

# Academic Strategy

**2009–2015**

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## Purpose and structure of the Academic Strategy

- 1 The purpose of this Academic Strategy is:
  - a) to provide a more detailed context for the appropriate objectives contained in the University's *Strategy*, in particular:
    - 'to be academically excellent';
    - 'to develop confident employable graduates';
    - 'to be an international University';
    - 'to be a preferred partner'.
  - b) to provide a framework and context for academic planning and development in the period, 2009-2015;
  - c) to contribute to the achievement of the growth described in the University's *Strategy 2009-2015* for institutional sustainability, for investment in facilities, and for the general enhancement of the student experience.
- 2 This document has three parts:
  - a) a brief consideration of the general context in which the *Academic Strategy* is located;
  - b) a presentation of the key components of the *Academic Strategy* itself;
  - c) an accompanying annex which provides a consideration of the factors which inform the *Academic Strategy*.
- 3 This *Academic Strategy* does not contain detailed targets but provides the more general framework for academic development. However, particularly in its description of the key components of the strategy, it does include some broad indicators of responsibilities for significant objectives. Detailed targets will remain a feature of the planning process, the quarterly meetings devoted to continuous portfolio monitoring and review, and will be reflected in the University's *Corporate Plan*.
- 4 It should be noted that this *Academic Strategy* applies mainly to taught undergraduate and postgraduate provision and the research degree programme. Strategies for research and knowledge transfer activities are described in separate documents.

## A context for the Academic Strategy

- 5 In a speech in 2002, Lord Dearing remarked that in the Middle Ages communities were built around castles; in the Industrial Revolution they were built around factories; and in the knowledge economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century they will be built around universities. The University's *Strategy 2009-2015* echoes this concept in

stating, as part of its vision, its wish to be known for “expertise which societies can use directly to enhance the lives and prospects of their people and communities” and to “serve all of the communities we touch”.

- 6 In this context, the University is unambiguous about the role it wishes to play in supporting, enriching and transforming the communities which it serves. This provides a powerful context for the University’s *Academic Strategy* especially if the constitution of the University’s student body is used as a proxy for its wider stakeholders and communities:
- a) over 59% of students come from within 25 miles of the University’s campuses in Edinburgh;
  - b) nearly 70% of students are from Scotland;
  - c) about 24% of students are international including those from the European Union (but excluding other parts of the UK) and rising to 34% if those studying University programmes overseas are included.<sup>1</sup>
- 7 The figures give a simple but clear picture of our ‘communities’:
- a) *the specific communities* surrounding our campuses and the ways in which our presence may enrich them and, in some cases, help to regenerate and transform them by offering opportunities for work and study. The concept of community is also given a powerful expression in the current University estates strategy with the re-development of the Sighthill campus;
  - b) *the local Edinburgh community* and the importance of the University both as an employer and as a supplier of graduates into the local economy. The figures in paragraphs 6a) and 6b) above alone would justify the identification of Edinburgh Napier University as ‘Edinburgh’s University’ (in comparison, the figure for Scottish-domiciled students at Heriot-Watt University is 44% and for the University of Edinburgh is 49%);<sup>2</sup>
  - c) *the broader Scottish community* and the *de facto* role which the University must play in a country where over 85% of Scottish students undertake their higher education in Scotland (and where 86% of them then take up their first employment);<sup>3</sup>
  - d) *the international community* defined both as those students who are studying for University awards with partner institutions overseas, and those who come to the University’s campuses in Edinburgh. A key objective in the University’s

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1 Statistics supplied by Policy, Planning & Intelligence Services based on 2007-2008 enrolled students and from HESA 2007-2008.

2 HESA HE Planning Plus 2008 (Table 11).

3 HESA HE Planning Plus 2008 (Table 11) and HESA Destinations of Leavers from HE 2006-2007 (Table 7b).

*Strategy 2009-2015* is to be a truly international University, that is, developing from our current position as a successful recruiter of international students into a University which integrates “international and intercultural dimension into our mission and across all of our policies and strategies”.

- 8 The identification of the University’s ‘communities’ can be seen as an important stage in deciding the general, and then specific, nature of our academic strategy and consequent academic development. The diverse nature of those communities indicates that we need to maintain a responsive and flexible approach to the range and future development of our academic portfolio, and to the ways in which it is delivered.

