

2020 - 2025

STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION



Professor Nigel Seaton
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Nigel Seaton

Our new Strategic Plan, the second of my tenure as Principal, will guide the development of Abertay University over the next five years and beyond. This document represents a considerable effort made by the Abertay community over the last year or so as we have reflected on our purpose as a university, set out our ambitions for the next five years, and considered realistically what it will take to achieve these ambitions. This has been an endeavour of the University community as a whole, with very many members of staff and students contributing to the various stages of the plan's development.

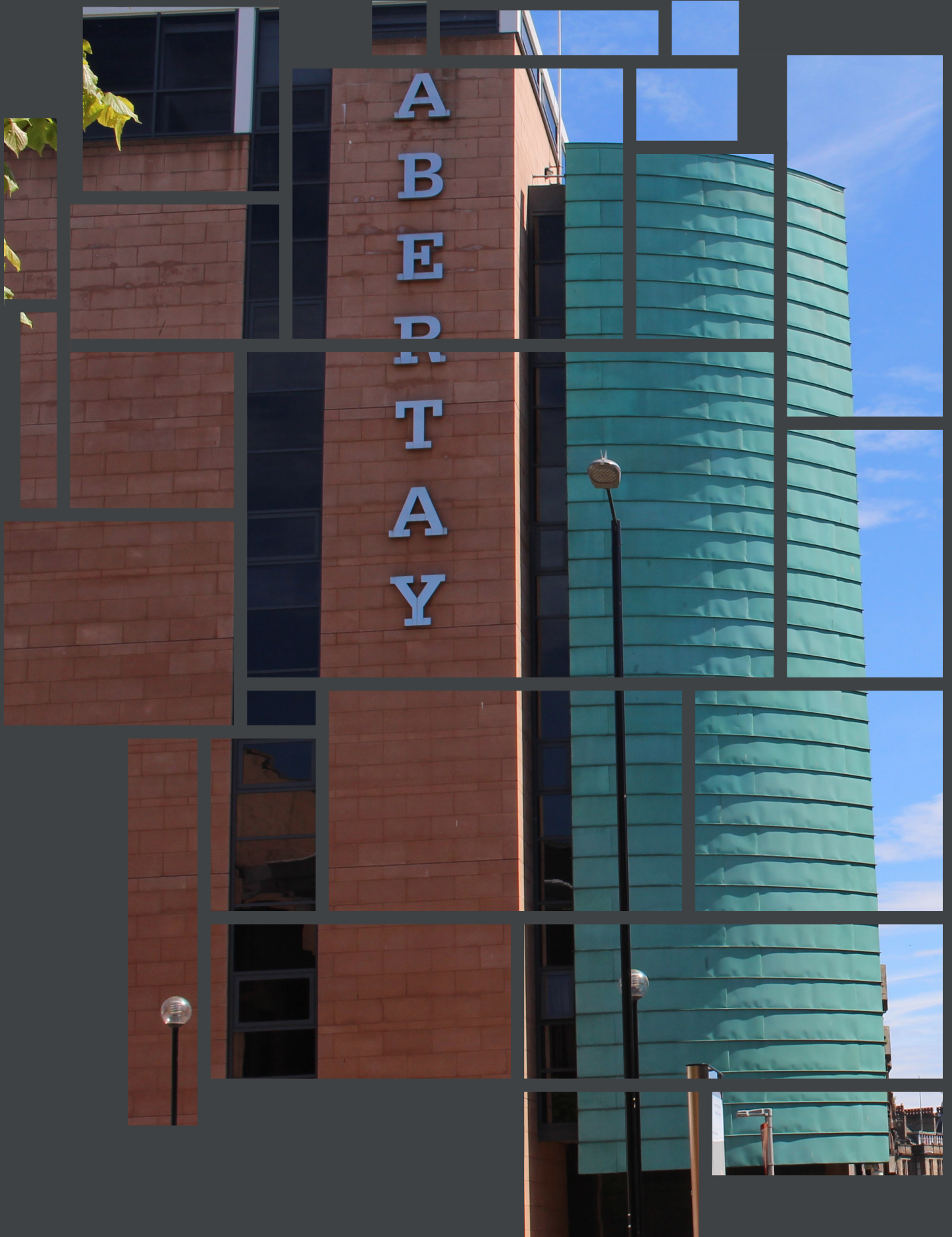
The plan begins with a short statement of our purpose as a University. Prominent within this statement is the commitment to providing 'transformational opportunities'. This is what we are about at Abertay, and we are proud of our record. We make a strong contribution to social mobility through our work at the University, and we are an innovator in this area, having introduced 'access thresholds' to support the admission of disadvantaged students three years before other Scottish universities.

