

Partnerships Sub-Strategy 2021-26

1. Strategy name

Partnerships Sub-Strategy

2. Our partnerships mission

The aim of the Partnerships Sub-Strategy is to set out the University's vision and ambitions for recruitment, education, research and industry partnerships. The Partnerships Sub-Strategy is a key enabler of the University Strategy 2019-25, the Education and Research Strategies, and the University Education and Research plans.

3. Our partnerships vision for 2025

Strategic partnerships are central to the delivery of the University Strategy. By 2025, strategic partnerships will have played a central role in enabling the delivery of our mission and vision for education and research, as set out in the Education and Research Strategies. Our strategic partnership portfolio will have increased in size, quality and diversity in alignment to the University's institutional and subject-level ambitions. Our partnerships will support our ambitions to grow the University to 20,000 students and 1,000 REF-submissible staff. More of our students and staff will collaborate with strategic partnership activity. Our strategic vision complements the Essex 2025 project to review the University education product portfolio, working closely with departments to develop their partnership opportunities. Collaborations with strategic partners will enable transformational education and research, with our values-based approach fostering deep relationships with our partners. Working with strategic partners, we will enhance the global visibility and reputation of the University's education and research. We will ensure an effective balance of education and research partnerships, making the most of complementary opportunities in building strategic partnerships. We will collaborate in more regions and countries around the world to support continued growth and diversification of University income. Partnerships bring many opportunities to improve our global reputation in education and research. Our approach to developing new partnerships

and working with existing partners is one that reflects the Essex Spirit of being daring, entrepreneurial and with a global mindset that has a transformational effect on people, knowledge and communities.

With an emphasis on enhanced internationalisation, partnerships will have made a direct contribution to the University's ambitions of:

- a. Recognition as one of the world's top 200 universities (University Strategy KPI 2)
- b. Providing a transformational education experience with improved student satisfaction (University Strategy KPI 4), achievements and outcomes (University Strategy KPI 5)
- c. Enhancing our research performance through existing and new collaborations that lead to more successful research students (University Strategy KPI 7), improved global recognition/citation of our research (University Strategy KPI 9), and increased international opportunities for research funding (University Strategy KPI 10) and impact (University Strategy KPI 8)
- d. Diversifying our partnership activities in ways that contribute to a growing community of students and staff, broaden our reach, and support financial sustainability (University Strategy KPI 11)

The Partnerships Sub-Strategy provides a values-orientated approach to ensuring our collaborative endeavours contribute to our mission for Excellence in Education and Excellence in Research. The values that guide partnership decisions are:

Transformational, Inclusive, Excellent and Sustainable (TIES). Our TIES partnership values provide a frame of reference for different members of our community, our partners or prospective partners, and other interested external parties. Our TIES values represent internal and external transparency about the values, ethics, motivations, aims and objectives of our partnerships.

Our partnership TIES are:

- a) **Transformational:** Our partnerships will enable us to create a range of transformative opportunities for our students and staff. The transformative potential of all proposed new partnerships will be carefully considered and, for existing partnerships, will be a principal objective of continuing enhancement. Partnership activities and experiences will be valued that question and develop the knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs of our staff and students to help them become confident global citizens, able to influence issues of importance to them. Our research partnerships will, through international and industry collaboration, enable us to have a positive impact on the most pressing issues and global challenges. The effectiveness of our partnerships will be evident through the range of mutually transformative opportunities created for our students, staff and our partners.
- b) **Inclusive:** Belonging to a global community that fuses ideas, cultures and perspectives is at the heart of our Essex Spirit. We will nurture partnerships that help us improve the national and international reach of our research and education. Our partnerships will be inclusive, making an Essex Education available and beneficial to people from many different backgrounds, circumstances and locations around the world. Inclusivity of our partnership activities will also bring members of our community together around education and research projects in ways that value and support internationalisation, trans-disciplinarity and diversity.
- c) **Excellent:** All of our partnerships must make a discernible contribution to the University's commitment to Excellence in Education and Excellence in Research. In a collaborative spirit, we will encourage mutual generosity in the sharing of resources and expertise, working in partnership to achieve shared goals and ambitions. Our partnerships will provide opportunities for us to enhance the education we deliver and the research we carry out in a way that positively impacts upon people, knowledge and communities. Education partnerships will create a high-quality student experience characterised by our commitment to research-led education, underpinned by a living and learning ethos. They will nurture capable graduates,

global citizens with excellent subject-specific knowledge and employability skills. Our education partnerships will enable us to deliver different types of programmes in different global regions and countries, with parity in our minimum expectations of academic quality and excellence consistent with our Education Strategy. Research partnerships, through our combined strengths, will boost the quality and impact of the research we carry out in striving to help solve some of the most important challenges facing the world. The excellence of our collaborative work and those who we partner with, will strengthen the University's global identity and reputation as a world-leading institution for higher education and research.

- d) **Sustainable:** Sustainability is a marker of a successful partnership characterised by strategic compatibility, operational viability, and resilience to regulatory, fiscal and societal change. We will build meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships that have the capacity to evolve, strengthen our reputation, and contribute to our ability to have positive local, national and international impacts. Our partnerships will have purpose, delivering education and research outcomes that capitalise on mutual strengths. Our partnership activities will bring notable growth in educational and research activities, operationally and financially sustainable, generating overall surplus. We will adopt a whole-portfolio approach to sustainability, nurturing relationships with current partners and our capacity to pursue future opportunities.

Sub-Strategy Scope

Partnerships is a broad term that can refer to a wide variety of activities in which the University engages with external stakeholders¹. The Partnerships Sub-Strategy will have a specific strategic focus on developing the University's national and global profile and performance in education and research excellence.