### Components of the Academic Strategy

- 9 The context expressed above, and the informing factors which are presented as an annex, shape the key components of the *Academic Strategy* itself. These comprise the three main areas of academic delivery:

- a) the undergraduate portfolio;
- b) the taught postgraduate portfolio;
- c) the research degree portfolio;

and two cross-cutting themes which particularly characterise the work of the University and are key elements of the overall *University Strategy*:

- d) international development;
- e) partnership with Scotland’s colleges.

### The undergraduate portfolio

- 10 At the beginning of this plan period – and likely to be a feature throughout the period in terms of publicly-funded undergraduate education – a major factor is the capped environment operated by the Scottish Government through the Scottish Funding Council. This implies an approach to academic development which is shaped not by simple addition to the undergraduate curriculum but by a continuous shaping and reshaping to ensure that it remains contemporary, relevant and accessible. The overall objective is to provide an undergraduate portfolio which is attractive to home and international students and which is sustainable because it continues to evolve to meet their needs and the needs of employers. It is also important that the University develops an undergraduate portfolio which exploits its recruitment quotas to the maximum, and reflects the University’s continuing commitment to access and widening participation.
- 11 In their academic development activities at undergraduate level, Faculties will thus continue to consolidate and strengthen programmes which are viable and

attractive, to develop new programmes which meet new market demands, and to close those programmes which are unsustainable or clearly of reduced interest to applicants. Such an approach will help to ensure buoyant application rates, attract committed and motivated students, and enable the University to achieve its recruitment and retention targets.

- 12 In the past, the University has offered guidance in the shaping of its academic portfolio through the use of 'academic investment areas', that is, delineating particular academic disciplines or broad areas of the curriculum in which it felt that investment would best be made. This discipline-based approach to academic development has served a useful purpose but increasingly carries the risk of becoming too rigid or static in the face of quickly changing student and employer demand.

**The Edinburgh Napier 'academic signature'**

- 13 The University's *Strategy 2009-2015* outlines what it refers to as the Edinburgh Napier University 'academic signature', that is, the provision of academic programmes which reflect the essential nature of the University's mission, vision and values. This academic signature can also be used as a concept to guide programme development and to replace the past discipline-based approach.
- 14 The Edinburgh Napier University 'academic signature' will thus adopt a key role in programme development. It will shape the nature of programmes, it will become a definition of what every graduate of the University will experience as part of those programmes, and it will help to define what skills and capabilities students will possess in support of the objective in the University's overall *Strategy 2009-2015* which seeks 'to develop confident employable graduates'.
- 15 The 'academic signature' of the University involves programmes which:
- have an applied, professional or vocational focus which contributes directly to employability;
  - respond directly to the key principle of the University's Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy 'to develop confident individuals with high quality achievements, skills and attributes that are valued by students, employers, the sector and the community';<sup>4</sup>
  - demonstrate a purposeful approach to internationalisation;
  - build concepts of global citizenship, promote diversity, ethical understanding and behaviour, and generally develop students' social capital;
  - are informed by research-teaching linkages and education research;

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4 Edinburgh Napier University, *Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Promoting Learning for Achieving Potential* (2005 and subsequent revisions).

- f) are flexible in structure and delivery, capable of receiving articulating students at a variety of entry levels, and have a commitment to the principle of student choice.
- 16 As the University's *Quality Framework* is further developed, these elements will be built into the approval stage for all programmes to ensure that our undergraduate provision meets the University's objectives for academic excellence and for the development of confident and employable graduates. Scrutiny of these elements will be shared appropriately between the academic approval process and the business approval process which is essentially informed by a consideration of staff expertise, resource availability, cost consciousness, market awareness, and general sustainability.
- 17 The establishment and development of the academic signature will occupy a central role in programme development in the plan period. However, the University will also focus on a number of other initiatives which will characterise its approach to curriculum planning.
- The development of 'foundation degrees' and other employer-linked programmes*
- 18 Particularly in co-operation with its College partners, the University will explore the viability and market for applied programmes based on the 'foundation degree' concept current in other parts of the UK. Such programmes will be characterised by the close and continuing contact with employers during development, approval and operation.
- 19 The University will plan and undertake a major curriculum development exercise focused on the provision of a variety of work-based learning programmes developed in partnership with employers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies. The programmes will be characterised by an innovative approach to the blending of prior experiential and certificated learning with relevant current employment experience. The programmes will become a major contributor to the University part-time student population.
- 20 Both in the development of 'foundation degrees' and work-based learning, the University will look to the Faculties and Academic Development to forge a creative and active partnership to ensure that strategic objectives are achieved efficiently and effectively across the institution.
- Cross-School and cross-Faculty programmes*
- 21 There will be further encouragement to exploit the synergies created by the University's academic structure in the development of undergraduate programmes which sit across School and Faculty boundaries. Such developments will be incentivised through use of the University's Strategic Investment Fund. The University will also promote further development of co-curricular modules which enrich undergraduate choice and express the aims and vision articulated in the *University Strategy*.

