



HARTPURY

U N I V E R S I T Y

Hartpury University Academic Strategy

2020-2025

1. Introduction

The world is changing, and our society, environment and population are transforming rapidly. These are exciting times, but they make for an uncertain future for which our organisation and graduates must be prepared. As a relatively new Higher Education Institution, this Academic Strategy provides a framework and guide for our Higher Education provision, shaping our curriculum offer and student experience for the years ahead.

In embarking on this journey, we have a solid foundation on which to build. Hartpury University achieved University title in 2018 following successfully achieving Taught Degree Awarding Powers. We are proud of our Teaching Excellence Framework Gold award and continue to focus on the employability of our graduates with over 98% in employment or further study within 6 months of graduating. We focus on an inclusive student experience, as part of an applied programme of study, putting theory into practice. Our growing recruitment and strong achievement rates illustrate the success of our approach and the hard work of our staff.

While the University has made great strides in an evolving educational environment, there is more to do. The ambition to achieve University title provided us with a sense of purpose and clarity over the direction of travel. It is important we re-establish our sense of 'why' as a university, building on our heritage and embracing the future needs of society and our specialist industries.

Hartpury has earned and enjoys a good reputation. Staying within our specialist areas of Animal, Agriculture, Equine, Sport and Veterinary Nursing, we aim to build and create a great reputation as a university alongside Hartpury College. Reputations are built primarily on the foundation of high-quality activities, outputs and achievements, but professional communications, marketing and stakeholder engagement will play an important role in building a clear and distinctive identity and a compelling narrative. Engaging and mobilising our alumni and other stakeholders in our activities will be increasingly important to our future success.

1.1 External Context

The rapidly evolving societal, political and economic landscape has led to increased demands on universities to make their contribution and benefit to society more visible. As the Higher Education sector in England becomes increasingly regulator-driven, universities are required to embrace transformational processes and to be proactive in demonstrating their value. We must demonstrate our stance and role in developing, translating and supporting the impact of new knowledge, ultimately making a difference to society and the world in which we live. Universities have more to offer than traditional concepts of value for money and for example, we should be cognisant of our role in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainability Goals.

While today's 18-year olds have a freedom of choice for the course and university they wish to engage with right up to enrolment, the demographics would suggest a very different experience in the next ten years (figure 1). By the mid-2020's there will be a 17% rise in 18-year olds; by 2030 this will have risen to 27%. Additionally, the growing 18-year old application rate highlights further pressure on university places, with modelling suggesting that English 18-year olds will be 25% more likely to apply than

today¹. This, combined with wider demographic factors, has resulted in a prediction of the total of 18-year olds entering the HE sector rising by 43% by 2030 – an extra 115,000 UK students requiring places. With changes in policy regarding international students and visas, the number of students recruited from outside the UK is also likely to continue to grow. Essentially, based on all strategic signals, planning for a substantial increase in recruitment is prudent.

