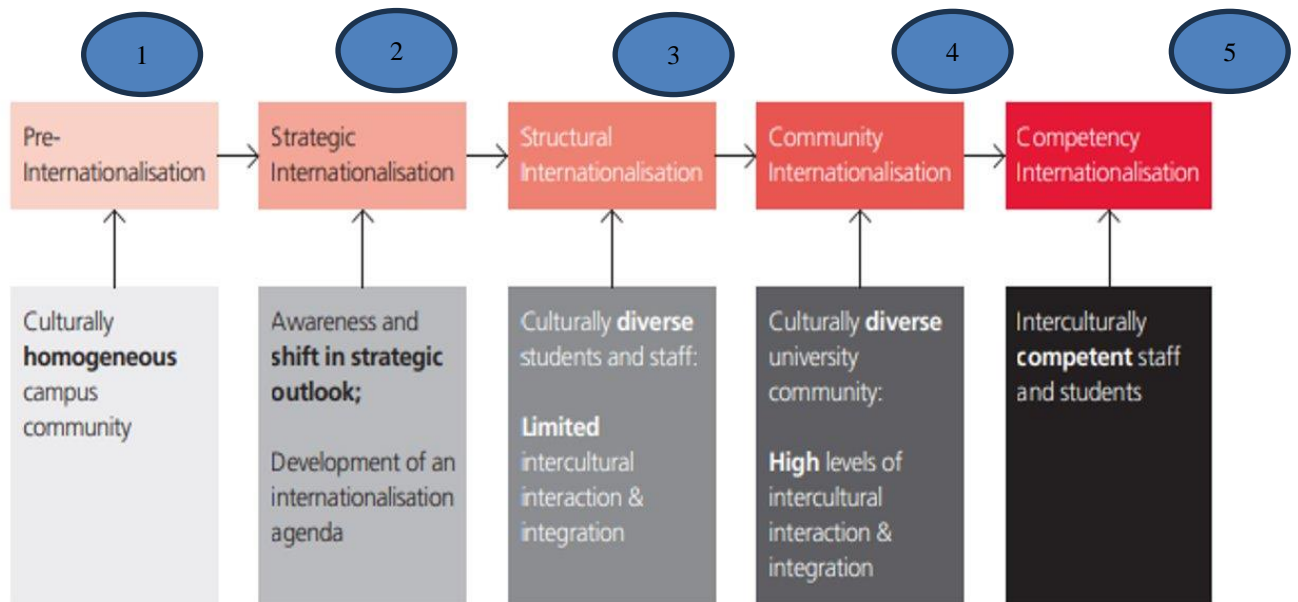
Civic Purpose/ Place: our sense of place is relevant to internationalisation, for home and overseas students as reflected in student mobility and recruitment. Developing the narrative and case studies to demonstrate this proactively to the local community will be more important as the volume of foreign students increases.

“We recognize how our place in the UK partly defines us and what we do but that brings with it a determination to be global in outlook and international in action”.

Financial Imperative: Funding streams of universities across the world have to be diversified for their survival. The balance of international and home activity is critical for Keele University to become financially sustainable, able to make its own path in education and research.

Our Heritage: The Keele model of the modern university is as valuable at home as it could be overseas, in the right contexts. Keele has been a values-led institution, with a distinct heritage of great research and education, perhaps best reflected in our work with students, communities, government, and industry for development and regeneration. This provides a basis for discussions, particularly with the “global south” as they confront these issues and we collectively face global challenges.

The University like many across the UK and internationally is moving from stage 2 and with elements of stage 3 emerging. We have a lot of opportunities. It will not be easy because we have lots to do and would need to organise, invest and work differently, all at the same time as the University looks beyond its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.



Spencer-Oatey, H. & Dauber, D. (2015) How internationalised is your university? From structural indicators to an agenda for integration

If the Stages of Internationalisation were applied to Research only, as a research intensive institution, unsurprisingly, Keele is much more global that we can summarise into a clear graphic or simple form of communication. One of our tasks is to understand better the nature of the global ecosystem – the reach of our research projects, our staff collaborations, our doctoral community, in particular, where we have had research of consistent depth, over multiple years, with strong impact at home and in those countries.

This is also true of our impact on employability and development of particular professions, such Allied Health in Hong Kong. This is an area that could be of substantial interest in countries where our particular strengths can support the goals of those communities while developing our home students and the reach of both our education and research.