The promotion of further flexibility in curriculum structures

- 22 The introduction of the 20-credit modular structure created the potential for the development of a range of degree programme 'types' which will give further choice to students. There will be encouragement for the introduction of more 'mixed' programmes, for example, Major/Minor combinations, and other opportunities which allow students to construct a programme which meets their particular needs and interests.

CPD opportunities arising from the undergraduate portfolio

- 23 Consistent with its overall strategic objective to create, exploit and transfer knowledge, the University will encourage and promote initiatives which are aimed at translating appropriate parts of the undergraduate curriculum into CPD opportunities.

- 24 The key points arising in respect of *the undergraduate portfolio* are:

- a) the responsibility of all Faculties and relevant professional services to ensure student success and progression, and that the University achieves its recruitment and retention targets;
- b) the introduction and establishment of the Edinburgh Napier 'academic signature' as a guiding concept for programme development and to help the University achieve its objective to create 'confident, employable graduates';
- c) the development of 'foundation degrees' and other employer-linked and work-based learning programmes;
- d) the development of cross-School and cross-Faculty programmes, and the promotion of further flexibility in curriculum structures;
- e) the exploitation of CPD opportunities arising from the undergraduate portfolio.

The taught postgraduate portfolio

- 25 The University's overall *Strategy 2009-2015* continues to set an agenda for growth but, as noted above, expansion of full-time undergraduate numbers is effectively unavailable as a result of continued 'capping'. Hence, the University will continue to identify growth in taught postgraduate and continuing professional development provision as a strategic objective, and recognise the importance of this provision to the economy in providing opportunities to develop and add knowledge and skills throughout working life. The concept of the Edinburgh Napier 'academic signature' will also be adopted as appropriate for our postgraduate portfolio.
- 26 The local context for growth is at once challenging and encouraging. Some 45% of Edinburgh's resident population hold degree-level or equivalent professional

qualifications.<sup>5</sup> The local market is therefore perhaps more susceptible to targeted TPG/CPD provision than to part-time undergraduate programmes. The growth of such provision will continue to be a significant target for each Faculty reflected through the setting of TPG target numbers in the annual planning round and monitored through the quarterly academic development meetings. The importance of international recruitment to TPG programmes is discussed in the *International Development* section below.

- 27 In 2009, at the beginning of the period which this strategy covers, the University has the advantage of having conducted thorough Faculty-based evaluations of the viability and sustainability of each individual TPG programme, and a broader University review of the 'environment' in which TPG programmes are offered. Some of the key areas for development which are relevant during the plan period have been influenced by those exercises.

#### Coherence and efficiency in TPG provision

- 28 Faculty TPG reviews clearly demonstrate the advantages of operating coherent and linked suites of Masters programmes. Providing efficiency in structure and in the multiple use of modules, they also offer a better platform for future programme development which is both responsive and prompt. Wherever possible, Schools and Faculties are encouraged to continue the use of such suites or to work towards their introduction as appropriate.

#### Market-led development

- 29 In an extremely competitive market, it is essential that supply-side enthusiasms are not permitted to take precedence over accurate and evidence-based market demand. Collaborative working between Faculties and the marketing and intelligence functions within the University's professional services should be focused on:

- a) early identification of demand-side needs;
- b) promotions aimed at employers and organisations rather than individuals;
- c) the targeting of the University's own graduates and alumni.

