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Introduction

Teaching excellence and its relationship to research are at the heart of our mission. We offer an inclusive, diverse learning community that is committed to equality of opportunity, internationalisation and progression towards learner autonomy. Our strategy applies to all of our students; undergraduate and postgraduate, full and part-time, whether based at the De Montfort University (DMU) campus in Leicester or with other collaborative partners, including businesses. We recognise that our students have varying needs, but that the principles underpinning our University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (ULTAS) remain relevant to them whatever educational objective they are pursuing. Our students will be part of De Montfort University’s learning community and actively participate in its development and achievements from application to graduation and beyond.

De Montfort University is a truly international university with a distinctive focus on employability, culturally aware and relevant curricula, offering comprehensive student support and academic guidance, and a strong commitment to equality, diversity and environmental sustainability. This Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy builds on this and will further enable De Montfort University to reinforce its reputation for offering a distinctive high quality student learning experience, founded in secure University processes for continuous quality enhancement, and underpinned by nationally-leading teaching innovation and international research excellence. It will do this by setting a series of challenges which programme and subject teams are expected to take up in ways that are appropriate to their own academic disciplines.

To realise the strategy and meet the current challenges in higher education we will provide inspiring and engaging development programmes for all staff who support student learning.

This strategy supports the University’s new strategic vision and plan and runs in tandem with it through to 2015. This strategy is aligned with cognisant University strategies, including the Research and Innovation Strategy and the Employability Strategy.

Strategic principles

i. Teaching excellence informed by world-class research

ii. Varied assessment and delivery to enable student learning and achievement

iii. Enabling the development of students as independent, autonomous learners

iv. Continual focus on student employability and graduate skills

v. Enhancing Learning through Technology (ELT)

vi. Culturally aware, international and relevant curricula

vii. Commitment to inclusivity and diversity

viii. Embedding education for sustainable development in the curriculum

We encourage and promote active reflection and incorporation of the above eight strategic principles by all academic teams in relation to programme development, review and delivery. The principles will be achieved by appropriately challenging targets within a robust implementation plan.
What the principles mean

i. Teaching excellence informed by world-class research

De Montfort University values teaching and research equally and is committed to the provision of a supportive environment so that staff can further enhance student-centred learning, research-informed teaching and teaching-informed research. Our students benefit from professionally-qualified and nationally recognised staff, well equipped to facilitate effective learning through innovative, challenging, relevant curricula and learning methods, and underpinned by world-leading research, scholarship and professional practice.

ii. Varied assessment and delivery to enable student learning and achievement

Students will benefit from a varied learning, teaching and assessment diet that allows them to develop and be examined in their strengths, while addressing the integrity of subject disciplines, subject benchmarks, national academic standards and where appropriate, accreditation requirements of relevant professional bodies. Assessment will be sufficiently challenging and varied to acknowledge the range of students’ strengths while rigorously evaluating their capabilities against expected module and programme outcomes.

All programmes will continue to ensure appropriate curricular variety in relation to academic and professional requirements, and that the rationale for the diet is made clear to students on the programme. Assessment needs to facilitate student learning, and not simply test outcomes; simultaneously, learning and teaching need to ensure that outcomes can be met, and this need is equally important in professional and academic programmes. In all instances, programme design, curriculum delivery and assessment methodologies will be informed by the latest developments in the discipline and will measure up to the highest academic standards. In addition, fairness and transparency will be the hallmarks of our assessment practice.

iii. Enabling the development of students as independent, autonomous learners

De Montfort University recognises the importance of allowing students to develop as independent, autonomous learners, in part by selecting learning methods that are the most effective for each individual. Such autonomy depends on maturity of judgement, self-critique and self-reflection, and the learning and teaching strategy places emphasis on the need to cultivate these qualities in students as they progress through their awards.

The development of our students is underpinned by appropriate support and academic guidance to encourage and promote learning autonomy. Moreover we recognise the importance of supporting students in their transition to higher education and the value of continued and relevant support throughout the student life cycle. A staff/student partnership approach is at the heart of our commitment to retention, progression and achievement.