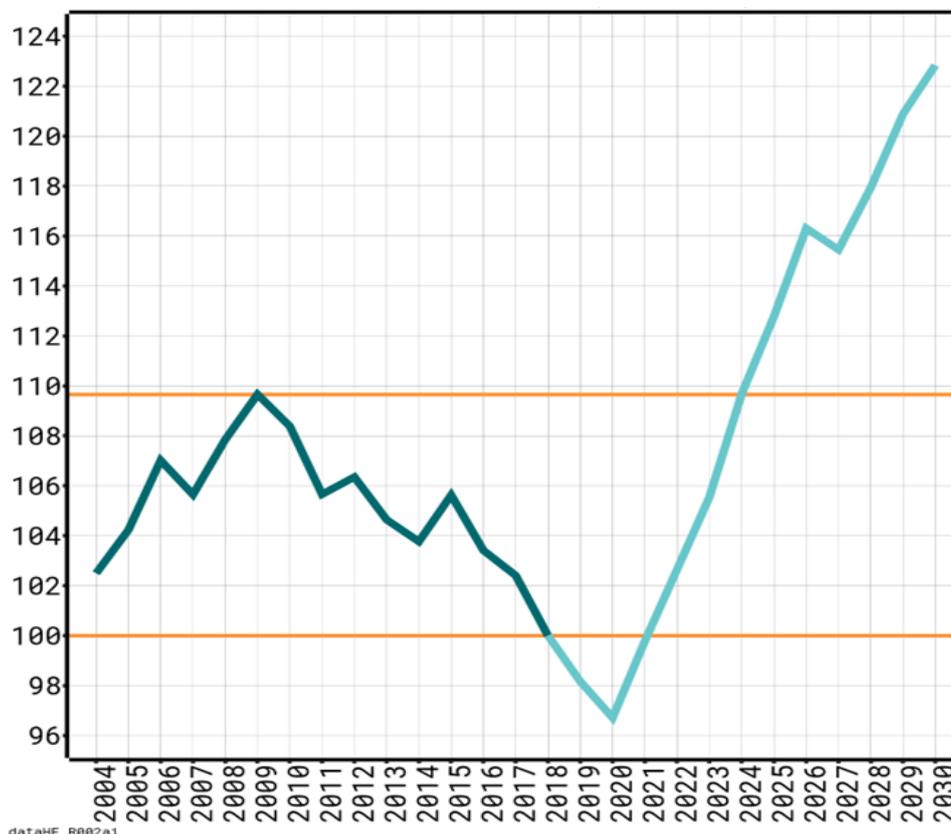


Figure 1: Eighteen-year-old population as a percentage of 2018 number in England (2018 = 100%).

It is important that Hartpury is positioned to meet the needs of the growing population, not only in terms of student numbers but also in terms of industry employment needs. The Industrial Strategy² highlights associated implications, including the ageing population. Additionally, there is evidence in our industries that there will be increasing employment needs, with sectors such as Agribusiness reporting an ageing workforce, with low recruitment and retention of younger staff. We know there are significant challenges for staff retention in veterinary nursing and equine (especially racing), and growing job opportunities within the animal (charity) sector alongside the need for more professionals to support physical activity across the population. Hartpury has an opportunity to position itself to meet the needs of both the growing number of 18-year olds, and future employment needs.

¹ <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-great-recruitment-crisis-planning-for-rapid-student-number-growth/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy>

The HE sector in England is also adjusting to a regulatory approach, with the Office for Students (OfS) utilising metrics extensively to inform their assessment of providers. They are not afraid to hold providers to account. This is alongside a more strategically driven approach to inclusivity: Access and Participation Plans are designed to meet the country's targets, and do not necessarily consider the challenges that this may bring to individual institutions.

1.2 Planning and consultation

The planning process began in the autumn of 2018 when an extensive consultation, research and benchmarking process was launched. The planning period included active dialogue with staff and students, external consultants and external stakeholders. It was informed by analysis of English higher education policy, consideration of practice across the devolved nations and beyond. Relevant regional and national data pertaining to demographics, inclusivity target groups, societal and economic indicators and student feedback formed part of the evidence base. The Academic Strategy is aligned with, and supports, the synergetic delivery of Hartpury 2025 and the Hartpury College Academic Strategy.

During the consultation it became clear that as a specialist institution, it was important we were clear as to where we wanted our strengths to reside. For example, there was significant debate regarding our current position in digital technology and if we wished to invest heavily in this area in order to deliver more of our provision online. Consultation revealed that one of Hartpury's strengths was our applied provision which utilised our campus and industry connections to put the theory into practice. It was agreed that investment should be in facilities which supported our applied curriculum, of which digital technologies may be part of enhancement rather than the main driver.

Debates confirmed that our academic provision would continue to be driven by a teaching excellence first culture recruiting predominantly non-mature students to our undergraduate degree programmes while growing postgraduate taught and postgraduate research provision. We would look at evolving some new models of delivery related to professional development, planning resourcing carefully to ensure the quality of the student experience. As a result of such debates the following five priorities were derived, with underpinning actions designed to provide clarity as to our direction of travel.

2. Priorities

The Academic Strategy sets out a range of priorities and actions that are designed to deliver an outstanding experience for our students, who are at the heart of all our activities. This provides clarity to all stakeholders as to the future direction of the academic provision in line with Hartpury 2025, as illustrated by our ambitious summary statement:

Hartpury University is a specialist community, ambitious and confident in our ability to make a difference to society. We will add value through impactful, inclusive and empowering partnerships with students, staff, communities and the industries we serve.

The summary statement was developed following widespread staff, student and external consultation. We believe the words provide clarity as to our future direction, with people

being at the heart of it. The following five priorities and their associated actions will form the basis of an implementation plan to deliver on this statement:

PRIORITY ONE: Teaching practice will provide learning opportunities that will enable students to realise their potential.

