

# UEA International Strategy 2016-20

## Introduction

As one of the top 1% of universities in the world, UEA has a proud tradition of educating students from around the world, of solving problems that have global impact and of building collaboration with academics wherever they might be. The University is ranked in the top 100 of “international universities” by the “Times Higher” and over 20% of our staff and student body are from overseas.

However, the conventional model of higher education is changing and we cannot afford to be complacent. Around the world, governments are actively pursuing the recruitment of students from regions in which the UK has been dominant, while UK government policy on visas has made the recruitment of international students more challenging. At the same time, driven by the rising cost of US education, we have seen the emergence of alternative, low cost, models of higher education. In research, funds are concentrating longer and larger grants leading to research consortia and partnerships. In short, in all areas of our activity, there is a need to better understand and promote our place in the world, to ensure that our students’ are equipped to succeed in a competitive global environment and that our University seeks and builds successful relationships with global partners.

Measured by many quantifiable indicators -- student satisfaction, citations, research grant income, graduate prospects -- UEA has an enviable set of global indicators. However, we are both relatively young and have not, to date, prioritized developing our presence internationally. Hence our reputation lags our measured performance. This reputational lag means we have to work harder to win students and research grants. UEA needs a programme of global engagement to enhance our reputation of excellent teaching and top quality research. Our touchstone when considering any activity will be the extent to which it will enhance our reputation and facilitate our academic mission. In this strategy we consider carefully our ambitions, how those need to be supported with appropriate staff and infrastructure and what benefits will follow. We also devise key performance indicators and benchmarks which will allow us to know how we are making a difference.

This plan responds to the UEA Plan 2016-20 and primarily to the two key strategic drivers that relate to internationalisation; extending our international reach and meeting with global challenges (Strategic drivers 3 and 5). Strategies to deliver other aspects of internationalisation (for example, internationalizing our curriculum, campus and student and staff experience), will be more comprehensively covered in other operational plans.

## Strategic objectives

The International Strategy’s focus is to contribute to the delivery of UEA2030 Vision and the 2016-2020 UEA Plan. In particular, this strategy aims to deliver to one key objective.

### **Objective 10 – Projecting our reputation: a world-leading university at the heart of local, national and global networks**

1. We aspire to enter the top 200 in the Times Higher Education World Rankings for teaching and research quality. Our current ranking between 200 and 300 in these indicators contrasts our strong performance in research metrics in which we have comfortably featured in the world top 100 for a number of years. The disparity reflects a relatively less successful performance in the reputation surveys.
2. We will project our research quality and innovative teaching more effectively to a global audience through development of a smart marketing strategy for this important aspect of our activity.

3. We will develop more effective regional bases, for example in the USA, China, India, Japan and Southeast Asia, to engage alumni and regional partners to help promote our activities and achievements.
4. We will create purposeful networks to which key stakeholders will want to join and contribute. These will include global networks for alumni, students and researchers, as well as more local networks to support our collaborative and interdisciplinary ambitions. Our relationships will enhance our global reputation, making new contacts and creating opportunities for scale, growth and new income. They will also benefit the reputation and economy of our region.

## **Our actions**

### **1. Extending our reach in national and international markets**

#### ***Corporate Plan Strategic Driver 3***

#### **1.1 Build effective global networks with international partners, including students, alumni, researchers and businesses, to extend our reach (CP3.1)**

UEA Vision2030 clearly defines our goal to enhance our strong international reputation and become increasingly competitive in a challenging global market. We want to be renowned for our global networks and reach, and for our partnerships. Worldwide, alliances across borders are becoming more common and it is important that UEA is not isolated but instead seeks out opportunities that will deliver a strong global position.

UEA already has a wide range of international partners and some excellent international research networks (e.g. the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research). However, the majority of institutional partnerships are for single-themed research initiatives or for student exchange. Most have evolved organically and without an institutional approach.

To ensure we establish UEA as a university of global standing we need to strategically develop our networks and partnerships with top-quality, research-intensive institutions and other key partners and stakeholders.

The University has already selected five priority countries, tasked with raising UEA's reputation in these regions: China; India; Malaysia; North America and Japan. These countries have been identified by a combination of global reputation, the research strength of their universities, current or potential success of their economies and depth and spread of current engagement with UEA. Pan-university dialogue groups have been implemented to provide a strategic focus, to collate activity from across the university, to encourage country related dialogue and initiatives and to assist Schools and Faculties to identify the right international partners. It is therefore important that these Groups are supported appropriately by the University.