Compared with our last Strategic Plan, covering the years 2015 – 2020, there are points of both continuity and of change. We remain focused on our students, and strongly rooted in Dundee and the wider Tayside region. We remain committed to teaching a broad range of subjects and to using our research and our specialist expertise to support the development of industry and commerce.

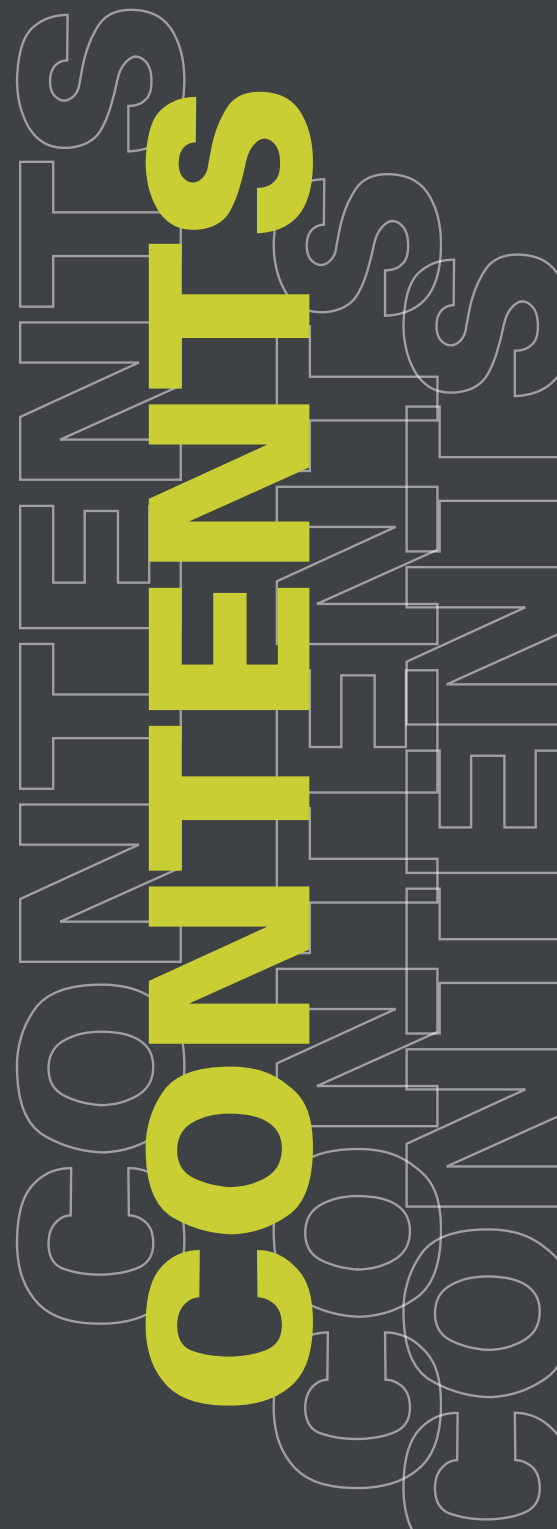
Alongside this strong element of continuity, there are two major changes. We will build on our expertise in computer games, cyber security and computer science in order to put digital technology at the heart of all that we do. Alongside significant planned investment in our core IT systems, this will enhance the experience of our students and empower our staff to work in new ways.

The second change is a focus on academic collaboration, particularly internationally. Here we are taking a measured approach, building on our strengths, with the twin aims of broadening access to an Abertay qualification and increasing our income from sources other than the Scottish Government. Over the period of the last strategic plan, we focussed primarily on our activities at our campus in Dundee. Our successes over recent years, for example our very good performance in the 2019 National Student Survey, where we are ranked 13th in the UK for Overall Student Satisfaction, provide a strong foundation for the exploration of these new opportunities.

I hope you will enjoy reading our new Strategic Plan. We are proud of what we have achieved as a University, and we are going forward with confidence towards the opportunities and challenges ahead.