- 30 University reviews show that currently only 9% of TPG provision is offered in the evenings or at weekends. Whilst this situation may already be a response to the perceived needs of the market, a further more detailed review by each Faculty will be undertaken to ensure that the University is not failing to meet the needs of students by limiting the periods in which TPG provision is offered.

#### The development of different patterns of TPG provision

- 31 The University will encourage the development of different patterns of TPG provision including, where appropriate:

- a) collaborative programmes with its College partners which allow for students to

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5 Edinburgh by Numbers (Edinburgh City Council, 2008).

undertake the earlier stages of a TPG programme closer to their home base;

- b) collaborative programmes with European and international partners;
- c) 'integrated' Masters provision including the 5-year integrated Masters programme.

#### TPG and the relationship with CPD

32 Faculty TPG reviews indicate that very little difference is drawn between postgraduate study aimed at formal qualification, and the provision of opportunities for continuous professional development at postgraduate or post-experience level. There is a presumption, then, that all TPG programmes will be tailored to allow CPD opportunities to be derived from them, and that Faculties will be active in developing those opportunities alongside other initiatives aimed at commercialisation and income-generation. In these activities, Faculties are encouraged to work closely with appropriate professional bodies and employers.

33 The key points arising in respect of *the taught postgraduate portfolio* are:

- a) the continuation of a growth agenda in the University's postgraduate taught portfolio, and the responsibility of Faculties to meet agreed targets for the recruitment of taught postgraduate students;
- b) the adoption of the Edinburgh Napier 'academic signature' to inform postgraduate programme development;
- c) the presumption towards the development of TPG provision in 'suite' structures for efficiency and to assist further programme development;
- d) a deliberate focus on demand-side rather than supply-side provision and increased attention to key target groups for recruitment;
- e) a requirement for Faculties actively to review the timing of their TPG provision to ensure that market opportunities are not lost through the limited use of evenings and weekends;
- f) the promotion of the development of different types of Masters provision;
- g) the presumption that, where appropriate, all TPG programmes and suites of programmes will be tailored to allow CPD opportunities to be derived from them.

#### The research degree portfolio

34 A more detailed account of the current status and future development of the research degree portfolio will be issued in further documents. In the general

context of this *Academic Strategy*, the University will:

- a) secure a sustainable critical mass of registered research degree students equivalent to about 2% of overall student numbers;
- b) ensure that all students are linked to an area of research strength and depth and that the majority of them are located in the areas of research excellence identified in the University's Research & Knowledge Transfer Strategy;
- c) increase the number of research-degree students funded through the research councils, charities, industry or self-funded, and thus systematically reduce the reliance on the use of core University funding for this purpose;
- d) create a University-wide Graduate Teaching Assistantship Scheme which would enable a research-degree student to undertake paid academic activities, including teaching duties, while being registered for a research degree;
- e) encourage the development of an appropriate range of research degrees under the aegis of the Higher Degrees Committee including the further development and promotion of the professional doctorate;
- f) commit to the development of a University-wide training programme for research degree students with sufficient flexibility to provide core training needs for all students registered with the University;
- g) commit to the further development of a training programme for staff to ensure that all supervisors of research degrees are appropriately prepared and are kept up to date with changes in relevant regulations and procedures.

### International development

- 35** The University's *Strategy 2009-2015* is unambiguous in its aim to develop the institution into a 'truly international University'. There is a presumption in the strategy that the currently successful international recruitment to the University and its provision of programmes overseas with selected partners will continue. However, it also sets a more ambitious and challenging objective:

*we will develop from being a university which is successful and highly regarded internationally to become a truly international university – integrating an international and intercultural dimension into our mission and across all of our policies and strategies.*

- 36** The approach to international development outlined in this *Academic Strategy*, therefore, is a blend of existing activities related to academic recruitment and programme development, and a need to contribute to the broader

internationalisation of the University. These activities are described below – the University's separate *International Strategy* should be consulted for more detail.