Education for Sustainability as a “wicked problem” that requires multidisciplinary, global approaches is an area that we can leverage Keele’s distinctive position. We have potential overseas partnerships who have similar values, ambitions or heritage as Keele.

Our Institutes are conceptually well set-up for international engagement all in areas of substantial common ground, with Medicine and Health Sciences having a track record that we can use to open other doors and expand the University’s awareness in key markets and build its reputation. We are seeing this already in the Institutes for Global Health and green shoots in Sustainable Futures, Digital Society and Social Inclusion.

When applying the Stages of Internationalisation at Faculty and School level, there will be a mixed picture. Our Business School will show a substantial pipeline of Education partnerships. Humanities (parts of) and Social Sciences (parts of) for Research and Student/ Faculty Mobility. It will always be so. Supporting the whole institution means, different roles for Schools, Institutes or programme teams (research, education, mobility) and occasionally with the ideal partner where we deliver everything (for example, the potential in Computer Science, Health). Those will be rare but we do have some of them, such as the Joint Institute in Chengdu, China, potentially Universiti Sains Malaysia, potentially in Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, and more that will emerge as the Internationalisation Framework continues to extend our footprint.

## 2.0 Summary of Internationalisation Framework:

Targets over 5 years 2028/29:

- Treble overseas students studying a Keele programme
- Double overseas students studying on Campus

Control:

- The framework operates within current governance structures. The core team will be made up of those academics working in Faculties on internationalisation, professional services colleagues in Student Recruitment, Global Opportunities, Education Partnerships, the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Student Services & Success, the Language Centre and Research and Education.
- The principle is to focus on a project management approach bringing in appropriate colleagues as needed to achieve specific objectives and disband those when completed. This will allow us to be more responsive and focus on outcomes more than process.
- The Deans of Internationalisation & Partnerships are now in post in each Faculty to deliver on Institutional/Faculty priorities.
- The wider University teams involved with Internationalisation have met and will now meet quarterly to build efficiencies and effectiveness across Global Opportunities, GSRA, Language Centre & LINC, Education Partnerships, Faculty International Deans, International Research and Student Services.

Focus and Implications: We cannot do everything.

Short term – focus on Keele University brand awareness, recruitment (staff and students)

- “Low risk” TNE – focus and grow China, expand into Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Egypt
- Reinforce relationships with major science systems like China, United States, Singapore etc.
- Remain focused on Recruitment markets, mapping to emerging markets
- Research - messaging framework/proof points / case studies / countries & regions with impact
- A Distinct Keele Model – build in partnership development into agreements, similar to a commission structure we have for agents. This is then used to grow the partnerships productively across.

Medium/longer term - strategic, so that the University is better able to exercise greater control of its future.

- Build up progression partnerships at level 3, UG and PGT
- Brand awareness - to survive we need a Brand that works both at home **and** abroad (positioning, comms, Alumni over the medium term)
- Keele Deal International (Schools/ Sustainability)

There are 4 pillars to delivering. The first 3 deliver the 4<sup>th</sup> and form a virtuous circle.

1. Diversity in our student body (South, East Asia, Africa, then ROW) to benefit home and overseas
2. Attracting global talent as we are below comparator benchmarks (32% at sector for academic, (Keele growing, though room retain and address unevenness), especially in priority Schools.
3. Student and Staff mobility (in chosen areas)
4. Working with high performing partners for education and research (markets short and longer term)

### 3.0 Model:

We have an opportunity to build a model that is consistent with Keele's history and its best impact over decades on the community, that will set us apart as innovators. Some areas that we could leverage to set Keele University apart:

- A percentage of partnerships income that support development, scholarships for UK and partner students
- Research for Keele and Partner Universities staff (targeted funding pots, independently managed)
- International Education Research (longer term, education systems study for longevity of reputation)
- Supporting Regional Development where governments are investing in Skills
- Support governments where they investing in transformation through universities and educational institutions
- Science and Innovation Parks – Keele's KE reputation and its sustainability credentials (campus and education)

Partnering as outlined from the University Strategy is clear and well established. This remains a strong base of capabilities and heritage at Keele.

"Our partners will be a wide range of people and organisations, on campus, and across the world. We will work to further enhance our internal partnerships, ensuring that education and research benefits from effective, collaborative working".