¹ The Sub-Strategy does not include: i) Direct entry recruitment involving agents or other third parties, or wider partnership arrangements focused solely on recruitment activity; ii) Commercial agreements, links or partnerships with companies or other organisations associated with the provision of services, buildings or goods to the University; iii) Partnerships with charitable or philanthropic organisations; iv) Agreements or relations with financial donors, alumni or other contributors; v) Outreach partnerships such as those with schools, societies or NGO's; vi) Relationships with research funders

The Partnerships Sub-Strategy will prioritise:

- a) The exploration, discussion and development of mutually advantageous collaborative opportunities in education and research
- b) Education partnerships that lead to an Essex award, including the student body served by University of Essex Online
- c) The extension of provision with existing partners, strengthening the relationship, and forging relevant educational offers
- d) Our engagement and commitment to European consortia partnerships, with special attention to the Young European Research Universities network (YERUN) and the Young Universities for the Future of Europe network (YUFE)
- e) Pathway provision - via the University of Essex International College
- f) Collaborative links with industry and public sector stakeholders that have a shared purpose around education and/or research - knowledge exchange, knowledge transfer partnerships, contract research, CPD or consultancy
- g) Students and staff mobility (for education and/or research), through study abroad programmes, exchanges or digital networks
- h) Research partnerships with international HEIs and research organisations
- i) Membership and engagement with university networks and consortia to promote education and/or research activity

Our Partnerships Sub-Strategy will guide decisions and subsequent actions relating to partnerships, ensuring that all partnership activities contribute to the 2019-25 University Strategy, the Essex 2025 project, the Education Strategy and the Research Strategy. The Partnerships Sub-Strategy recognises the importance of the accreditation status of academic departments and works to help retain and secure these awards to advance University standing and reputation. The Partnerships Sub-Strategy will have an enabling impact on people, knowledge and communities.

Local priority areas - People

Priority 1 – People

Partnerships play an important role in expanding opportunities for members of the University to contribute to and benefit from Excellence in Education and Excellence in Research. Partnership opportunities are an important component of a transformational environment, enabling our students and staff to reach their full potential in ways that lead to positive achievements and outcomes. This includes enhanced opportunities for study abroad, cross-cultural engagement, staff exchange and international research collaboration. We will:

- a) Improve the visibility of partnership opportunities for our staff and students.
- b) Celebrate and acknowledge student and staff international engagement and partnership working to achieve excellence in education and/or research.
- c) Increase the number of our students who, as part of their Essex education, benefit from an international experience, student exchange or study abroad opportunity, or collaborative learning opportunities with partner institutions. We will develop creative options to encourage international learning experiences, facilitating students to take up these transformative opportunities.

Partnership activity can be complex and requires effective strategies for due diligence and risk management. We will support staff involved in transnational education delivery and expand our expertise of regulatory frameworks in other countries. We will:

- a) Facilitate improved staff and student involvement in partnership engagement and development.
- b) Adopt a balanced approach to building a partnerships portfolio. Investing our time and resources in complex networks, large bilateral strategic partnerships (research and education) and smaller recruitment or reputation-enhancing partnerships.

Local priority areas - Knowledge

Priority 2 – Knowledge

We will foster education and research partnerships which strengthen the University's identity as a premium higher education institution. Our partnerships will enable us to complement and enrich our existing educational provision and research strengths. We will:

- a) In direct support of the Education Strategy, disseminate innovative approaches and new ideas from our international engagement and partnership activities to inform our own education practice.
- b) Expand the size and scope of our partnerships including new product development and innovation in our modes of delivery as we grow our portfolio.
- c) Raise the external visibility and profile of our academic excellence through strategic national and international partnerships.

In growing and diversification our partnerships, our priorities will be in the continuing development of educational and research excellence. With due regard to the maximisation of Intellectual Property, we will work with partners whose expertise complements our own, creating joint strengths. The reputation and standing of our partners is such that, through association, it will strengthen the University's identity as a premium higher education institution and/or as a world-leader in research. Our partnerships will create opportunities for the University to be more visible and have greater positive impact in education and research at a local, national or international level. Data and intelligence-led methods will enable us to:

- a) Develop partnerships which have the potential to bring notable growth in educational and/or research activities, with the resilience to evolve and re-prioritise over time.
- b) Develop systems that enable us to benefit from numerous small partnerships which support direct recruitment into the University, with acceptable levels of return on investment.

Local priority areas - Community

Priority 3 – Community

Diversifying student and staff community through partnerships is an important aspect of a transformational learning environment. An internationally and culturally diverse classroom of students and staff brings positive benefits to the whole University community. Partnerships bring opportunities for internationalising our curriculum and our living and learning environment. Our partnerships will support inclusivity through collaborative endeavours, making an Essex education accessible around the world. Even where higher education is not available in the traditional way, they will open opportunities to those who have the talent, aptitude and potential to benefit. We will foster international research collaborations that are inclusive, provide new perspectives, creativity and innovative solutions to research problems that improve the University's visibility, impact and reputation. We will:

- a) Develop new strategic partnerships and expand existing strategic partnerships, focusing on strategic regional and country-level recruitment priorities.
- b) Grow and diversify University of Essex Online, creating inclusive and connective opportunities for students studying part-time, remotely or through alternative modes.
- c) Develop partnerships in regions and countries of the world including Europe where our education and research will have a positive impact on local, regional and global needs.
- d) Cultivate study abroad and student exchange arrangements which offer options to suit a variety of student circumstances.
- e) Advance the institutional culture of partnership with industry, enterprise, policy and third sector organisations, through scaled initiatives between partners, staff and students.