Strategy 2023 - 2027.

Supporting aspiration, creating opportunities, delivering impact

University of
Northampton

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Contents.

Introduction from Vice Chancellor.

Professor Anne-Marie Kilday

When I arrived at the University of Northampton in the Summer of 2022, I was welcomed into an institution that has been transforming lives for decades. What began as Northampton Technical College in 1924 has evolved into the county's only seat of Higher Education, enriching knowledge through research and building a better future for thousands of people in the UK and around the world.

I am incredibly proud to be the Vice Chancellor of the University of Northampton, and the custodian of its legacy. In uncertain times, our polestar is the positive impact we can make, and the steps we must take to achieve our ambitions and enable others to achieve theirs.

This strategy will be our guide and has been developed in close consultation with the people most affected by it – our staff and student community. Their commitment to their University is on each page, and I thank them for their guidance and counsel.

Now it is time for us to rise to their challenge and work together to deliver the University of Northampton they have envisioned. I am looking forward to every step of that journey and invite you to join us.

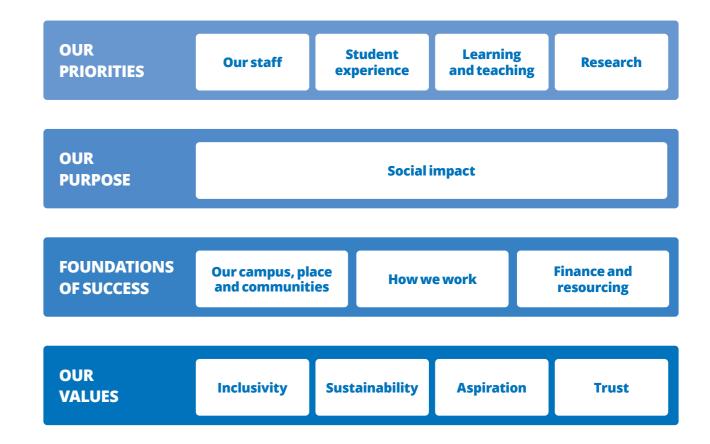**Professor Anne-Marie Kilday
Vice Chancellor**

How we developed this strategy.

This strategy has been developed through a process of co-creation. Throughout the winter of 2022/23, we held a range of face-to-face and online events where staff from across the University came together to discuss our ambitions, sourced ideas from across our staff body through a dedicated survey, and spoke to students about what is most important to them.

We also referred to existing data where available and held focused conversations in the University Leadership Team and our Board of Governors. A draft version of the strategy (the Green Paper) was circulated for consultation in June 2023 and final revisions have been made based on feedback received.

Strategy tiers

OUR PRIORITIES	Our staff	Student experience	Learning and teaching	Research

OUR PURPOSE	Social impact

FOUNDATIONS OF SUCCESS	Our campus, place and communities	How we work	Finance and resourcing

OUR VALUES	Inclusivity	Sustainability	Aspiration	Trust

Our mission.

Supporting aspiration

Creating opportunities

Delivering impact

Our values.

Four core values, developed through conversations across our community, underpin everything in our strategy and will guide our decisions.

Inclusivity

The University of Northampton celebrates and promotes being a diverse and inclusive community because diverse characteristics bring diversity of thought and experiences. This creates a richer community where – with respect and fairness – everyone matters and everyone can excel.