Accordingly, all students will have an effective induction to their studies, which will be extended throughout and beyond the first term. All undergraduate students will be given the opportunity to undertake diagnostic assessment in line with subject-specific requirements at an early stage, and feedback will be provided. We understand that learning opportunities extend well beyond the classroom, and can be enhanced by allowing students to identify and exploit appropriate support from a variety of sources including feedback from module tutors, independent and guided use of library and electronic resources, personal tutors, personal development planning, advice and guidance centres, individual private study, and the opportunities for structured learning and discussion through the use of virtual learning environments. These elements of learning support will be introduced to the students within the extended induction period, and will remain available to them throughout their time at the university.
iv. Continual focus on student employability and graduate skills

De Montfort University is passionate in its conviction that its provision be aligned to the practical needs of business and the professions. There are a variety of ways in which programmes may deliver this objective to students, including the embedding of key skills, the identification of transferable skills, professional accreditation, professional interactions, work experience and placements, student exchanges and other schemes interfacing with the workplace. All programmes actively enhance the ways in which employability is achieved by students, and nurture the development of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes in ways that are made explicit to students (a statement of skills, values and experiences for graduate employability is attached to this Strategy.)

v. Enhancing Learning through Technology

We define Enhancing Learning through Technology (ELT) as learning that is transformed through the situated use of information and communication technologies. This recognises a more critical approach to the use of technology in education, which acknowledges the socio-cultural and pedagogic implications of issues around personalisation, social learning, open education and sustainability, rather than seeing the use of technology as an end in itself. In addressing each of these issues, technology is an important catalyst for innovative learning and teaching, and for the sustainable development of curricula and the development of students as active independent learners. ELT more appropriately demonstrates De Montfort University’s focus on excellence in research, teaching and innovation, and its focus on its stakeholders through values of resilience, sustainability, diversity and equality.

ELT is an essential element of a high quality 21st Century higher education experience. Our ELT vision is predicated upon the extension of learning opportunities and the improvement of the quality of contact between learners, tutors and resources. We will promote openness and cooperation in the development of flexible, personalised and sustainable approaches to ELT, where networks of faculty and institutional champions will lead the transformation of our overall institutional experiences.

Our aspiration is for both our core educational values and respect for the diversity of our academic communities to be underpinned appropriately by technology. We will use technology to nurture, stimulate and enhance our capability for inclusion, creativity and innovation. This aspiration will be realised through dialogue and activity within and beyond the formal curriculum, between staff, students and external peers, in integrated physical and virtual spaces, using appropriate socially-located technologies. To this end students will be encouraged to be active members of their learning community collaborating in the production of knowledge with their peers and academic staff.
vi. Culturally aware, international and relevant curricula

De Montfort University is committed to becoming a truly international university by creating international citizens who are aware of and able to respond to a changing and challenging global environment both in education and in the world of work. To this end, curriculum opportunities will be developed and enhanced in order to encourage students to develop the social responsibility and intercultural adaptability that is critical for international awareness, understanding and career development in a fast-moving global economy.

The provision of a varied and progressive learning, teaching and assessment diet that is challenging and truly representative of UK and international cultural, social and commercial concerns will be achieved through, for example, the integrated use of research informed teaching, staff and student international exchanges and the concurrent development of staff expertise.

vii. Commitment to inclusivity and diversity

In De Montfort University’s learning community, all students and staff are valued for their contributions. We acknowledge the importance of developing learning and teaching practices that recognise the diversity of the student body. ‘Diversity’ is understood in its broadest sense. We recognise that inclusive higher education entails designing curricula and preparing learning, teaching and assessment activities that meet different student needs and learning styles from the outset, and are also sufficiently responsive to the particular needs of individual students. The curriculum also provides opportunities for students to learn about diversity and foster a respect for others.

vii. Embedding education for sustainable development in the curriculum

De Montfort University aims to develop staff and students to become responsible ‘global’ citizens in the face of the environmental challenges ahead of them. We also acknowledge the importance of developing and/or embedding an awareness of environmental sustainability in the curriculum in order to encourage respect for the future, energy awareness and environmental good practice. We recognise that this will be achieved in a variety of ways and at a range of different levels of engagement from bespoke programmes of study to specific modules, or by reference to sustainability issues in the existing curriculum and its associated resources.
Strategy implementation and evaluation of impact

The university will achieve the objectives of this Strategy through a robust implementation plan, agreed by all faculties, which contains appropriately challenging strategic targets. The challenges are detailed in section five. It is expected that, over the life span of the strategy, all faculties will address all the challenges in their own context.

Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees (FLTCs) will be responsible for defining and delivering a range of projects annually which align to the ULTAS implementation plan, drawing upon support and expertise from professional services/central teams as appropriate. These projects will address the learning, teaching and assessment strategic principles and challenges.