- 37 In respect of recruitment, the University currently has a large population of international and EU students (see paragraph 6c). Against agreed targets, the University will maintain and develop this recruitment, especially at postgraduate level, by strengthening existing and developing new partnerships. It will encourage the development of further articulation arrangements. It will also continue to monitor the success of the establishment of permanent in-country offices dedicated to recruitment activities and expand their number if appropriate.
- 38 We will also seek further growth in the current range of provision offered overseas and thus in numbers of students studying for a University award with an international partner. In so doing, more attention will be focused on the ingredients of the currently highly successful partnerships in Hong Kong and elsewhere:
- a) the cultivation of strong partnerships with well-established public or private providers of higher education in their own country;
  - b) good subsequent relationship management;
  - c) good business planning;
  - d) demand-led provision;
  - e) bespoke delivery and materials;
  - f) the most appropriate mode of delivery for the particular market (including face-to-face by University staff where this is sustainable and offers a particular advantage).
- 39 In developing a 'truly international university', Faculties and Schools working with Academic Development will continue to focus on the internationalisation of the curriculum by reviewing academic programmes to ensure that they have a more international and multi-cultural dimension. This process will be a relatively long-term exercise with some activities, such as more frequent staff and student international mobility, working as a context to help achieve it. A more deliberate approach to encouraging staff to take an international perspective of their disciplines will be one of the continuing tasks of the committee structure at School, Faculty and University levels dedicated to learning and teaching.
- 40 As a context to its international activities, and particularly in relation to the EU, the University will continue to align itself with the positions on Europe adopted by the Scottish Funding Council and Universities Scotland. It will be important that appropriate progress is made in ensuring that the University is able to meet the demands of the developments following the Bologna Declaration – and thus in being able to capitalise on the opportunities which a coherent European Higher Education Area may bring.
- 41 The key points in respect of *international development* are:
- a) the responsibility of all Faculties and the International College to meet agreed

targets for international students recruited to the University;

- b) the responsibility of all Faculties and the International College to meet agreed targets for the numbers of international students recruited to programmes delivered overseas;
- c) the maintenance of an effective partnership between the International College and the Faculties to deliver the University's strategic objectives in relation to international activities;
- d) the development of partnerships to expand the University's European and international portfolio, and the expectation that each Faculty will particularly develop an appropriate range of postgraduate taught programmes through such partnerships;
- e) the responsibility of the deliberative structure related to teaching and learning to help to promote and develop an appropriate international dimension for all academic programmes.

### Partnerships with Scotland's Colleges

- 42 In its overall *Strategy 2009-2015*, the University states its intention to be 'a preferred partner' and acknowledges that the establishment and development of partnerships can extend across a broad spectrum of individuals and organisations. However, in the context of this *Academic Strategy* – and given the University's local and regional recruitment patterns – the partnerships with Scotland's Colleges are the most important that we maintain. It is essential that each part of the University, academic and professional, understands the importance of these links and works towards their further development and enhancement. Each year, there is an increase in the flow of students from such colleges to the University's programmes, both on and off-campus. Currently, some 2,500 students have studied in a College in Scotland immediately prior to joining us (and the figure rises to almost 3,000 if Colleges across the UK are included).<sup>6</sup>
- 43 The future growth and stability of the University is reliant on maintaining, and where possible, expanding these numbers. More importantly, the University's mission includes the provision of opportunities for College students who (except in small numbers) are unlikely to find such opportunity elsewhere. In a broader context, a series of papers from the Scottish Government, including its *Skills Strategy*, strongly promote a coherence and a 'continuum of provision' in tertiary education which is reliant on excellent and well-developed links between Colleges and Universities.
- 44 The beginning of the period from 2009 also sees the establishment and first year

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6 FE Monitoring and Tracking Report, 2007-2008.

of operation of the Edinburgh, Lothians, Fife and Borders Regional Articulation Hub (ELRAH). Funded by the SFC – and led by the University in acknowledgement of its expertise and experience in articulation – ELRAH comprises 14 University and College partners and seeks to develop regional articulation links for the benefit of students and in support of the ‘continuum of provision’ promoted by the Scottish Government. The University will look to Academic Development to lead its involvement in ELRAH, to ensure that Faculties benefit through the creation of further articulation arrangements which lead to direct entry to University programmes, and more generally to maintain and enhance the University’s position as a leading institution in the theory and practice of articulation.