Sustainability

The University aims to become net zero carbon this decade. We will mobilise our University community towards common objectives and collective action to be a sustainable institution, with positive impacts on our environment and on society.
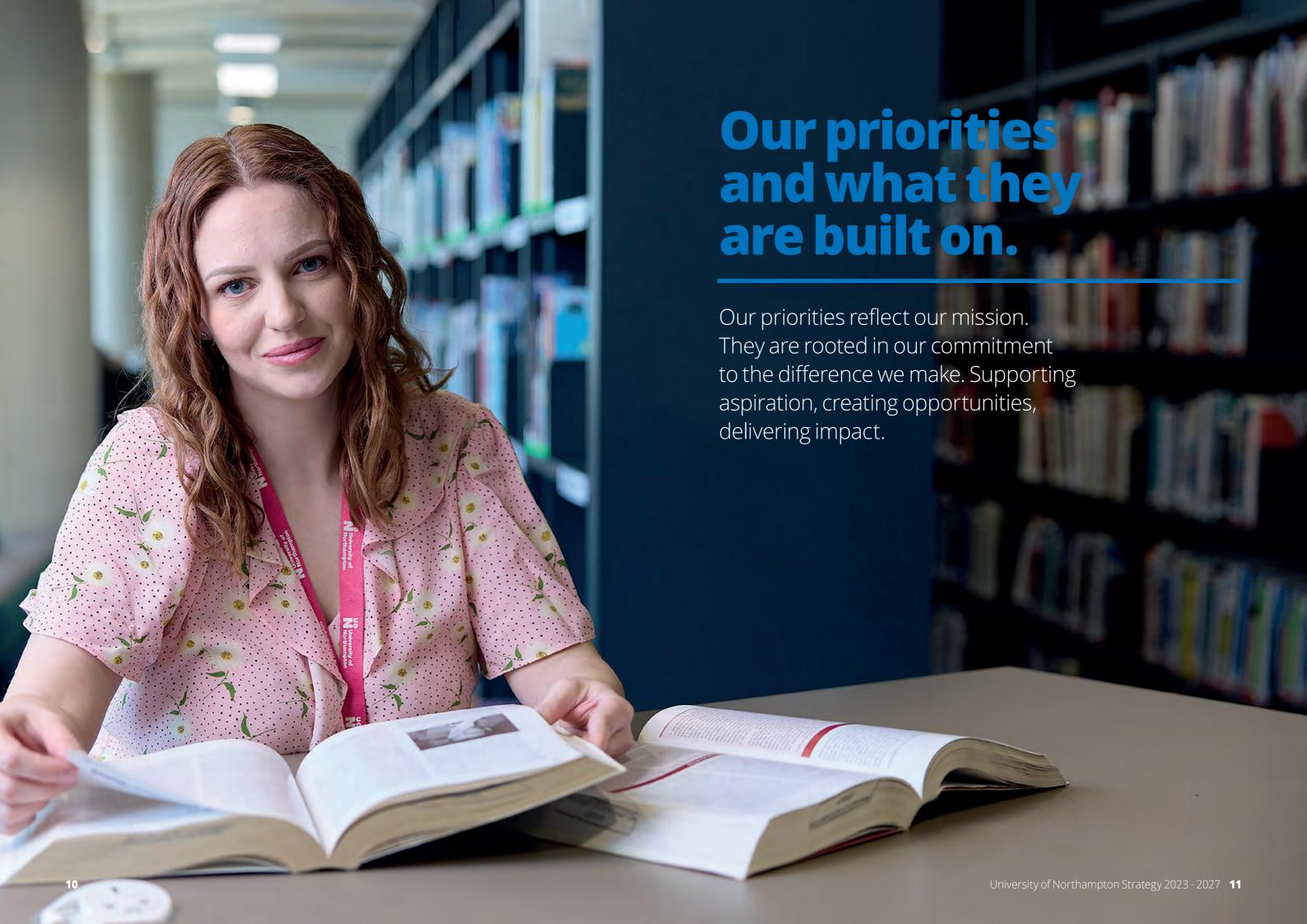
CORE VALUES

Aspiration

The motto on the University's crest is 'Ne Nesciamus' (Let us not be ignorant). Our strategy outlines our ambitions for the future of our University, but also will enable us to realise the aspirations of our staff, students and stakeholders for excellence in all we do.

Trust

Trust is a core principle of the way we work together. We will build relationships which foster trust through respect, reliability, transparency and a shared mission to support aspiration, create opportunities, and deliver impact.

Our priorities and what they are built on.

Our priorities reflect our mission. They are rooted in our commitment to the difference we make. Supporting aspiration, creating opportunities, delivering impact.

Priority one:

Our staff.

Our staff are our greatest asset. We want colleagues to be proud to work at the University of Northampton and know that the University is proud of them. We will showcase excellence and success and provide opportunities for development.

In a competitive job market, our employment offer will attract and retain talent by creating an inclusive community, reinforcing collegiality and dedication to staff wellbeing.

Culture is important, and we understand that an environment which allows our staff to be at their best is essential. We are committed to listening and working in partnership to make this happen.

We will evaluate our colleagues' experience through surveys and data collection which are sensitive to people's time. We aim to ensure that staff are confident they are valued by the University and their health and wellbeing is of paramount importance.