FLTCs will be responsive to changing strategic and resourcing priorities and ensure their activities are aligned with cognisant strategies such as the International Strategy, Employability Strategy and Research Strategy.

It is recognised that FLTCs will be key in driving forward faculty learning and teaching initiatives. Regular meetings of the Chairs of FLTC Group will provide a supportive network and a forum where practice can be shared and common challenges addressed.

Projects should be planned and then approved by the Faculty Academic Committee, and where appropriate the Faculty Executive, as part of the annual faculty planning process, in order that the resource implications can be anticipated. Planned projects should also be presented to the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) for signoff. ULTC will ensure that projects align with university strategic priorities, encouraging and commissioning initiatives that share common aims as well as disseminating good practice that merits wider implementation.

FLTCs, again drawing upon support and expertise from professional services/central teams as appropriate, will be responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the ways that the projects have addressed these principles to their Faculty Academic Committee and the FLTC at the end of each academic session.
Aims and challenges linked to strategic principles

i. Teaching excellence informed by world-class research

De Montfort University values teaching and research equally and is committed to the provision of a supportive environment so that staff can further enhance student-centred learning, research-informed teaching and teaching-informed research.

The aim is that:

• All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes will build upon staff research and professional expertise. Programmes should utilise, develop and disseminate the best and latest research, scholarship and expertise relevant to the subject discipline and student needs

• Nationally and institutionally recognised teaching excellence is disseminated frequently for the benefit of our learning community

• A supportive environment is provided for the development of learning, teaching and research excellence.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

• Programmes will introduce research-related material progressively within their curricula, and annually monitor their curriculum content to ensure current research and scholarship is being utilised

• The final year of all undergraduate programmes will contain a research-related component

• Each faculty will work proactively with National Teaching Fellows and DMU teacher fellows on projects designed to enhance teaching and learning practice

• Each faculty will make appropriate use of relevant internal teams such as Academic Professional Development, Academic Quality, Library and Learning Services and external bodies such the Higher Education Academy

• Staff who have been nationally and institutionally recognised for their teaching excellence will contribute to University conferences, professional development, and mentoring activities in order to effect positive change

• By 2015, all new lecturers with 3 years or fewer teaching experience will complete the Post-Graduate Certificate in higher education (PGCertHE) or an equivalent qualification. Existing teaching staff will either have completed the PGCertHE or be a Fellow of the higher education Academy by 2015

• Departments will actively promote, support and develop 'co-producer projects' to give their students the opportunity to collaborate with other students and academics and contribute new knowledge within their discipline.

ii. Varied assessment and delivery to enable student learning and achievement

De Montfort University has well developed Assessment Policy, Practice and Protocols that define expected feedback and moderation, and set out expectations of programme teams and students. As part of this, students benefit from a varied learning, teaching and assessment diet that allows them to develop and be examined in their strengths, while addressing the integrity of subject disciplines, subject benchmarks, national academic standards and where appropriate, accreditation requirements of relevant professional bodies.
The aim is that:

- Programme and module teams will review their assessment regimes annually to confirm to students that they are actively responding to their feedback, provided through mechanisms such as the National Student Survey and Programme Level Feedback.
- The curriculum will provide sufficient opportunities for students to respond creatively in ways best suited to their own skills, attributes and previous experiences.
- Learning opportunities will challenge and extend students as well as supporting and nurturing them, so that they are confident enough to take intellectual and creative risks, and to pursue activities and interests that go beyond the university curriculum.
- Assessment regimes will encourage individual critical reflection and evaluation whilst also fostering social skills such as the ability to think and act ethically.
- Clear links will be made between undergraduate and postgraduate provision to enable and encourage students to continue through all levels of educational attainment.
- Feedback will link the student’s response directly to the task set such that students can see exactly how to improve. Feedback should be timely enough to enable students to build upon it in subsequent work, and be consistent, fair and transparent so as to engender confidence.