PRIORITY TWO: Our graduates will be highly employable, recognise the value in what they do, and able to make positive contributions to society.

PRIORITY THREE: Hartpury commits to developing impactful and sustainable partnerships in line with strategic priorities.

PRIORITY FOUR: Establish a vibrant and dynamic culture of research and knowledge exchange that fosters excellence, cooperation and impact.

PRIORITY FIVE: Managing growth: Meeting the needs of the growing population; increases in student numbers will be sustainable and will never compromise on quality.

Overarching measures:

Teaching Excellence Framework

Research Excellence Framework

Knowledge Exchange Framework

National Student Survey

Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

PRIORITY ONE: Teaching practice will provide learning opportunities that will enable students to realise their potential.

At Hartpury we believe excellent teaching is delivered by staff who are passionate about their subjects, and is both industry and research informed, resulting in an inspiring and engaging experience. The pursuit of teaching excellence is at the heart of everything we do, with a focus on first class, inspirational teaching and a commitment to continuous enhancement across all areas within teaching and learning. This will be achieved by staff who are fully engaged and supported with their own continuous professional development, which in turn will positively influence student learning. We foster and enable this commitment through a systematic approach to professional development for all staff, throughout their career. Departments will work collegiately, recognising opportunities to celebrate differences and share good practice.

Our applied curriculum will be underpinned by teaching practice which integrates our campus, research and industry interactions in teaching, learning and assessment, encouraging active participation. Teaching practice will challenge students to apply theory and knowledge in real world environments. We believe in the value of face to face interaction where digital teaching and learning methodologies enhance rather than replace.

All teaching practice will celebrate the diversity of the people at Hartpury, creating an environment which does not have barriers to learning. We will recognise that students are individuals and will support them to recognise their own learning styles and equip them with the knowledge and skills to realise their own potential. We will promote equality and diversity in all that we do, prioritising and developing inclusive teaching and learning practices that benefit all students.

Excellent teaching practice will promote active pedagogies and innovative approaches to encourage student engagement and commitment to learning. We will generate conditions which motivate students to be fully involved in their learning, with a shared responsibility for engagement between teaching staff, the institution and the student. Students will participate, attend, submit and achieve.

PRIORITY ONE ACTIONS

1. Empower academic professionals to commit to their own continuous professional development and deliver industry and research informed, outstanding teaching practice.
2. Embed real-world experiences within teaching practice.
3. Promote inclusive teaching practice that facilitates student engagement and understanding of their individual approach to learning.
4. Utilise innovative and excellent teaching practice and participatory learning experiences to enhance the student experience.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Staff have a recognised teaching qualification
2. National Student Survey 'Teaching on my course'
3. National Student Survey 'Learning opportunities'
4. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 'Quality of teaching and learning' and 'Engagement'

5. Student attendance data
6. Student continuation
7. Successful achievement of the milestones identified in the Access and Participation Plan

PRIORITY TWO: Our graduates will be highly employable, recognise the value in what they do, and able to make positive contributions to society.

Hartpury has, throughout its history, encouraged its students to actively gain employability skills and has held graduate attributes at its heart. We have identified attributes that every graduate will be known for, while allowing differential achievement based on the nature of the study and the individual student. Hartpury University graduates will be:

- independent, innovative thinkers and effective communicators;
- able to work collaboratively while understanding their own responsibilities;
- able to prioritise their own and others wellbeing alongside the demands of their professional lives;
- resilient and adaptable in a changing world; and;
- self-aware, with respect for themselves and others, and value different cultures and perspectives.

Our student experience will have these attributes integrated throughout the student journey. We will deliver distinctive and transformative opportunities embedded in both our curricula and approaches. These attributes will be promoted by and for our people: the students, staff and industry and community connections, which make the Hartpury University experience unique. We will design complementary opportunities for our students through social, volunteering and optional learning activities that support them in making a real impact within their community and gaining experience, turning these attributes into positive actions. These real experiences will support our graduates to recognise how they can make a positive contribution to society, now and in the future.

Looking forward, sustainability needs to be part of being a student at the Hartpury, no matter what the discipline. Sustainability is cross-disciplinary, perfectly slotting into undergraduate and postgraduate courses and opening up a rich seam of research possibilities. Concepts, issues and innovations relating to sustainability will be integrated into our programmes.