BY 2027, WE WILL	HOW
Support a culture of excellence in all our work	Develop our People Strategy, outlining our plans and ambitions for attracting, developing, engaging and retaining our staff. Improve the staff life cycle from application and onboarding, through career progression. Improve staff development, recognising varied trajectories through which they may progress their career.
Develop our support for health and wellbeing	Relieve administrative pressures staff face and allow them to focus on objectives. Continue our work to codify and balance workloads for all categories of staff to ensure equity. Enhance childcare and sports facilities on campus.
Build an inclusive working environment	Develop, implement and embed the University's first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Recognise the diversity of our staff body, their circumstances and their needs, and continue work around how we can best support this for everyone's benefit.

Priority two:

Our students' experience.

Studying at the University of Northampton will be a transformative experience that creates opportunities for our students. During their time at the University our students develop academically, as well as socially. They develop their social capital, their confidence in facing challenges, and the full set of skills they will need after graduation. Students are encouraged to have high expectations of themselves, in an environment that enables all to succeed.

We will achieve the best possible student experience by fostering a culture of collaboration with students. We will capture the student voice and feedback combined with other forms of evidence and data to adapt and improve our students' experiences of studying at the University.

We will work with key stakeholders to make Northampton a compelling destination where our students can expand their knowledge and horizons and add to the rich network of relationships and connections in the wider world.

We are committed to access, participation and student success. The individuals who make up our student community represent a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances. We will ensure that all our students have an excellent experience, whether they study on campus, remotely, or at one of our partner institutions.

We want university life to be enjoyable and successful for all our students. We will develop our student accommodation on and near our campus to benefit study, belonging, wellbeing and social activities.

Evaluation of our students' feedback to understand our strengths and weaknesses is vital. We will utilise data from the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), to conduct our own surveys as appropriate, and take action based on their insights to drive improvements.

BY 2027, WE WILL	HOW
Develop dialogue and co-creation with students	Create a shared agenda for student experience with the Students' Union, agreeing a clear mandate for each side.
	Build an environment in which students can develop ideas and initiatives themselves, including student societies and opportunities to engage with our local communities.
	Work with local stakeholders to develop a town-wide student accommodation strategy and develop our accommodation portfolio to offer as many students as possible high-quality, affordable accommodation on or near campus.
Build an inclusive environment and sense of belonging	Optimise the enrolment and orientation processes to be inclusive of and engaging to all students.
	Work with local stakeholders to develop the town centre of Northampton to be more student-friendly, with associated benefits for the whole community.
	Make the digital experience equivalent to the onsite experience for learning and community.
	Construct modes of attendance and personalised timetables that meet, as far as possible, the diversity of our students' needs.
Develop our support for health and wellbeing	Ensure specific support for groups with particular needs, such as international students.
	Develop on-campus social and sports facilities that reflect the diversity of our students and their needs, including outside core working hours.

Priority three:

Learning and teaching.

Our approach will always be led by the question: "what will our students need when they graduate?"

This question will inform our ongoing development of excellent pedagogy for a rounded set of graduate attributes, covering knowledge, transferable skills, and engagement with social and global challenges.

Our methodology is based around active learning in small groups, making the most of digital platforms and tools and focusing on interactions which make the biggest difference to learning. We will continue to refine this to reflect the diversity of our students' learning and foster belonging to a truly inclusive learning community

Our pedagogy will be research-informed, and will support students to undertake their own research, developing these skills from the start of their degree. It will be inspiring, inclusive and accessible, and will include authentic and stretching assessments and real-world learning experiences oriented towards employability.

Our portfolio will respond to changing social and economic dynamics, national priorities, engagement with employers and other partners and – crucially – the voice of our students. We will explore initiatives such as apprenticeship models, the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, active distance learning and the possibilities of extended reality and artificial intelligence.

We will ensure all our teaching staff feel supported in their work and will offer learning and teaching career pathways with parity to research pathways. Our teachers will build practice as a community, reflect the dynamic nature of our education and fuse expertise from academic, industry and practitioner backgrounds.

We will continue to target Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework as an objective measure of success. We will also achieve improvements in the percentage of our undergraduate students continuing into the second year of their degree, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, through innovative approaches to students' learning outcomes.