Through the De Montfort University Assessment Policy, Practice and Protocols, it is expected that:

- Assessment opportunities will continue to develop a range of transferable, graduate skills.
- The programme team will foster its relationship with students to establish/develop a true community of learning that embraces creative endeavour and novel ways of solving problems.
- Undergraduate programmes will support the first year experience through the use of diagnostic and formative assessment methods.
- All programmes will include opportunities for students to work together on specific activities.
- Module teams will review feedback mechanisms and audit for timeliness, usability and impact.
- Each assessment task will make clear to students what is expected of them and how marks are to be awarded. Feedback should align to these expectations.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

- Through their programmes, module teams will develop positive relationships with their students to establish/maintain a community of learning that embraces creative endeavour and co-production of knowledge between staff and students.
- All programmes/subjects/faculties will develop their own contextualised grade descriptors in line with the university’s generic undergraduate or postgraduate descriptors.
- All students will have the opportunity to use appropriate feedback from earlier assessments to inform and thus improve subsequent pieces of assessment.
- FLTCs will monitor the way in which assessment tasks make clear to students what is expected of them to ensure transparency, fairness and consistency, drawing upon best practice across the institution and sector.
- All programme teams will extend their use of technology to support online submission of coursework and progressively introduce online feedback to students after work has been marked (also appears under ELT).
iii. Enabling the development of students as independent, autonomous learners

At De Montfort University we recognise the importance of supporting students in their transition to higher education and the value of continued and relevant support throughout the student life cycle. A staff/student partnership approach is at the heart of our commitment to progression and achievement which involves engagement with feedback and taking appropriate actions.

The aim is that:

- All students will have access to learning spaces and libraries which are fit for purpose and conducive to learning in the 21st century, and to the resources and support necessary for the development of graduate skills and academic independence
- Programmes will support individuals to draw on their genuine curiosity, diverse knowledge, technical skills and ability to experiment, while understanding the nature of risk in a global context
- Students will be encouraged to accept personal responsibility for their own autonomous learning and know how to benefit from feedback and access appropriate support
- Programme teams will co-create and communicate new knowledge for the benefit of students, staff and the institution. Students will be encouraged to contribute original ideas through peer group learning, as part of developing their intellectual, critical thinking and other graduate skills.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

- The university will continue to enhance the learning environment through investment in its learning spaces and resources. This will include regular review of facilities and opening hours, and consideration of alternative methods of resource discovery, access and learning support
- Staff and student elearning resources will be equally accessible wherever students choose to study
- Programme teams will create opportunities for students to experiment as they learn. In doing so they will help students understand successful management of risk
- The curriculum will incrementally increase student autonomy and should be progressively challenging through each level of the programme
- The programme team will foster their relationship with students to establish and develop a true community of learning.

iv. Continual focus on student employability and graduate skills

De Montfort University is passionate in its conviction that its provision be aligned to the practical needs of business and the professions. All programmes actively enhance the ways in which employability is achieved by students, and nurture the development of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes in ways which are made explicit to students.

The aim is that:

- Each programme highlights the development of skills which are relevant to the world of work and any related professional body
- Our programmes develop skills which should last our students a lifetime.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

- All programme information including handbooks will clearly articulate the skills being developed that have particular resonance with the world of work
- Students and staff will engage with each other in skills development in order to enhance student employability and graduate skills
- By 2015, work experience opportunities will be offered to all students. Faculties will set progressive discipline-specific targets each year
- Faculties will actively engage with alumni to support and develop vocational and business links to the curriculum and the learning community.
v. Enhancing Learning through Technology

At De Montfort University we wish to prioritise how learning and teaching can be transformed through the considered use of technologies in the curriculum. We will use technology to nurture, stimulate and enhance our capability for inclusion, creativity and innovation.

The aim is that:

All programmes will develop and integrate Enhancing Learning through Technology (ELT) to support, enhance and transform student learning.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

- Led by the Centre for Enhancing Learning Through Technology (CELT), we will develop strategies for:
  - E-assessment and e-feedback
  - Open Educational Resources (OER)
  - The use of ELT to support student transition into higher education
  - Delivery of an institutional approach to supporting virtual communities of practice
  - An institutional approach to distance learning
- Programme teams will extend their use of technology to support online submission of coursework and progressively introduce online feedback to students after work has been marked (also appears under Assessment and Learning)
- Programmes will integrate ELT into their curriculum in ways that are appropriate to the programme and its students.
- ELT and Distance Learning technologies will be creatively utilised to promote international and business links (either formal or informal) between DMU and its higher education partners
- Faculties will ensure that ELT employs assessment tasks and feedback linked to learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

vi. Culturally aware, international and relevant curricula

De Montfort University is committed to becoming a truly international university, by creating international citizens who are aware of and able to respond to a changing and challenging global environment both in education and in the world of work. To this end curriculum opportunities will be developed and enhanced in order to encourage students to develop the social responsibility and intercultural adaptability that is critical for international awareness, understanding and career development in a fast-moving global economy.