We will explore how we can meet the demands of the industries and communities we serve. We will utilise reports such as AdvanceHE's Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education Framework and the work of the UK Climate Commission for Further and Higher Education to provide a lens through which we evaluate our academic offer. Both the designs of the programmes we validate and the regulatory framework in which they operate, will provide a coherent and connected experience that places the Hartpury University graduate attributes at its centre; an integrated and recognisable part of the Hartpury University experience.

PRIORITY TWO ACTIONS

1. Embed 'Hartpury Graduate Attributes' in the student experience, from regulatory and curriculum designs to the provision of extra-curricular activities.
2. Provide an institutional environment that actively and consciously facilitates educators in supporting students to become highly employable graduates and make positive contributions to society.
3. Embed sustainability throughout our curriculum, regardless of discipline.
4. Ensure our students are equipped to recognise and communicate the attributes they bring to both the world of work and wider society.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. National Student Survey 'Learning opportunities'
2. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 'Skills development' and 'Resources and services'
3. Employment and Further Study
4. Graduate level employment and higher-level further study
5. Our students know and understand sustainability

PRIORITY THREE: Hartpury commits to developing impactful and sustainable partnerships in line with strategic priorities.

As partners, students will be engaged in their experience and the opportunities that Hartpury provides for them to develop and evolve as individuals. The values, opinions, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of our students will be voiced through various channels including staff-student committees and the student-led Student Union. Such communication channels will ensure that the student voice is inclusive and is heard as an influencer of strategic direction and decisions at Hartpury.

Hartpury is a unique organisation, combining a University, a College, and many industry relevant communities within one campus. This structure provides many benefits for the people of Hartpury, but also results in a relatively complex organisation considering our size. Despite the complexity there are examples where the competing priorities have been navigated successfully, resulting in integration, connection and positive outcomes for students. As both the College and University evolve, it is critical we build upon good practice and strengthen the connection between our internal communities. While culturally challenging, this is an opportunity to work in true partnership for the benefit of all.

Following the achievement of Taught Degree Awarding Powers and university title, the opportunities for academic partnerships has expanded to include franchise and validation. While there is significant risk, fruitful and mutually beneficially academic partnerships have the potential to; facilitate access to Higher Education, support research and knowledge exchange, alongside developing and sharing good practice. Over the duration of this strategy there is the potential to consider further academic partnerships, building on good practice with University Centre Weston. Progression of such partnerships will be dependent on the potential of a mutually beneficial partnership and its sustainability. Partnerships must result in an outstanding student experience

whilst ensuring Hartpury is able to discharge its responsibilities to relevant regulatory and external bodies effectively.

Regionally, we are beginning to strengthen partnerships with schools via our outreach provision and, as a member institution of the Gloucestershire Reaching Out with Schools network, we are confident of being able to fulfil our commitment to access and participation. Hartpury continues to recognise increasing diversity within the student body and seeks to ensure parity of the student experience for minority group students. Inclusivity remains at the heart of all that we do, and we recognise the journey required to create facilities, resources and curriculum that are accessible to all students equally.

Positive and sustainable partnerships are difficult without a planned and structured approach. Ultimately, we wish to engage productively in external partnerships that seek to address contemporary challenges regionally, nationally, and internationally utilising in-house expertise, on-site facilities, and research output. Such partnerships must also offer opportunities to inform and enhance the student experience, proactively involving students and staff to provide interaction and engagement with social issues and civic affairs. Our challenge over the next five years will be refining, strengthening and improving partnerships that meet these requirements.

PRIORITY THREE ACTIONS

1. In partnership with the Student Union, develop and implement a 'Student Voice and Partnership Policy' which captures the University's approach to gathering, learning from and responding to the student voice (including individual and collective views from the student body).
2. Facilitate collaboration between further education and higher education that ensures we provide a curriculum offer and student experience which creates a sense of aspiration for students to join us at 16 and leave with a PhD.
3. To promote effective partnerships between academic departments, specialist facilities and commercial activity to manage the challenge of competing priorities and maximise the student experience.
4. To consider further academic partnerships carefully regarding capacity, sustainability and risk.
5. Fulfil our moral responsibility to raise aspirations to progress to higher education through both school and community-based engagement.
6. Promote sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships with external organisations in line with our strategic priorities.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. National Student Survey 'Student Voice'
2. PTES Student feedback opportunity questions
3. FE to HE progression
4. Successful achievement of the milestones identified in the Access and Participation Plan
5. National Student Survey 'Learning resources'
6. A varied portfolio of partnerships that evidence positive outcomes