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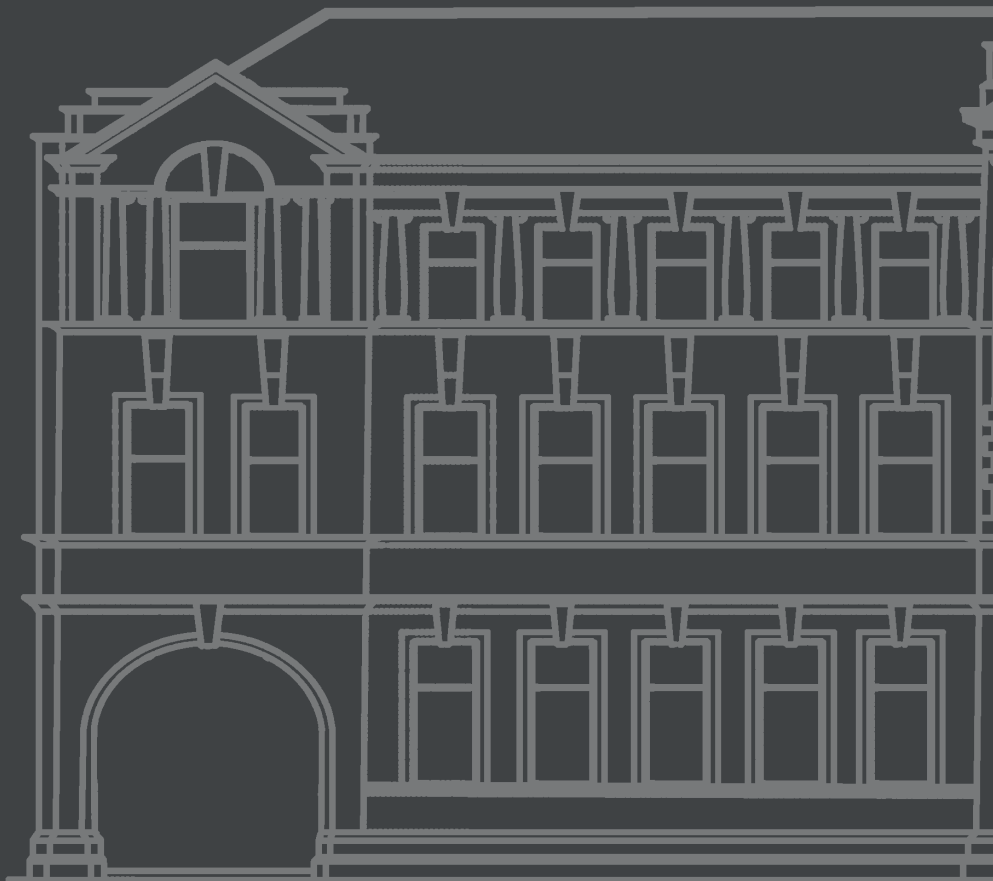


OUR PURPOSE

For 25 years Abertay has been a leader in Scotland in enabling access to university and in successfully preparing students for the world of work. Rooted in our community, we offer opportunities, through our teaching, research and knowledge exchange activities, to students, staff and graduates to excel in their chosen paths and to have a positive impact on the world around us. We do this in our own way, being different if it means we can serve our students, staff, partners, and society better.

We are proud of what we do and of the contribution the Abertay community makes to the success of Dundee, Scotland and the wider world.

As we look towards the next 25 years, our focus remains on offering opportunities, making a difference in people's lives and doing this in our distinctive Abertay way.