The sections below identify main areas for the university to focus on to build global reputation.

Research Excellence. UEA has high-quality and highly-cited research. We are ranked in the top 50 in the world for our research citations and this has huge resonance with our international audience. Strategically developing our global research partners and networks is crucial for our internationalisation. UEA's research strategy explores in more detail on how this will be achieved and the two Executives will work closely together to ensure we are maximising opportunities.

Global Networks. Global networks can enhance UEA's position for research and teaching; for knowledge exchange and as a force to lobby Governmental and industry bodies. Through exchange and dialogue, they will also help to deliver a deeper understanding of cultural difference at all levels of an organisation and establish UEA's place in a particular geographical area.

Action to develop a network of European Universities has already begun, with UEA as the lead partner. In time, this network could share best practice, access Horizon 2020 and other funding opportunities, provide a position of strength in accessing new markets, develop innovative new products, offer TNE

or exchange incorporating one or more institutions and pool resources to contribute to global issues. Such a network could make us more attractive to other international partners, particularly given the potential access to research funding, and help to raise our profile.

### Trans-national education

Economic and demographic trends<sup>1</sup> suggest that the large global markets for British HE, such as China, will not continue to grow and are likely to decline. At the same time widening participation is key to Government agendas worldwide but affordability is paramount. In response to this, many British institutions have been building international partnerships for transnational education (TNE) which offer more affordable options to students who might, for example, study for two years in their home country before transferring to a UK university for two years. For UK universities, joint programmes can provide a reliable stream of students, pre-selected by the partner institution.

As our research power grows there will also be a pressing need to expand our PGR recruitment. We need to embrace a range of innovative options for PGR including low-residency low-cost models (such as co-tutelle), TA-ships and exchange models in which the cost of our PGR degree is exchanged for activities of value overseas.

Aside from the model's discussed above, there are a host of others that involve engagement with a partner's teaching (for example, flying faculty who deliver part of the UEA curriculum at foreign institution). Details on the types of partnerships can be found at appendix 2 (partnerships chart).

UEA's response to declining markets for direct recruitment must be to build innovative partnerships appropriate to our commitment to very high quality education and student satisfaction. The key is to work with the right institutions and to choose a model that is best suited to School requirements, strengths, and resources.

Thus, where Schools are currently dependent on international recruitment, we see it as essential that they develop at least one alternative co-educational or other recruitment route so that a wider range of international students can access their courses and provide an alternative to direct recruitment.

### INTO - Pathway Partnership.

Our partnership with INTO enables 600 students per annum to study pre-university courses on our campus, the majority of which then progress onto degree programmes. It was the first of its kind, has now been replicated at 22 universities around the world and continues to help hundreds of students access UEA's programmes. However the international environment is changing and competition for excellent students is intensifying. As the partnership enters its second decade we will work with INTO to refine their strategy and to use their network more effectively, particularly in the area of reputation raising.

Governments and sponsors. UEA has focused its efforts on either direct recruitment or through its extensive agent network and there is a need to improve our relations with governments and sponsors. In certain parts of the world such as the Middle East, South America and parts of SE Asia government sponsors dominate the funding environment. For PGR students effective sponsor engagement is critical. We have encouraged a number of sponsors to visit the campus over the past year but sponsor engagement initiatives will now be resourced as a regular activity so we are to better capture more of their resources and intelligence.

Mobility Partnerships. The University already has 200 study abroad partners providing opportunities for six month to year-long placements. In addition, we also have a small but growing number of international business partners, providing overseas internships for students. There is good evidence that international experience is valued by employers and students with international experience get

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3. <http://monitor.icef.com/2014/03/looking-at-chinese-market-trends-for-2014/>

better jobs more quickly. Additionally, as illustrated in IDP's recent Student Buyer Behaviour Research 2015, work placement and entrepreneurial opportunities are major drivers for international students.

All students at UEA should have the opportunity to enhance their experience beyond their studies through volunteering, internships, entrepreneurial opportunity or study and work abroad. Our ambition should be to double the number of students who have an overseas experience over the next five years. To achieve this, study abroad needs to become an intrinsic part of the universities programme planning and issues over module capacity, systems and processes will need to be addressed.