PRIORITY FOUR: Establish a vibrant and dynamic culture of research and knowledge exchange that fosters excellence, cooperation and impact

Universities have a pivotal role in creating and sharing knowledge. Hartpury will create a culture of excellence for both research and the support of non-academic partners (knowledge exchange). Building on a solid foundation, Hartpury University must now embed a culture which values and supports research and knowledge exchange (RKE). As a relatively small organisation, a strategic approach is needed to prevent dilution of our resources across too many areas and projects. Research will align with our specialist subject areas, driven by industry, positively impacting on professional practice while underpinning our own curriculum. The emphasis will need to be one of quality over quantity whilst remaining in our specialist areas, together with improved communication internally and externally of our research, its value and impact.

Reputationally, research and knowledge exchange will become increasingly important to Hartpury University. For the first time, the organisation is eligible to enter the national exercises that judge quality (e.g. Research Excellence Framework [REF]). Hartpury will also be part of the emerging Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). Our performance will inform league tables, academic and commercial partnerships, funding opportunities and influence staff and student recruitment. Demonstrating the ability to research to a high level is integral to the reputation and credibility of a university.

Hartpury is a unique organisation that has many outstanding assets that have the potential to be a catalyst for a dynamic and vibrant research environment. The presence of a university, college, elite sports academy, international level equine facilities and events, animal collections, working farm, agri-tech centre and the rural estate and campus itself, are incredible assets that we should maximise in our research and practice. The challenge going forward will be to bring the parts of the organisation together so that all are part of the RKE journey and culture, and all parts of the organisation feel the associated benefit (e.g. in our practice and curriculum). The main asset Hartpury has is its people and we must ensure that we are inclusive and retain our collegiate culture as we aspire to RKE excellence. We must make sure that there is a place in our RKE culture and structure for all. Support to achieve excellence in RKE will exist through staff development and mentoring. As a small organisation, it is vital that we are externally facing and embracing partnerships, both with other research institutions but also with the communities and industries that we serve. Through partnership and collaboration, we can achieve much more with the resources we have and maximise RKE with real world impact.

We have seen rapid growth in our postgraduate research (PGR) student numbers. As with all Hartpury University students, we aim to provide an outstanding experience to our PGR students. With growth in numbers we will need to plan carefully to make sure that the student experience and research quality are of the highest standard. We will ensure that research degree awarding powers (RDAP) is a realistic goal within the next decade, with REF 2027 as a significant milestone, alongside 30 PGR completions.

PRIORY FOUR ACTIONS

1. Increase the quality of research across research centres and ensure research has real world impact.
2. Develop an inclusive research and knowledge exchange culture that develops and retains talent, benefitting all of Hartpury.
3. Be outward looking and build research and knowledge exchange partnerships with industry and the community.
4. Increase income from research and knowledge exchange in a sustainable manner.
5. Ensure that research and evidence informed practice is adopted across all parts of the organisation through effective internal knowledge exchange.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Quality of research outputs assessed by peer review, through the Research Excellence Framework or our own exercises
2. Annual external quality scoring of research outputs and impacts
3. Percentage of teaching, scholarship and research staff
4. Postgraduate Research Student completion in relation to planned timescales
5. RKE income to the University

PRIORITY FIVE: Meeting the needs of the growing population; increases in student numbers will be sustainable and will never compromise on quality.

As highlighted in the introduction, the 18-year-old population in England will grow rapidly in the duration of this strategy and it is important Hartpury is positioned to meet the associated demands. Growth does not come without risk. The strategic plan agreed by Corporation in 2019 raises the target for HE student numbers to 3000. The quality of the student experience is paramount and we are mindful that forward planning is essential to avoid any negative impact on the student experience. Over time, planning will also need to consider how we select the students who will benefit most from the opportunity of studying at Hartpury. Selection criteria and methodology must align with our values and not simply be based on tariff points.

While it is not planned to significantly change modes of delivery, increases will include growth of postgraduate numbers (increasing evening and weekend activities on campus) as well as undergraduate – we will need to be a 365-day campus. Additionally, growth of international students is predicted following changes to UK immigration policy and the popularity of Hartpury in our specialist fields with University title. This further compounds the need for us to think of the Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and International student experience in a more holistic way. There is an opportunity to explore part time provision aimed at supporting life-long learning of those engaged in a professional environment (including work and / or professional sport). Such provision and associated experiences would need to be designed specifically for this unique audience and this cannot be a rebadge of our current relatively traditional curriculum and student experience.