Local college partnerships from Shrewsbury to Newcastle are under active management with consistent engagement. The offers to these partners help to build similar internationally. We do have partnering capacity in the Science Parks and in our wider Keele Deals. That we have to build on and grow within the academic units as a first priority. It is especially important for UK International students – in particular progression agreements to widen the flow of international students who are currently studying at HND level in the UK, are familiar with the education system and have developed their study skills.

There is a substantial range of School partners though these are mainly focused on local needs. We do not have these at an international level. This will likely take us several years to develop with platform and insight partners such as Navitas.

Policy and development work undertaken on initial business case creation, due diligence and oversight processes are much more mature. How well this is socialized across the University is a question mark, what the training need is and levels of ownership have to be addressed in the short term. This is central to delivering on partnerships, mapping out the work, inclusion into regular work allocation, building consistency of effort at course and link-tutor levels.

Supporting knowledge development and sharing would help, for example with the table below – as different groups of partners serve different purposes, though working in the similar space/ higher level objectives. Standardisation and templatisation of opportunity evaluation will allow people to spend time on the right opportunities, our rejection rates increase and time on task becomes proportional to the planned outcomes. This will take time as training is rolled-out and communities of practice are established within Faculty Internationalisation Groups and around School Directors of Internationalisation.

Partnering is supported by a series of national, regional and global specialists, government and private sector. There are mission groups in major science systems and regions; HEI Bodies like UUKi, UKCISA, BUILA etc. Bodies like the British Council provide overseas ecosystem support. We also have partners like EAB with global insight. There are multiple actors who can range from school system aggregators, recruitment agencies, to research partners, rankings agencies/consultants and funding agencies. As Keele University matures its internationalisation profile over the next 3-5 years, it will be necessary to develop plans to work with such partners to achieve institutional objectives in a more proactive way.

#### Keystone Geographies and Partners:

There are established priority international student recruitment countries as set out in the GSRA International Recruitment plan. The University's work will continue to build on this. At this stage, it is clear that South Asia will be top of the list for all things – recruitment, education, research and increasingly mobility (though more staff than students in the short term). China will continue to build momentum for Education partnerships. East Asia (in particular Singapore and Malaysia) will begin to feature more prominently. The Middle East as a hub for the region will continue to develop as a secondary level. Africa will gain momentum but likely over a 3-year timeline, though we have a model already coming through in Morocco (and possibly the Emirates). Other regions/countries will need to be considered on an exceptional basis.

These Keystone countries – the top 10 – allow the University to better leverage its resources and activities to develop its reputation. In parallel, a focus on fewer, bigger, Keystone international partnerships that are multi-school, multi-level is being supported by the University with the investment until breakeven being held outside the Schools. This will allow Keele to more favourable compared to its benchmark peers, though this is a major challenge, growing faster than both the sector and peers.

#### **4.0 Curriculum and Academic Development:**

The current work being undertaken in Education will extend the requirements for validation and curriculum design to include international markets, advisors, data and partners into the design process.

The Student Futures element for international students has work to be done but we could start in pockets where the opportunity exists (e.g. Physiotherapy in Hong Kong; China alumni; doctoral alumni in Kazakhstan, Bahrain).

The major focus area will be on academic support/ toolkits/ capacity development to be inclusive with some focus on international students where necessary. The key stage is pre-arrival and arrival academic skills preparation. Happy, successful students tell others about Keele University. The collectivist cultures that dominate our priority recruitment markets mean that we benefit from getting it right or lose equally quickly as family, tribe, linguistic group word of mouth is more powerful than any of our efforts.



## 5.0 Brand, Alumni and Reputation:

The table below is a summary of the work that will be necessary. The International Branding Marketing aspects could be well within our reach, and enhancing our International Alumni Engagement could be achieved relatively quickly with some additional resource. That investment will benefit both Research and International, and ultimately our education offer – i.e. our overall reputation. Much of this is around the Research we produce and connections that exist and can be built. The wider effect of research, education and recruitment support a multiplier effect for Keele University.