- 45 Additionally, the University will continue to seek in its partnerships with Scotland’s Colleges:
- a) further off-campus programme delivery (particularly for part-time provision);
  - b) the identification of opportunities for shared developments in consultancy and CPD;
  - c) the development of partnerships in the area of credit-rating;
  - d) the investigation of the potential for closer structural collaboration with selected Colleges which may benefit the partners and their students in the provision of comprehensive tertiary educational opportunities.
- 46 The key points in respect of **partnerships with Scotland’s Colleges** are:
- a) the responsibility of all Faculties and relevant professional services to ensure that we are exploiting the full potential of our partnership with Colleges;
  - b) the responsibility of Academic Development to lead in the development of ELRAH and the maintenance of the University’s leading position in articulation;
  - c) the responsibility of Faculties and Academic Development to ensure that the University identifies further opportunities for academic and institutional partnership including part-time, CPD and credit-rating activities;
  - d) the responsibility of the appropriate Vice-Principal to ensure that our partnerships with Colleges are fully developed at an institutional level.

## Conclusion

- 47 The intention of this *Academic Strategy* is to provide additional commentary and clarification of the academic objectives described in the University’s *Strategy 2009-2015* as supplemented by institutional and faculty-based reviews and planning exercises. It is also intended to act as a framework and a guide for academic development in the University during the current plan period. It will be amended appropriately as the *University Strategy 2009-2015* itself is evaluated and amended.

## Annex

### Factors informing the Academic Strategy

1 The informing factors discussed below create a context for the key components of the *Academic Strategy*. In brief, they are:

- learning, teaching and assessment;
- quality assurance, quality enhancement, and academic standards;
- research-teaching linkages;
- continuing academic portfolio review;
- internationalisation;
- access and widening participation;
- partnership and collaboration;
- recruitment, student experience, graduate attributes and employability.

#### Learning, teaching and assessment

2 The University's objectives in this area are captured in detail in its *Strategy for Learning, Teaching & Assessment* and particularly in its overall statement of aims:

- a) to develop confident individuals with high quality achievements, skills and attributes that are valued by students, employers, the sector and the community;
- b) to create inspiring, challenging and effective learning, by valuing teaching, research, scholarly activity and partnership as complementary and fundamental;
- c) to strengthen [Edinburgh] Napier's reputation for providing high quality learning that is student focused and flexible and that enhances students' employability.<sup>7</sup>

3 The strategy and the aims which it promotes form a general context for the University as it seeks to encourage varied and innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, and as its virtual learning environment is further refined and developed. More specifically, as factors informing the academic strategy, there will need to be a focus on:

- a) encouraging the expansion of the University Teaching Fellowship Scheme as a method of identifying and then deliberately using recognised high quality teaching as a catalyst for the practice of all staff;
- b) achieving a comprehensive use of WebCT as a key technological support mechanism for learning and teaching; and promoting the assumption that technology-supported learning and teaching has progressed beyond the stage

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7 Edinburgh Napier University, *Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Promoting Learning for Achieving Potential* (2005 and subsequent revisions).

of being considered as a 'special' method and has become an accepted norm for all staff;

- c) continuing to provide a comprehensive approach to staff development in the use of new technologies and learning environments in support of high quality teaching and learning;
- d) continuing to strive for consistency in the process and practice of assessment to ensure that it is fair, transparent and equitable;
- e) encouraging and supporting the development of education research across the University;
- f) ensuring that the principles of the TESEP (*Transforming and Enhancing the Student Experience through Pedagogy*) project (in developing pedagogical approaches that are truly learner-centred, and which are enriched by creative and appropriate use of emerging technologies to engage and empower learners) continue to inform teaching and learning in the University.