BY 2027, WE WILL	HOW
Develop a truly inclusive academic community of staff and students that co-creates learning at the University	Overcome award gaps between those groups identified in the Access and Participation Plan. Develop Active Blended Learning for subject, level and student experience. Develop interdisciplinarity across the portfolio to support integrative approaches for our students.
Innovate and develop our methodology and practice	Celebrate, reward and disseminate excellent practice in learning and teaching. Introduce more flexible learning models, including those available via the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. Embed a negotiated learning and assessment model. Operationalise the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) digital transformation framework for learning and teaching.
Strengthen the supportive environment for students to thrive	Develop the role of the Personal Academic Tutor within a strengthened Integrated Learner Support offering. Develop placements/Real World Learning including authentic assessments, in all programmes.

Priority four:

Research.

Research is integral to what we do and who we are as a University. We aim to be a truly research-based institution – one in which excellence is embedded, and contributes to learning and teaching, knowledge exchange, social impact, enterprise and innovation, while we respond to the priorities of our communities.

We already have areas of strength in our research. We will build on these to develop a consistent profile of quality that is recognised inside and outside of the University, supporting interdisciplinary and collaborative work with other organisations where we can. We will engage in research that tackles regional, national and global challenges, and delivers meaningful and significant impact for the communities we serve.

Our research environment and culture will reflect and support the diverse activities and expertise of all our staff. We will strive for operational excellence in processes, systems and support that underpin our research. This includes a commitment to recognise time for research-related activity, to develop and support our staff and student ambitions and to create an environment that will attract and retain talented researchers.

We believe that having ambitious goals around research can, and will, enrich the student experience. We will cultivate and codify links from research to learning and teaching, developing priority themes across the two.

We will build towards the next national research exercise, aiming for ambitious increases in the quality of our outputs. In the intervening years, we will track our progress through internal peer review and evaluation.

BY 2027, WE WILL	HOW
Develop a research environment and culture that prioritises quality	Align our research to meet regional, national and international priorities. Strive for operational excellence in terms of research support and our systems and processes. Target investment at areas with a strong case for strategic development, supporting interdisciplinary centres of excellence and collaboration where we can.
Create a culture of research	Codify workload planning to ensure that time allocated for research is consistent and ringfenced. Enhance support for career progression pathways linked to research, including for staff from professional backgrounds. Broaden and deepen our partnerships with other organisations as key enablers of social impact, innovation and enterprise.
Embed stronger mechanisms to support and capture our impact	Increase the numbers of and support for Postgraduate Research students, post docs and early career researchers. Strive to make it possible for more of our staff to engage in research and contribute to our research profile as an institution.

Our purpose:

Social impact.

Social impact is our ultimate purpose. We create social impact through the transformative experience of our students. Our research, enterprise and engagement with the wider world, and our diverse collaborations and partnerships will continue to transform lives, communities and businesses for the better.

Social impact will always be a key feature of our education, and our students and our staff will be socially conscious changemakers, engaged in global challenges and confident of their role in making positive contributions to address them.

We will refine our thinking around the complex processes which make our social impact happen and how we evaluate it. We will have a clear story around social impact and the pathways that create it through our student experience, learning, teaching and research.

Relationships and external engagement are fundamental in

creating social impact. We will be clear around what our external relationships mean to us, allowing us to further develop collaboration with our local communities, businesses and government, and deploy our expertise to shape policy and development in our town and county. Our social impact will reach beyond Northampton to the national and international canvas both through our own activities and through our partnerships.

We will evidence the social impact of our education through evaluating our students' confidence in entering the job market, and the social impact of our research through our

participation in impact assessments in the Research Excellence Framework. We will also work with our academic experts at the University to develop appropriate and meaningful ways of measuring our social impact.

BY 2027, WE WILL	HOW
Ensure our social impact benefits our external stakeholders	Sharpen our approach to managing external relationships, with optimised processes and senior owners for key relationships. Capture and report the social impact of programmes/subject areas/departments internally and externally. Help businesses and other stakeholders understand their social impact, working with them as partners. Define and publicise Northampton's expertise in social impact for prospective students, staff, partners and clients.
Refine how we embed social impact at UON	Develop our curriculum and teaching to instil in our graduates social commitment and understanding of the difference they can make. Introduce elective modules in specific social impact topics that students can undertake alongside their course. Make the evaluation of a programme's contribution to social impact part of validation and quality processes. Introduce a UON degree apprenticeship scheme for individuals from low social economic areas of the county.

The foundations of our success.

Our foundations will support the delivery of every aspect of the strategy. While they may evolve over time and as our circumstances develop, their crucial enabling role will be ongoing.