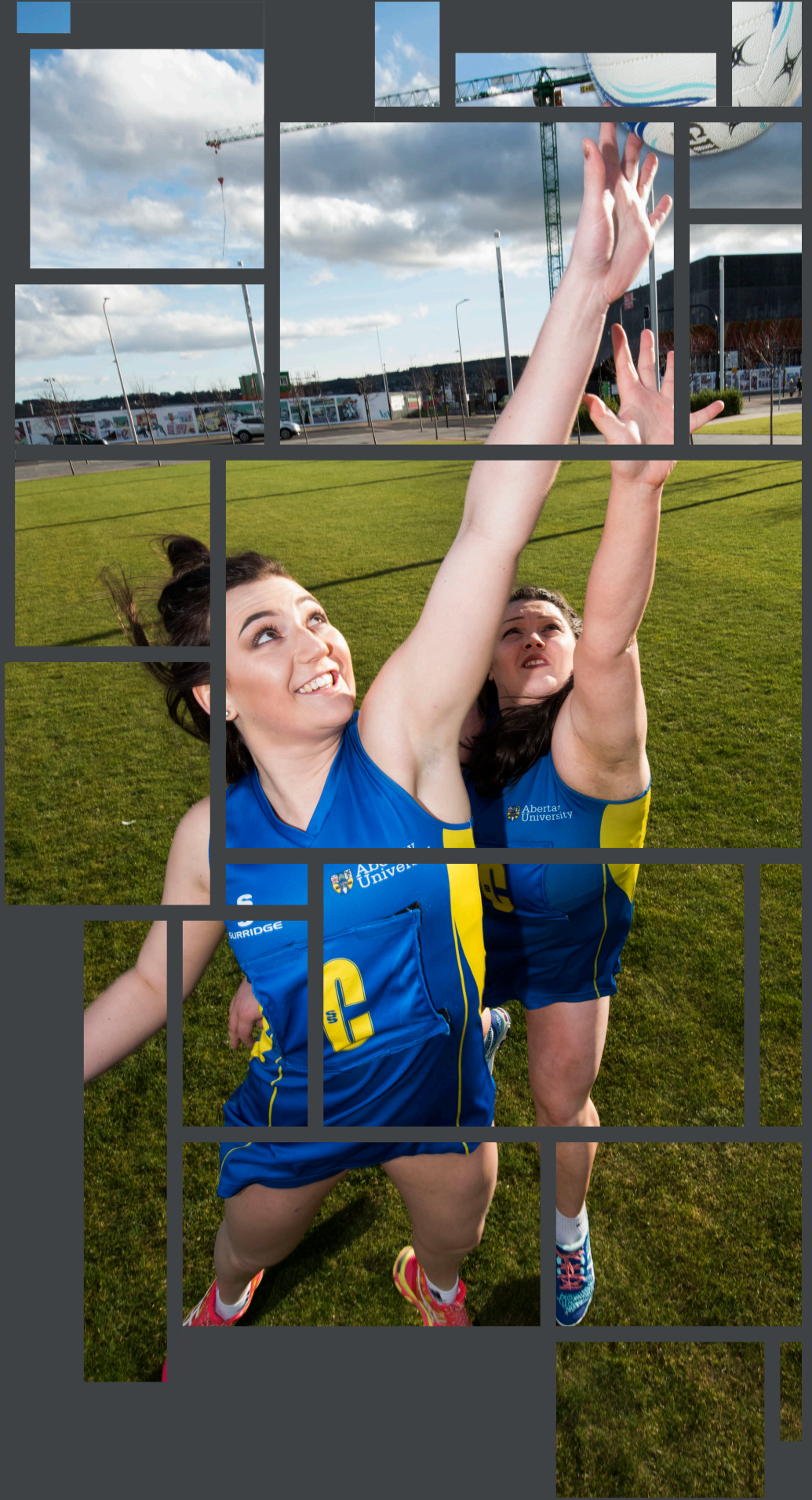
To offer transformational opportunities to everyone who has the ability to benefit from Abertay's approach to university education.

To inspire and enable our students, staff and graduates to achieve their full potential and to have a positive impact on the world around us.

To prepare students for the world of work and a life of learning.



Abertay makes a difference
Abertay makes a difference
Abertay makes a difference
Abertay makes a difference