The majority of study abroad partners are based in North America and Europe (the latter via Erasmus programmes), closely followed by Japan and Australia. We will incorporate more non-traditional destinations into study abroad options so that students can gain experience that best fits a world where regions such as China and India are likely to dominate. One of the key issues is ensuring the quality of the student experience overseas, where surety over teaching quality, welfare or accommodation may be an issue, whether perceived or real. Thus, in order to build confidence, both students and staff, and to encourage global thinking, we will introduce short term (possibly ATS staff led) academic programmes; for example 2-4 weeks, over the summer. Such models are common place in North America and, in addition to developing our own with other universities, there may be opportunities for participating in current programmes run by our North American partners. In all such developments, we will integrate closely with the Learning and Teaching strategy and the Student Opportunities project.

Partnering with our alumni. Alumni are regarded by most universities as an essential resource, for raising reputation and recruitment, for providing ready-made enthusiastic and proactive networks, and for assisting with funds and expertise. This commitment should go both ways. UEA is known for its consistently excellent student experience and already our Careers hub provide ongoing assistance for three years after graduation. We should do even more to promote this and add other opportunities for on-going connection that might be attractive to our alumni. For example, networking events and early career workshops to be delivered in-country or perhaps a bi-annual regional conference to which we invite more senior alumni.

UEA already runs a variety of alumni events from "Global Gathering" (a worldwide, simultaneous social event, student led but coordinated by the alumni office) to more formal alumni gatherings attended by a senior members of university staff. We will seek to formalise these networks, starting with priority countries and using focus groups to establish what might work. We will develop a network of selected alumni to help raise UEA's profile in region, provide useful connections for visiting academics, and give advice and guidance to returning students.

Partnering with Current Students. Our experience is that internationalisation works best if there is early and wholehearted engagement from students. We already operate an international ambassador network through which current students provide guidance to applicants through social media. However, we will utilise this and other student networks, such as the Students' Union to gain a greater insight of student needs and an understanding of the different markets that our international students come from. Wherever possible, we will involve students in our internationalisation groups and committees and, as we develop initiatives in line with this plan, create opportunities for students (for example, assistance with international research, opportunities to interact with students in partner institutions).

### **1.2 Explore the development of new international offices to aid in student recruitment, alumni relationships and projecting our achievements, with an early priority being an office in the USA in 2016/17 (CP 3.2)**

The development of regional offices in priority countries will enable us to take informed and long-term action to diversify. An in-country presence can help UEA to further many of its objectives: reputation, recruitment, institutional partnership and alumni relations. We already have international offices in Malaysia, China, Nigeria, and India. We are currently launching a new office, to be based in the US. Ultimately, this exercise should be undertaken for all priority countries, to ascertain whether it would be a desirable option.

### **1.3. Work with partners to build the profile of the region, the university, our teams, our individuals and the work we do, focused at all times on growing our reputation for high quality education and research (CP 3.3)**

Unfortunately, the region of East Anglia is not well known internationally which affects local and regional businesses. It would be advantageous to develop regional networks with local schools and businesses to promote the region and our combined research and enterprise strengths. We will seek to maximise networks that might be available through established partners such as INTO, as they have relationships with their universities in Australia, US and China. Likewise, the Norwich Research Park (NRP) is developing its global links and already has a Centre in Shanghai. Opportunities for regional cooperation could also be explored through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to build an effective coalition to promote East Anglia as a high quality destination for education, tourism and culture. There could also be opportunities to cost share on initiatives and gain mutual benefit but there is not yet a good understanding of the possible synergies and benefits. We will explore the opportunities that might arise from collaboration through dialogue with organisations across the East Anglia region. This may include working with organisations in the region and joining them in international trade events and delegations.

## **2. Addressing our global challenges** ***Corporate Plan Strategic Driver 5***

### **2.1 Develop and internationally promote our research strengths, with a focus on those that address major global challenges with world-class impact (CP5.1)**

UEA is already leading on projects that have global significance and impact on communities worldwide, for example through our work in development studies but, like many other universities, we do not have a full picture. As a university, we face a gap between our research strengths and our global research reputation. To change this we need to be clear on our key research areas and where they might best resonate globally. We need to employ focused initiatives and targeted communications strategies in order to raise our profile.

#### Improve Information Flow

The University would gain tremendous strength and a significant competitive advantage if we were able to collate and analyse current activity for any given country. Such knowledge would also aid the development of more targeted partner and country strategies. Thus, processes to capture the locations of individual links should be introduced at School level and be built in to the development of institutional wide record systems. We have already found successful exemplar universities where the database has been implemented and temporary staff employed to populate it. Many of the tasks in this plan, particularly those that involve partner liaison communications and research bidding are

made hugely more expensive or impractical without such a system. We must make it a priority over the planning period.