#### Quality assurance, quality enhancement, and academic standards

- 4 The University's approach to setting and assuring academic standards, and to assuring and enhancing academic quality, are detailed in the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy and the Quality Framework. These are set within the context of the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland and take due regard of SFC guidance, the QAA's Academic Infrastructure and the expectations of professional bodies which recognise or accredit our provision. We would also anticipate making full use of the QAA Indicators of Enhancement to inform our progress in quality enhancement in the University.
- 5 The University has made significant progress since its last QAA ELIR in 2006 and now looks forward to its next ELIR in 2010-2011 so that its significant changes in both process and culture can be peer-reviewed. In particular, we wish to embed the cultural changes which were achieved as part of the development and approval processes which were designed for the transfer to a 20-credit modular structure.
- 6 The University plans to undertake a significant revision of its Learning, Teaching & Assessment strategy in the academic year 2009-2010 with the expectation that this will lead to a better articulation of related strategies but also to further development of the Quality Framework. A series of evaluations of projects undertaken at the beginning of this plan period (particularly related to assessment process and practice and the transfer to 20-credit modules) will also be used as valuable information to guide our future quality-related developments.
- 7 We aim to work closely with our students and their representatives in partnership in seeking continuously to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities we provide and to ensure that the support we offer is aligned closely with students' requirements and needs.

- 8 We are committed to peer-review, independence and externality in order to satisfy ourselves and our stakeholders that our academic standards are rigorously maintained and that our curriculum remains contemporary and relevant.

#### Research-teaching linkages

- 9 The QAA Enhancement Theme, *Research Teaching Linkages: Enhancing Graduate Attributes* (RTL:EGA) has been the subject of significant interest both within the University and across the sector. Essentially running in 2008 and 2009, the output from this theme will inform the work of the current QAA integrative Enhancement Theme *Graduates for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.
- 10 The focus of the RTL:EGA theme served to make explicit the link between research and teaching and has encouraged institutional reflection regarding the ways in which both research product, and more particularly research process, can be embedded within the University's provision. At a relatively early stage, this reflection has informed the redesign of modules and programmes in order to embed and enhance existing good practice in this area. Of particular interest is the encouragement of 'research mindedness' as a core graduate attribute within our students in order to equip them for the increasingly complex and dynamic working environment that they will face upon graduation. For these reasons, research-teaching linkages has been adopted as one of the key elements in the Edinburgh Napier 'academic signature' discussed in the *Academic Strategy*.

#### Continuing academic portfolio review

- 11 The major university-wide academic portfolio review conducted in 2005-2006 put into place a structure to enable continuing portfolio review to be conducted on a routine basis. This structure is now embedded with Faculties assuming responsibility for the scrutiny of their academic programmes and the systematic quarterly meetings with the Senior Vice-Principal acting as an opportunity to review progress.
- 12 Academic portfolio review has always involved issues of infrastructure and resources. These issues – especially in the early part of the period of this *Strategy* – will assume increasing importance as Schools and Faculties seek to establish a sound evidence base on which to make decisions. The recent work on cost consciousness in establishing and delivering the academic portfolio at module and programme levels forms an important context to the *Academic Strategy* and the necessity for the University to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. This approach is supported by the recent amendment to the development and approval process for academic programmes which now requires a separate 'business' approval by the Faculty to ensure that issues of resource availability, cost consciousness, market awareness, and sustainability are fully considered.

#### Access and widening participation

- 13 The University's *Strategy 2009-2015* is unequivocal in respect of our mission in relation to access and widening participation. It wishes to "provide socially, culturally and economically relevant higher education to people who can benefit

from it...without regard to social and cultural barriers and boundaries". This responsibility is clearly reflected in the key components of this *Academic Strategy* particularly in relation to partnership with Scotland's Colleges, and the further development of the undergraduate programme to be as accessible and flexible as possible.

- 14 Flexibility in academic programmes extends to both their nature and their method of delivery: the modular structure and the development of learning environments which encourage flexible and blended learning are central to the University's aims. It remains a target to ensure that, where appropriate, our undergraduate programmes are capable of receiving students to commence a programme at the beginning of Trimester 2 (January) as well as more traditionally at the beginning of Trimester 1. At the beginning of this plan period, we will also be operating an academic year which has been reshaped for an earlier start in an effort to make the student experience more coherent, to establish more logical patterns to student assessment, and to provide a more holistic induction period for each Trimester.