- We remain committed to **offering transformational opportunities** to anyone with the potential to benefit and we will continue to refine our approach to providing access to an Abertay degree. We will optimise the support available through our highly experienced and committed professional staff to allow as many students as possible to realise their potential.
- We are a leader in Scotland in **enabling access to university**, and to our academic and professional expertise, to students from a wide range of backgrounds. We were the first university in Scotland to introduce a 'minimum access threshold', fully recognising the circumstances in which students' qualifications have been achieved. Each year around a quarter of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds
- We are an integral part of the tertiary education system in Scotland and recognise that students may follow many different paths. We are committed to offering a **range of routes to an Abertay degree**. A third of our undergraduate entrants each year start in year two or three of a degree, receiving full credit for their previous qualifications, and we will continue to work with our college partners to ensure smooth and successful transition to Abertay.
- We are committed to having an **attractive and broad portfolio** of teaching and research, spanning science, technology, art, social sciences and professional disciplines and to exploiting opportunities across all subject areas to increase our prominence.
- We deliver **world-leading programmes** in computer games and arts and have been recognised in the top 20 universities in the world (and first in Europe) for computer games for the last five years. We will seek to develop and further enhance our reputation in this area.
- We will focus on **academic excellence** and delivery of a high-quality set of programmes by our highly-skilled and motivated academic staff and underpinned by our research. This will include online delivery and working in partnership with others.
- Our **research and knowledge exchange** activities focus on interdisciplinary, innovative, and collaborative approaches to applied research to address the complex problems that modern society faces.
- We will **invest in research** and knowledge exchange to strengthen our reputation in areas which enhance our academic programmes, thereby ensuring a sustainable, vibrant and collaborative researcher community.
- We **work closely with employers** and professional bodies across all subject areas to ensure that our programmes prepare our graduates for successful careers. We will seek to strengthen these relationships further, enhancing employer input within all programmes. We will offer all students the opportunity for work-related learning.
- We will develop opportunities for our graduates and the wider community to continue to refresh their **skills and knowledge** over the course of their careers.

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In 2025, Abertay will be known for:

- Offering an **excellent student experience** and giving our students the **skills to succeed** and to thrive in a changing world of work.
- The **impact of our research and knowledge exchange** on business and society more widely.
- Our **innovative use of digital technology** across all of our activities.
- **Supporting our staff** to develop as individuals and to have satisfying careers.
- Being a leader in Scotland in **enabling access** to university for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.



The challenge we face
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The challenge we face
The challenge we face



We know that the world will be different in 2025. We expect to see considerable change across the higher education sector, and more widely, as a result of new technology and increased automation. We expect continuing pressure on the finances of Scottish universities and a more competitive environment.

In order to continue to be successful and to thrive in 2025, we must be sustainable.

We want to ensure that our students receive the highest quality education and that we support our staff to deliver this. However, we recognise that our income in 2025 may not be greater than it is now and that we will continue to rely on Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funding for teaching undergraduate students. Like other modern universities Abertay is significantly exposed to the recurrent real-terms reductions in this funding that have been experienced in recent years. While we will take action to increase income from other sources, it will take time to realise the benefits from this investment.

So we think it is important to focus our activities to ensure maximum impact. Therefore:

- **We will focus on our agreed strategic priorities.**
- **We will change the way we operate to focus our resources on achieving these priorities.**
- **We expect the world to change. We will need to be adaptable and flexible.**
- **We know that we will only succeed by staff and students working together.**

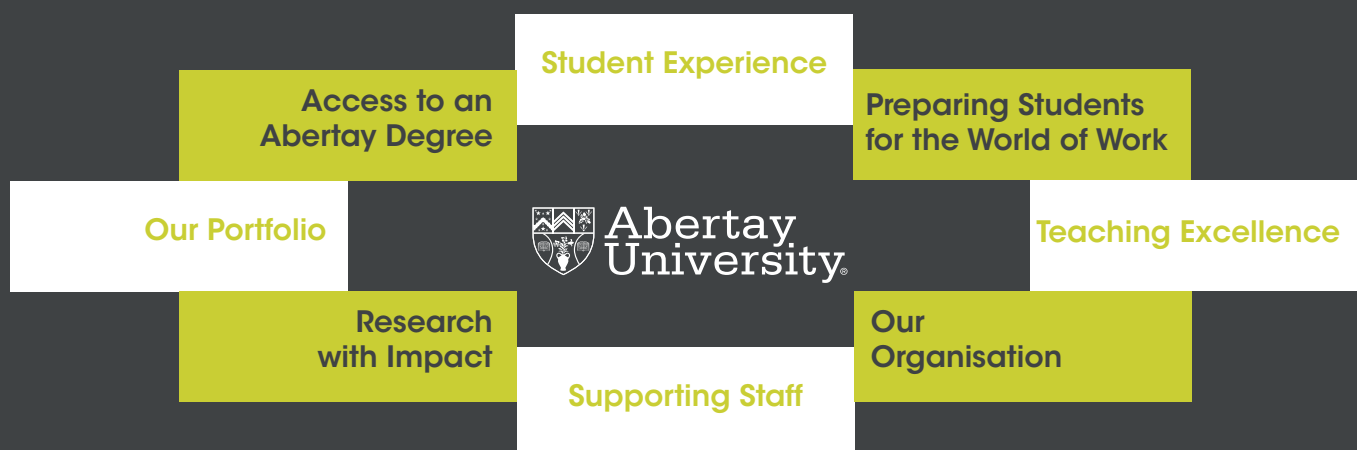
OUR RESPONSE



Our response to these challenges can be summarised around four guiding priorities which will shape everything we do.