### Identify Synergies

We should ensure that our research themes are linked to Government agendas, particularly in priority countries, at both national and regional levels. Much of this knowledge is likely to be available in pockets across the university or online but it needs to be pooled centrally and decisions made about where we could provide the most impact and where opportunities might exist.

The Research Executive plays a key role in setting those themes, communicating with academics on how they fit into those themes and the importance of publicizing one's research. We will work closely with the Research Executive and research strategy to ensure an integrated approach.

### Implement Initiatives

Over the next year, a range of initiatives should be considered to better promote UEA's research themes. For example,

- appoint high profile academics who can articulate the chosen themes across discipline and develop a strong media profile.
- implement a programme of academic visits to build relationships with key institutions identified as ideal partners.
- implement a "research profile fund" to incentivise theme-related conference attendance and on-campus activity (e.g. thematic workshops, global conferences).
- Recognize contributions to internationalisation in promotion and reward criteria.
- Attract funds (through donor, charity fundraising, etc.) to support practical follow-on action in countries where our research is making a difference.

We will work closely with the Research Executive as they develop these aspects of the research strategy.

### Improve Communication

While the international league tables are not a focus in their own right, we must have a communications plan to promote our activities to key influencers who, for the league tables, are international academics and employers. With this in mind, we will develop a communications strategy for international audiences and influencers.

Priority needs to be given to international reputation raising activity across the University, by both academic and administrative departments. As this internationalisation plan embeds we should develop high-profile press for promotional campaigns in our priority countries. Examples might include above-the-line advertising in the THE, The Chronicles and other HE Press plus interviews and feature piece in similar venues. Our communications strategy will review the available channels and devise the right mix of publicity, advertising and other activity by country.

### **Horizon scan and monitor international news to identify global challenges and prepare for them (CP 5.1)**

We will continue to keep abreast, and indeed ahead, of the global challenges we are confronting to ensure that as an institution we are tackling world issues. Our researchers should be answering those questions of international importance and translating their research into societal impact.

Many of our students have a highly developed sense of social responsibility that, harnessed properly, could help promote and action our global challenges. Effective internationalisation brings a better knowledge of the world and an ability to solve problems. Our improved agility, cultural

competence and diversity should enhance our ability to deliver on our ability to solve problems that have global relevance.

## **2.2 Support opportunities for hosting global conferences and summits where UEA can show world leadership in key challenges that our research is addressing (CP 5.7)**

If we are to raise our reputation internationally, we need to be perceived as leaders in research and teaching. For this reason alone, hosting conferences on campus should be facilitated wherever possible. It is almost always the case that those who visit UEA leave with a positive impression of our campus and our community.

Encourage Dialogue. The concept of dialogue resonates well with UEA's ethos, our cross discipline engagement, our collegiate community and our innovative outlook. We will develop internal dialogues on global themes and invite international colleagues at UEA to contribute their perspectives. We will proactively bid for international delegations to visit our campus and invite a wide range of staff to interact during our visits. We will also identify visiting research staff and create opportunities for wider staff interaction during their stay. In addition, we will continue to encourage and develop other initiatives that showcase our campus such as the International Summer School and customized short-term programmes.

Welcome to all. We need to ensure that all visitors to campus are made welcome, including study abroad and exchange students but also short-term research staff. We have an ongoing review for visiting and exchange students, one outcome of which will hopefully improve the incoming study abroad student experience. We should implement a similar review to improve the experience of international research visitors.

## **3. Conclusion – Achieving our actions**

This strategy contains a mix of conventional interventions that are known to work with some innovative ideas that fit UEA'S unique character and strengths. It is an ambitious strategy that will allow UEA to capitalise on its success, attract more international attention and revenue and build our reputation.

Over the duration of this plan, we will need to contemplate how best we achieve our objectives in an institution that has not, to date, been a major global player. Certainly, we will need to consider our governance and resource. We will also require a cultural change across the institution to create a holistic focus on international, beyond the current pockets where interest and expertise now reside. To achieve this the University should consider a global competencies programme, improved language training, induction for new staff and enhanced opportunities for staff mobility.

To be effective in the international arena our administration needs to be

- Agile and quick responding
- Entrepreneurial rather than focused on risk reduction
- Diplomatic and communicative
- Cosmopolitan and culturally competent.

Thus, as other key strategies are developed to deliver the UEA Plan 2016-2020, we will need to monitor these closely to ensure that internationalisation is embedded across the University in our people, education, research and campus.