# Building our international brand

International Brand Marketing	International Alumni	Academic Reputation
<b>Objective: to be a globally recognised and respected university</b>		
Strategic and tailored storytelling inc. promoting our international partnerships	Globally-engaged alumni network	Better league table rankings
Materials to support international visits	Strategic and proactive in-country events	More Keele publications in prestigious academic journals
Translation of key materials	Accurate CRM system	More international research programmes led by Keele
International theme across website	Recruitment and stewardship of alumni ambassadors	More high-profile global partners
International stakeholder database and touchpoints (e.g. VC e-newsletter)	Prospect research - exploration of key alumni 'VIPs' with focused link to our priorities.	More high-profile appointments
Earned and owned media coverage	Portfolio of global testimonials	Global relations programme inc. visits
Targeted advertising / paid promo / in-country sponsorships		Culture shift (People Strategy)
<b>Strategic Comms &amp; Brand</b>	<b>Alumni Team</b>	<b>USLT / Task Force?</b>
Reputational impact in: <b>1-3 years</b> £	<b>3-5 years</b> £	<b>3-10 years</b> £

## 6.0 People & Governance:

We have to concentrate on developing capacity around international partnerships across the university. People and Culture will therefore have to be a major focus. The People Strategy work being led by our Chief People Officer will support this. Attracting, recruiting and retaining staff with international capabilities especially on the academic side will allow us to move at a faster pace.

Most of the professionalisation of partnership working has to be done at the Programme, School and Faculty levels as most relationships (60% or more) will be led, owned and succeed with the commitment of the teams. The Centre can lead strategy, governance and cross-School, cross-Institute and University level partners.

Deans International & Partnerships working closely with their peers in Education and Research will be key to this change. The voice, visibility and capacity of School International Leads will be standardised, working closely with Executive Deans and Heads of Schools.

Working closely with our distinctive Keele Postgraduate Association and the Students Union to ensure the student experience and campus experience is outstanding.

We will not be following a committee structure; instead, to facilitate short-term projects, there will be dotted lines into Education, Research, University Executive into Senate and Council. The organising approach will be around project groups with membership changing based on the outcomes/timeframe.

Having reduced and re-aligned the sub-committees, the Internationalisation Framework will be overseen institutionally through International Partnerships Working Group (peer review), Strategic Education Partnerships group into University Executive. Faculty International Groups will feed directly into this structure.

An International Board, including external specialists and Keele International Leadership will act as a critical friend reviewing our progress against the Internationalisation Framework, University objectives and plans. This will come into place as the diversification plan becomes reality. It will act more as a peer review process to ensure that we draw on the expertise of others to supplement our own as we grown our own capacity.

## **7.0 Investment & Dependencies**

We have an ambitious student recruitment structure to build on; the international relations function at Keele needs development. In other words, we need to develop central and School capacity for opportunity screening, pursuit, branding/engagement, conversion and delivery. This supports the university and Schools with insight about potential geographies, universities, sectors, potential partners, student demand, government commitment, employment demand etc. The routine engagement that it takes year on year to move a partnership to high performance over 3-5 years is emerging still in our working culture – we do have examples of where this is happening and there is sector practice that we can draw on.

For our management of inward and outward visits to be more strategic, directed at an outcome, we need to bring this together for better resource utilisation and closing off legal and HR risks, both incoming and outgoing.

Our Global/ Research Reputation Comms will require investment – to build the stories and progressively support the University Brand as it extends beyond core markets of today but also into tomorrow.

International Alumni management will have to scale up in the medium term as we look to the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Keele next year to engage more fully, post-Covid and push the Keele name more into markets. We will need to test, try and build a plan for a 3-year horizon.

Global Student Recruitment requires in-country staff growth and progression/ articulation capability to reduce the risks around open market recruitment for an institution such as Keele.

We do have some strong teams doing great work, even if spread out and we need to make space for them to work more closely together. The Partnerships team will continue overseeing current partnerships and as the volume and KPIs come in, they will increasingly take on the kind of oversight role that our Research Office takes on for our established work. The Language Centre (especially LINC) is crucial to de-risking progressing students, Global Opportunities to student/faculty mobility and diversity of students, Strategic Communications & Branding (SCB) to continue developing our aspirational brand profile and storytelling, Alumni to drive global alumni stakeholder engagement, GSRA for the results we need to deliver in the short term and prepare for the medium term and our Students who will help us design the solutions that work, who become our graduates changing lives in the UK and when they return home.

**Dependencies:**

- Education and Research Strategies in development in parallel, allow embedding of internationalisation
- People Strategy
- Professional Services & Transformation Priorities
- Investment

Related policies: Inclusion Policy (including GEM) and Decolonising the Curriculum

**8.0 Conclusion:**

Keele will ensure a step-change in its work in China, diversification into Keystone geographies and partnerships on a scale it has not yet done. We will double international students studying on campus and treble our overseas students studying at home over the next 5 years to grow the university's reputation, diversify our income streams and expand faculty and student mobility.