#### Internationalisation and the Bologna Process

- 15 The commitment of the University to internationalisation is an identified particular component of the overall *Strategy 2009-2015* and the *Academic Strategy*. In aspiring to an holistic approach to internationalisation, the University recognises that it must undertake activities at home and overseas which advance economic development, social cohesion, constructive social mobility, and cultural understanding. The University's *International Strategy* maps out in more detail the key features of an international University which include an international student population; an international mix of teaching and research staff; the internationalising of the curriculum; the promotion of overseas study as an integral part of an academic programme; international teaching and research collaborations and exchanges; and an embedding of internationalisation across key corporate strategies and practices such that the commitment to internationalisation becomes rooted in the organisational culture.
- 16 In a European context, the Bologna Process creates an increasingly important structure in which the University operates. There are now 46 signatories to the agreement who are seeking to consolidate the achievements of the Bologna Process and to determine priorities from 2010 onwards which will create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The University's previous strategies have mirrored elements of the Bologna Process and have contributed to the development of strong links with European HEIs and success in attracting many students from Europe. It is appropriate now for the University to develop more overt links to the post-2010 Bologna Process in order to exploit the opportunities associated with EHEA which may assist us in achieving our strategic goals. These include:
  - a) taking opportunities to showcase the good practice existing in the University in areas which are identified as important to the achievement of the EHEA, such as recognising achievement and widening access, lifelong learning,

employability and student-centred learning, and identifying the attributes of the Edinburgh Napier graduate;

- b) promoting mobility for staff and students, particularly by increasing the numbers of students using Erasmus mobility programme, and increasing the numbers of academic and administrative staff participating in structured exchange programmes;
- c) developing and expanding our European partnerships and networks through an increase in articulation arrangements and 'top up' degree programmes, the development of collaborative degrees, particularly at postgraduate level, and the introduction of further 5-year integrated Masters programmes;
- d) contributing where appropriate in the areas of research and innovation to the EU's strengthening of links between the EHEA and the European Research Area.

#### Partnership and collaboration

- 17 As the component parts of the *Academic Strategy* demonstrate, the University's academic future is reliant on the establishment, maintenance and development of creative partnerships in respect of academic provision. This concept of partnership begins internally with the joint development of programmes by collaborating Schools and Faculties, and continues externally in the development of a range of programmes offered in collaboration with a variety of private and public sector providers, including Scotland's Colleges, the NHS, commerce and industry. The theme of partnership is constant throughout the identified components of the *Academic Strategy* including internal and sector collaboration, international developments, and the links to Colleges.

#### Recruitment, student experience, graduate attributes and employability

- 18 The ability of the University to deliver a viable academic strategy – as part of an overall University *Strategy* which promotes sustainability as one of its key objectives – is self-evidently dependent on healthy recruitment and on ensuring the quality of the student experience leading to student progression and success. Planned activities of Student Affairs, the International College, Policy & Communications and Faculties in ensuring the recruitment of well-prepared and informed students to the targets set, and the Student Experience Committee's work in developing a Student Experience Strategy, underpin the *Academic Strategy*. The development of a statement of the expected attributes of an Edinburgh Napier graduate and the means by which students can be supported in their conscious development of those attributes, and within that the growing importance of *Confident Futures*, are also key factors in students' employability, graduate employment and their wider contribution to society.
- 19 More specifically in respect of employment, there is the continuing need for the University to be mindful of its local Edinburgh and broader Scottish communities. There should be a high degree of coincidence between the disciplines we cover

and the predicted future areas of growth in the local and national economy. Any other approach would appear to be a contradiction in a University which professes the employability of its graduates as a key aim and objective. Hence, the University's academic portfolio should reflect, for example:

- a) in respect of the local Edinburgh community, the growth areas of the economy identified as part of the paper, *Edinburgh 2020*: banking, biotechnology, education, renewable energy, and environment (taking into account, however, the interim plan produced to cover 2009-2012 in response to the prevailing economic climate which notes that over 10% of the city's workforce and its top five employers are within the financial services sector);
- b) in respect of the broader Scottish community, the National Priority industries identified by Enterprise Scotland: life sciences, energy, tourism, financial services, food and drink, and electronic markets; and the predictions of Futureskills Scotland's *Labour Market Projections 2007-2017* which include a significant expansion of employment opportunities in business services, retail and distribution, and health and social work.

20 In seeking to enhance the employability of our students, particular attention will be paid to the opportunities which they are offered to engage in work experience or other appropriate contact with the employment market. An achievable aim is to ensure that every student, irrespective of their programme of study, is offered the opportunity for work experience or other appropriate employment-related activities during that programme.