- Providing opportunities to **change lives** and giving our students and staff the skills they need to thrive in the world of work.
- Promote **fairness and equality** of opportunity in everything we do.
- Ensure that our research and the programmes we teach continue to **be relevant** in a changing world. In doing so, be outward looking, taking account of international developments while continuing to deliver for our local community.
- Change the way we do things to make sure we **remain sustainable** and that we use our funding to deliver maximum impact.

We have used these as a prompt to think about our core activities



Access to an Abertay degree

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Access to an Abertay degree

- We will be regarded as a leader in widening access to university, continuing to innovate in this area and influencing policy.
- We will ensure that we offer fair access to our programmes. We will admit students on the basis of academic merit, taking into account their personal circumstances and potential.
- We will continue to work closely with college partners to ensure that at least one third of our undergraduate intake each year come directly from college and that they are effectively supported in their transition from college to Abertay.
- We will work with our partners across the education sector to ensure a diverse student population and to remove barriers which may prevent future students from reaching their full potential.
- We will work with partners to deliver our programmes beyond our Dundee campus.
- We will increase the number of students from outwith Scotland studying at Abertay.





- We are committed to ensuring all students have an excellent experience at Abertay.
- We will provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for students whenever they join Abertay and whatever their background. We will support students in their transition to Abertay and while they are here in a way that maximises student resilience, persistence, achievement and retention.
- We will aim to create a culture which promotes and supports physical and mental health and wellbeing for staff and students.
- We will extend the range of support available to students, using technology as appropriate, and taking account of individual circumstances. We will increase flexibility in the way students access support and allow staff expertise to be focused where it can have the greatest impact.
- We will embed international experiences in the Abertay student journey.

Preparing Students for the World of Work
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Preparing Students for the World of Work

- All of our programmes will prepare our graduates for the world of work and a life of learning by helping them to develop as reflective and independent learners.
- We will strengthen our engagement with business, industry and public sector in professional areas to ensure our programmes and activities are relevant, contributing to priorities and have enhanced employer input to the curriculum.
- We will offer work-related learning opportunities on all programmes. We will give all students the opportunity not only to learn new knowledge and skills but also to apply their learning in practical situations.
- We will support our students through our student enterprise programme to develop their business ideas.
- We will implement a digital strategy across our curriculum to ensure our graduates have relevant skills for life and the work-place.
- We will develop opportunities for our graduates and the wider community to continue to refresh their skills and knowledge over the course of their career, including a portfolio of micro-credentials.