The provision of a varied and progressive learning, teaching and assessment diet that is challenging and truly representative of UK and international cultural, social and commercial concerns will be achieved through, for example, the integrated use of research informed teaching, staff and student international exchanges and the concurrent development of staff expertise.

The aim is that:

- Students will be able to reflect upon and respond to their place in the world - locally, nationally and internationally – through curriculum content and delivery.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

- Staff, students, partners and stakeholders will proactively engage with the wider international agenda through activities such as research collaboration, progression agreements, curriculum enhancement, and staff and student exchanges
- Faculties will develop academic portfolios and pedagogic approaches that embed the agenda of internationalisation.
vii. Commitment to inclusivity and diversity

We acknowledge the importance of developing learning and teaching practices that recognise the diversity of the student body. ‘Diversity’ is understood in its broadest sense and we recognise that inclusive higher education entails designing curricula and preparing learning, teaching and assessment activities that meet different student needs and learning styles from the outset, and are also sufficiently responsive to the particular needs of individual students.

The aim is that:

- Our entire curriculum offer will demonstrate an inclusive approach to learning that has taken account of barriers to learning, as evidenced through the validation/revalidation and periodic review processes
- All of our students will have fair and equal access to the curriculum and positive support will be provided to address diversity-related under-representation and disadvantage.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

- All module/programme or subject teams (as appropriate) will identify where students from different diversity groups and with protected characteristics are under-represented or are underachieving, take positive action to address this and report their results annually using the Programme Enhancement Plans/Module Enhancement Plans process
- Resources and development activities will be provided to ensure staff have the knowledge, understanding and skill to meet the diverse needs of all of our students.

viii. Embedding education for sustainable development in the curriculum

We aim to develop staff and students to become responsible ‘global’ citizens in the face of the environmental challenges ahead of them. We also acknowledge the importance of developing and/or embedding an awareness of environmental sustainability in the curriculum in order to encourage respect for the future, energy awareness and environmental good practice. We recognise that this will be achieved in a variety of ways and at a range of different levels of engagement from bespoke programmes of study to specific modules, or by reference to sustainability issues in the existing curriculum and its associated resources.

The aim is that:

All faculties will offer opportunities for staff and students to engage in sustainability projects aligned with the DMU Sustainability Strategy.

The challenges we set ourselves will be:

All programme and/or subject teams will identify ways of embedding awareness of environmental sustainability issues through the development of new programmes, the development of new modules within existing programmes and/or new ways of delivering existing modules. They will report on these annually through the Programme Enhancement Plans (PEP) process.
Statement of skills, values and experiences for graduate employability

De Montfort University aims to help its students develop skills in the following domains, with different students achieving different combinations of skills and levels of attainment:

**Personal development**
- Working autonomously and/or working supportively and creatively with others as appropriate
- Setting goals, planning and implementing actions, coping with set-backs and pressure
- Self-awareness, self-motivation, self-reliance, self-confidence and self-discipline
- Intellectual curiosity, imagination, creativity, initiative, adaptability and open-mindedness
- Interpersonal skills (engaging with others to establish rapport and good working relationships)
- Awareness of the importance of engaging in activities promoting physical and mental health

**Academic development**
- Knowledge of relevant scholarship and awareness of where and how to gather and apply new knowledge needed for creative work
- Appropriate application of knowledge in different contexts
- Familiarity with research methods (and associated ethical and professional issues), ability to apply specialist techniques, and willingness to objectively evaluate new ideas
- Literacy, numeracy, ICT, internet and web skills
- Analysis, evaluation, communication and presentation skills

**Career development**
- Career planning and awareness of labour market
- Job search, application, interview and self-presentation skills
- Willingness to acquire the skills and training needed for future career development
- Awareness of the need to be flexible and open to possible future career changes

**Professional working**
- Teamwork, leadership and negotiation skills (including leading and being led by others)
- Experience of working on live projects, case studies or work-based simulations
- Planning and management skills (planning, managing and completing a task on time)
- Professionalism, loyalty, responsibility, integrity (achieving high standards in the workplace)
External awareness

- Respect for the ideas, cultural values and the rights of others
- Awareness of social, economic, cultural, ethical, environmental and sustainability issues
- Sense of local, regional and global perspective
- Appreciation of the value of enterprise, entrepreneurship, commerce and business skills

Experience of work

- Learning from voluntary, placement or paid work experience and from internships or study abroad
- Understanding of work and organisational cultures
- Familiarity with expectations of the workplace
- Mature and level-headed approach to life and work

This statement was developed using information and good practice from across the higher education sector.