Our approaches to curriculum design, delivery and student support will need to be reviewed to ensure both effectiveness and sustainability. Existing teaching and learning

spaces will be refreshed to promote active pedagogies and innovative approaches to encourage student engagement and commitment to learning. University student spaces will be invested in, including the development of a University Hub, providing an identity on campus for all university students, supporting an outstanding learning experience for all. This will include cross-organisational and specialist developments, with the significant need to invest in animal science facilities and to develop a stronger identity for Agriculture. There is time for effective planning to ensure the associated opportunities enhance the student experience.

University staff are fundamental to Hartpury's success, thus investment will be committed to build capacity, capability, autonomy and accountability in order to achieve our strategic priorities. This commitment will include supporting the development of leadership capacity and providing opportunity to 'grow our own' for succession. Continuing to develop a performance orientated culture is a priority at both an individual and department level and this will start with encouraging and rewarding self-reflection. Encouraging, nurturing and rewarding development, contribution and impact are vital to engage and motivate our existing workforce, and to attract new. We need to develop the right environment in which people can grow - one that encourages innovation, continuous professional development and scholarship, and one in which managers are not afraid to embed autonomy and accountability.

We need to continue to develop a culture which seeks and embraces change and continuous improvement in everything the University undertakes. Our staff should feel this is a fulfilling place to work and that they are empowered to be creative, challenge constructively, to be solution focused, putting forward new ideas and make decisions.

Ultimately growth will bring many benefits. Firstly, we will be providing opportunity for the growing population and meeting employer demands. Growth will result in a critical mass ensuring resilience, optimum size and long-term sustainability. The need to develop a stronger HE identity on campus will be satisfied and investment in physical and human resource will allow us to enhance activities and experiences, mitigating against the risks of being one person deep. To reduce the risk and maximise the opportunities associated with growth, planning for 3000 students is critical.

PRIORITY FIVE ACTIONS

1. Develop, agree and implement a student recruitment plan, which is aligned to our specialist provision, to meet growth targets and ensuring an excellent student experience. An inclusive approach to selection criteria will need to be considered carefully.
2. Develop a vision for the Postgraduate Taught and International Student experience which supports their integration culturally and academically into the Hartpury community, while celebrating their differences.
3. Explore part-time provision designed specifically for those in a professional setting / employment, where we are confident we can exceed their specific requirements and expectations.
4. Work with the campus master plan team and campus facilities team to ensure a planned approach to investment in both new and existing facilities to ensure a positive student experience, in and out of the classroom.

5. Ensure staff capacity, capability and a culture of accountability, through investment both financially and culturally.
6. Embed a culture of self-reflection and continuous improvement in systems and processes, including data governance.
7. Review and embed practice which ensures we continue to know our students through a coherent approach to supporting academic personal tutoring and pastoral wellbeing.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Growth targets
2. Student retention
3. Staff retention
4. Staff satisfaction
5. Student satisfaction

3. Implementation

Implementation will be led by the Academic Strategic Leadership Group³ who will be responsible and accountable for the planning and delivery of the priorities within the Academic Strategy. For each of the priority strands in the Academic Strategy, an annual operational plan will be prepared which will set out the timeline of steps that will be taken to deliver the objectives. The operational plans will outline associated targets, milestones, achievements, performance indicators and risks relevant to the priority. Progress will be monitored closely by the Academic Strategic Leadership Group. Updates will be regularly reported to Academic Board, Quality Enhancement and Standards Committee and Corporation.

During implementation, there is a commitment to ongoing engagement and consultation with stakeholders. Furthermore, data analytics will increasingly provide an evidence base to guide the work as it evolves over the lifespan of the strategy. This will require resources and it is important that the need to improve our capabilities in this area is acknowledged at this point.

Success will look and feel like:

TEF gold institution with 3000 HE students, a solid REF performance with PGR completions and excitement about REF 2028. Partners including students will see Hartpury as a first-choice institution. People will feel empowered to take responsibility, plan ahead and innovate. Our graduates will be sought after and will be making a difference within industry and the global society. We will be proud to belong.

³ Membership comprises of the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Academic Registrar, Dean of Teaching Learning and Student Experience, Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange and the Head of Inclusivity.