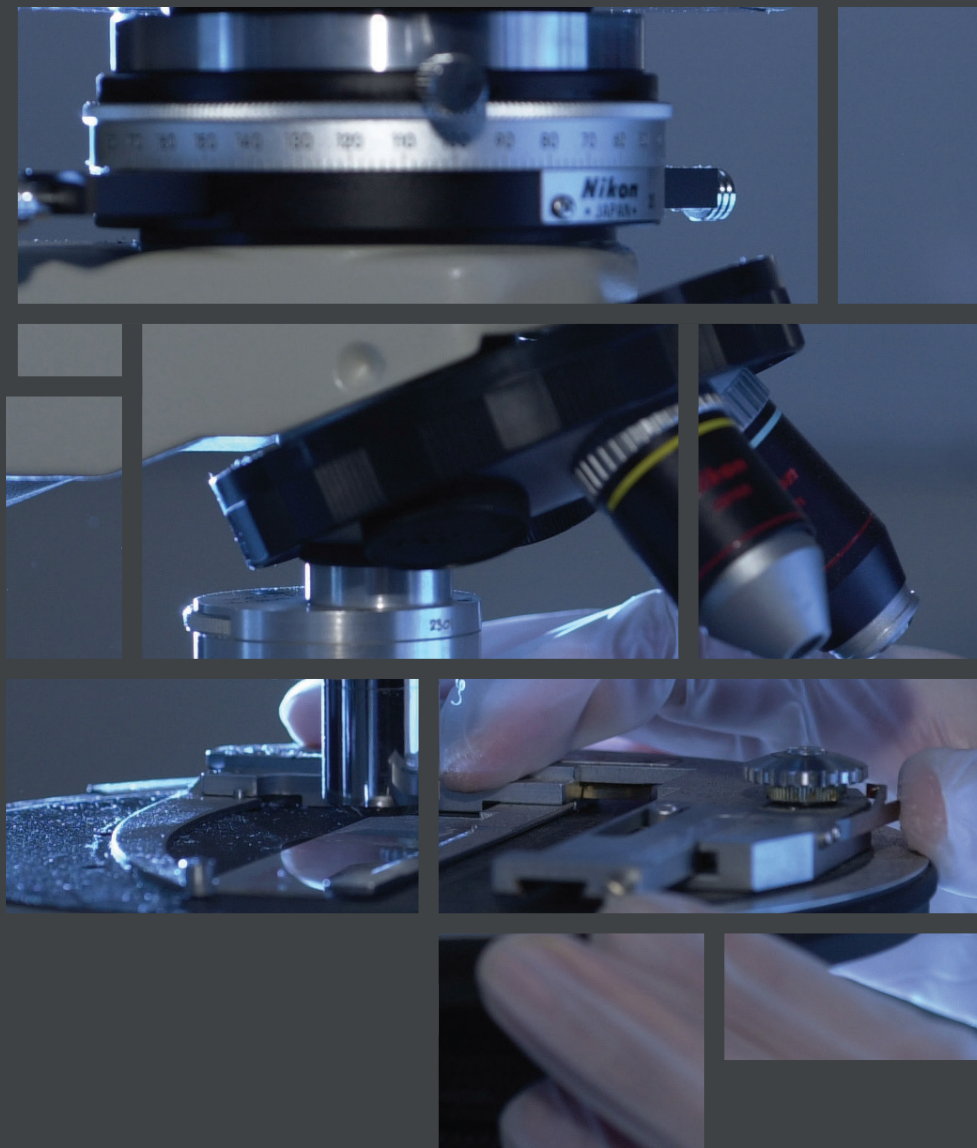
Our Portfolio

- We are committed to having an attractive and broad portfolio of teaching and research, spanning science, technology, art, social sciences and professional disciplines and to exploiting opportunities across all subject areas to increase our prominence.
- We deliver world-leading programmes in computer games and arts and have been recognised in the top 20 universities in the world (and first in Europe) for computer games for the last five years. We will seek to develop and further enhance our reputation in this area.
- We will focus on excellent delivery of a high-quality set of programmes which are underpinned by our research. We will develop:
 - online programmes, including some delivered with partners to students who are not based in Dundee.
 - taught postgraduate programmes which are attractive to students and supported by research.

- We will review and adapt our curriculum and the way we teach to take advantage of the latest pedagogic and technological research and innovation. This will be focussed on supporting flexible approaches to learning and active student engagement.
- We will support and develop our staff to deliver a consistently high standard of teaching and to develop their digital skills. Academic staff will be expected to have a nationally-recognised teaching qualification.
- We will exploit the potential of digital technology to offer a more flexible, personalised and inclusive learning experience for our students.
- We will engage our students in the design of our programmes and learning opportunities. We want our students to be partners in how they learn.



Research with Impact Research with Impact Research with Impact



- We are committed to producing quality research and knowledge exchange that is aligned with international, national and local priorities and delivers real impact for society.
- We will invest in research and knowledge exchange to strengthen our reputation in areas which enhance our academic programmes, thereby ensuring a sustainable, vibrant and collaborative researcher community.
- We will support staff to deliver quality research output, knowledge exchange and impact; we will clearly articulate our expectations and standards to staff.



- We want to be recognised by our staff as being an excellent employer and known for this both locally and in the higher education sector - attracting, developing and retaining the best staff, recognising and rewarding them for the contribution they make to the University community.
- We will aim to create a culture which promotes and supports physical and mental health and wellbeing for staff and students.
- We will continue to welcome and support staff from a wide range of backgrounds and personal characteristics in sustaining a fair and inclusive working environment. We will provide flexible working opportunities.
- We will support and encourage all staff to develop the digital skills needed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technological innovation and to meet changing expectations from students.