Foundation one:

Our campus, place and communities.

Our Waterside Campus reflects our ambition. A home-from-home for our students, staff and local communities. Our campus will be full of life, host to a range of learning, social and wellbeing experiences. It will bring people together, enabling our communities to mix while building place and belonging. It will be environmentally sustainable, supporting local ecology and biodiversity.

We will develop a framework to guide development on our campus, ensuring these facilities are prioritised whilst identifying opportunities to enhance our presence locally.

We are a civic institution, with strong roots in our town, our community and our economy. Local businesses and employers are key partners, offering opportunities for our students, and for developing our research and knowledge exchange. We will be a vital participant in local policy developments, partnering with government, business and other anchor institutions to support development in our town and county.

We will listen to our stakeholders and work with them towards shared goals. We know there is appetite for the University to do more to make our work relevant to our local communities. This may include supporting our students to both learn and make a difference through placements or volunteering, supporting local heritage activities, or working with local schools to support more of their students to go to university.

Our community extends beyond our campus. Many of our students live further afield and connect to us as their University even if they only visit occasionally. It also includes students at our partner institutions and our alumni. Our community-building will reflect this, using both place and other forms of connection to create common purpose and shared goals.

Our horizons also extend beyond Northamptonshire and we will serve as a conduit between our locality and the wider world. We will do this through our research and practice, which range from local to global, and crucially the range of our external relationships through which we will continue to learn, exchange knowledge and deploy expertise.

Also vital are our partnerships in the UK and other countries, which enrich the diversity of our student body and offer collaborative approaches towards shared goals.

Foundation two:

How we work.

Looking to the future, it will be important that our ways of working are supported by contemporary systems and processes which allow us to focus our attention on the work we most value.

We will continue to focus on this, and our approach will be guided by transparent dialogue across our staff body to develop solutions in partnership.

By 2027, we will conduct a transformation programme for our systems, processes and operating models, including administrative and logistical systems, and the tools that we use for supporting core business such as teaching and research. This will develop the University's information and technology provision to be a true strategic enabler of our

priorities, supporting a forward-looking culture and way of working. It will improve efficiency around basic operations, making them simpler and more reliable, improve staff and students' day-to-day experience by relieving their time to focus on what they most value, and support better informed decision making. This will ensure that our systems and staffing models are resilient for the future.

We will also review our frameworks for planning and budgeting. This will establish

an integrated approach for managing investment and supporting planned resourcing of all areas, especially those which are growing. It will also serve to protect our financial sustainability, integrating this with our other aims as an institution.

We will also improve our capture and use of data to support informed decision-making and governance and our ability to manage our performance and progress towards our goals.

Foundation three:

Funding and resourcing.

To achieve our ambitions, we need to ensure that we can fund and resource them effectively.

We have modelled the financial dimensions of our goals to 2027. This modelling is at the high level to give us assurance that our objectives are realistic.

It includes strategic initiatives that we wish to undertake and essential investment for key

enablers such as IT and our estate. This will support robust financial planning and resource allocation up till our first target year, 2027.

Our objectives are based on the most up-to-date intelligence and data. However, there is a high degree of uncertainty in

the Higher Education sector and its main income streams due to external factors beyond our control. We will continue to adapt to our external environment and any fluctuation in our expected financial position accordingly.

Afterword from Chair of the University of Northampton Board of Governors

Geoff Donnelly.

It is my pleasure to write this afterword for the new strategy of the University of Northampton. My colleagues and I have an enviable privilege to be its trustees, bringing experience of the private, public and voluntary sectors which rely on the teaching and research Higher Education provides.

The Board is delighted to endorse this strategy, and thank the staff, students and leadership of the University for their work in developing it. Having worked in the corporate sector and served on the Boards of several Higher Education institutions, I am acutely aware that reflection on a wide array of viewpoints leads to better planning, which informs decisions that move an organisation collectively in the right way. That has been the approach throughout the process that created the document you now read. I trust that you will find it lays a clear path for this University, and the foundation of great things to come.

During the time period covered by this strategy document the University will be transitioning from its youth to maturity. The aim now is – through the delivery of its mission and living its values – to become an exemplar for good practice in the sector for social impact and inclusivity that will benefit our local, national and international communities.

**Geoff Donnelly
Chair of the University of Northampton
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