- We will ensure the University is run in a modern way, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by new technology. We will build a reputation for our digital approach in line with our reputation for excellence in this academic area.
- We will provide an environment which inspires our staff and students to be creative and to work to their full potential. We will invest in our infrastructure to provide adaptable and technology-rich spaces for teaching and learning and for working.
- We will look at new ways of delivering core services with partner organisations to enable us to focus specialised staff skills and expertise where it will have most benefit. We will promote a culture of service excellence.
- We will continue to focus on long-term financial sustainability.
- We will develop and implement a new environmental sustainability strategy that is centred on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Our students will:

- Have a consistently excellent experience.
- Have more flexible access to support, with more online and blended provision.
- Be more likely to complete their degree and to perform better in the degree.
- Benefit from an increase in pedagogic research. Our programmes will make best use of pedagogic innovation and new technology, with a greater focus on personalised learning.
- Have the opportunity to undertake placement, work-related and/or enterprise opportunities.
- Reflect a diverse range of backgrounds. More students will come to Abertay from outwith Scotland (RUK, EU27, non-EU), creating a more diverse and international campus.
- Experience less pronounced gender imbalances across subject areas with existing imbalance.

We expect

- Student satisfaction to improve.
- Retention rates to improve.
- More students to complete degrees.
- More students to be employed in graduate level jobs.
- A higher proportion of students to study at Abertay from outwith Scotland.

Our staff will:

- Be encouraged and facilitated to develop the digital skills needed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technological innovation.
- Be supported to be adaptable, flexible and resilient in light of the pace of change.
- Be encouraged to maintain close links with business/ industry/ professional disciplines.
- Be part of a sustainable profile of high-quality academic staff.
- Have input to developing the University's plans.
- A stronger sense of the 'Abertay community'.

We expect

- Staff satisfaction to improve.
- Student satisfaction to improve.
- Able to attract and retain high-quality staff.
- Broadly comparable staff workloads across subject areas.

Our **portfolio** will:

- Contain a broad, attractive and sustainable set of programmes. We will focus on a high-quality, highly valued programmes.
- Have taught postgraduate programmes which are attractive to students, sustainable and supported by research.
- Include a set of online and blended qualifications, some of which will be delivered in partnership.
- Incorporate student input to the design of programmes and learning opportunities.

We expect

- A portfolio with sustainable numbers, high rates of student satisfaction and close links with industry/professional bodies to ensure graduates have relevant skills.

Our **organisation** will:

- Be well-run, efficient and forward-looking. We will be focussed on our core objectives and on ensuring our future sustainability.

We expect

- Core services delivered in new ways to enable us to focus specialised resource where it will have most benefit.
- A financial performance that provides long-term sustainability.

Our wider contribution. **Abertay** will:

- Be an active and committed partner in the ongoing cultural and economic development of Dundee and the region.
- Be a key partner in the education strategy for the region, working to ensure smooth transitions for students.
- Ensure that there are routes for those who have experienced educational disadvantage to progress to an Abertay degree.
- Continue to have guaranteed progression to an Abertay degree for students at partner colleges who complete a relevant qualification.
- Ensure that employers have opportunities to influence the development of programmes in order that graduates develop appropriate skills.

We expect

- Improved routes for students progressing from education institutions within the local area.
- Supply of graduates with relevant skills.

This strategic plan is underpinned by our 2025 transition framework which sets out actions, links to supporting strategies, and expected detailed outcomes. We will develop, by summer 2020, our university-level operational plan for 2020-25 setting out how we will deliver the high-level actions in the strategy. This will be supported by our supporting strategies and by detailed operational plans for Schools and Services. This will include an updated Learning Enhancement Strategy, Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy, Digital Strategy, Estates Strategy, Financial Strategy and Environmental Sustainability Strategy. We will review our operational plan progress on an annual basis and adapt accordingly.

In tracking progress against our strategic plan, we will use the following key indicators*. These will form part of a wider monitoring framework.

- % of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes
- % of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from disadvantaged backgrounds
- % students satisfied with the overall quality of their course
- % of undergraduate entrants still in higher education after one year
- % of undergraduate students projected to receive a degree
- % of graduates students employed in graduate level jobs
- Number of online qualifications
- Income from new online and franchise provision
- Research grant and contract income
- Income from knowledge exchange activity
- Number of Scopus citations for Abertay affiliated staff
- Staff engagement
- Staff: overall gender pay gap
- Increase in non-SFC income
- EBITDA as % of income

*some of these measures may evolve over time

