

Areas of Distinctiveness

The development of our four key strategies in the early autumn of 2018 and the newly introduced strategic planning round for schools and directorates has begun to give clarity on where we want to be in five years' time in relation to our academic portfolio, our research and our business engagement. We have spent significant time looking at how we not only remain a comprehensive university, offering a wide range of courses, but also develop further in some areas where we believe we already are, could be or should be more distinctive. These developments as outlined below will drive our research areas, focus our business engagement and give clarity on our estates, IT and people strategy for the next five years as well. This is important as we develop and grow our brand, and important for our longer term sustainability, growing our reputation and shaping our resource investment from the limited amount available and ensuring that we are a university for the modern world.

Areas of distinctiveness for the University of Suffolk

Alongside confirming our areas of distinctiveness (see below) we need to be clear what will make an area distinctive. This paper proposes that any area of distinctiveness needs to have or will develop the following:

- A comprehensive portfolio of courses including undergraduate, post graduate taught and post graduate research
- A comprehensive and joined up approach to relevant external stakeholders (industry/business/public sector etc.)
- Research to underpin our academic delivery and to have impact

In relation to learning and teaching each of the proposed areas is currently variable in the current portfolio, ranging from small to comprehensive undergraduate courses, and none or limited PGT offer. The PGR offer is also small but growing in some areas with potential for further growth if we can manage our staff capacity and capability to support PhD students.

In relation to business engagement most schools are aware of the need for wider business engagement and should look to our Business Engagement and Entrepreneurship professional service for support and guidance. External stakeholders report a lack of joined up thinking in process and communication in our approach to external stakeholder management. School plans largely all identify the need for more capacity to develop business engagement but with different ways of achieving this.

From a research perspective we are starting from a low base, with pockets of limited research in our schools and very limited critical mass such that we cannot really entertain a REF 2021 entry with any certainty.

So we need to clarify what areas we wish to be distinctive in and then continue to develop our portfolio of courses to underpin this and invest in business engagement and research support and infrastructure alongside the portfolio.

We will also need to progress our marketing and external communications in order to grow our reputation and attract funding, students, business partners and relevant staff to work with us.

Following engagement across the university, oversight of the school plans and further discussions with external stakeholders including ensuring a focus on the NALEP sector priorities the following areas are confirmed:

1. Health and Wellbeing

Given the broad range of undergraduate health and sports courses that the University currently runs and the fact that health and social care requirements will remain high on government agendas, it would be right for us to ensure that we capitalise on our existing growth and reputation in these areas, developing further in particular in new undergraduate health professional courses, in PGT and in research.

The School of Health Sciences has identified two areas of distinctiveness that it wishes to develop, namely - Living well into old age and Cancer Survivorship. The School of STE has a Sport Hub and regenerative medicine community. We are also championing as a University mental health and wellness alongside Dementia, both of which fit with living well into old age.

In order to develop in this area, the following would need to be considered:

- Turn the Centre into an Institute for Health and wellbeing
- Identify a 1FTE professorial lead for the centre – ideally someone with a background in either Living well into old age or in Cancer Survivorship. This could be developed with one or more NHS trusts as a clinical professorial post with shared funding.
- Bring the work within the Sports hub and the regenerative medicine community into the institute and also identify colleagues across the university (e.g. psychology; social work etc.) who may also fit within the umbrella of the focus of the institute.
- Confirm the business case for creating an undergraduate physio therapy course to commence September 2020
- Develop PGT courses in these areas
- PhD studentships
- Over time Professors to lead each subset of the Institute
- Links to external stakeholders need strengthening including key account management via a business development manager
- Collaborative partners sought possibly internationally to enhance research reputation and income

2. Creative and Digital Technologies

The schools of STE and ADH both have the opportunity to contribute to developments in the area of digital technology. The STE School plan attempts to narrow the field to Artificial Intelligence (machine learning), data analytic science, future of connectivity networks/internet of things and Cyber security all under the umbrella of SMART

ADH is less specific although talks about a digital hub, largely in the context of portfolio, with a limited resonance with business engagement and not related to research. The external industry, in particular BT and others at Innovation Martlesham/Adastral park are keen to see us grow and develop in this area and there is an opportunity to seek funding for both a Chair and PhD studentships alongside the campus developments at the park.

In order to consolidate our offer in this area we need to do the following:

- Realign our current institute infrastructure and confirm the specific foci and title of an institute
- Identify a professorial post to lead the institute and industry funding to enable this
- Develop further academic portfolio, particularly at PGT level
- PhD studentships

- Links to external stakeholders need strengthening including key account management via a business development manager
- Collaborative partners sought possibly internationally to enhance research reputation and income
- Align portfolio with the Institute

3. Crime and Social Justice

The school of LSS has a number of areas of the academic portfolio (Law, criminology, prison officer training, police training etc.) that coalesce around crime and social justice. There are a number of colleagues in these areas who are active researchers. In addition, SISER (Suffolk Institute for Social and Economic Research) undertakes a significant amount of work in this area as well. This is the key area for the university where we have some research substance and if it is to increase we need to support its sustainability. In order to achieve this the following needs to be undertaken:

- Clarify the name of a newly created Institute that brings colleagues in the school and SISER together
- Identify professorial leadership
- PhD studentships
- Links to external stakeholders need strengthening including key account management via a business development manager
- Collaborative partners sought possibly internationally to enhance research reputation and income
- Further work to identify other cross university colleagues with interest and research/research potential in this area e.g. mental health nursing; psychology; education

4. History and Heritage

Our history provision enjoys excellent ratings nationally. Alongside the development of The Hold on our campus, with significant funding invested by UoS as well as other founders, this context gives us a unique opportunity to make this an area of expertise. It is a niche area and is probably never going to grow to be significantly expansive; however various external bodies are already investing time in UoS to support our growth in this area; we have one Professor in the area already and when heritage and heritage in Suffolk are placed alongside Suffolk as a tourist destination it is apparent that this could be an area of distinctiveness albeit one that is very niche. In order to develop this unique area, the following would need to be considered:

- PGT portfolio of courses needs expanding and we need to find an attractive offer for heritage management
- PhD studentships
- Further development of our undergraduate provision linked to tourism and management (hotel/hospitality etc.)
- Development of a Centre for History and Heritage with clarity over any underpinning key themes within this centre.
- Links to external stakeholders need strengthening including key account management via a business development manager; there is an opportunity to engage in the national digital archiving service as part of this reach which again might add to the niche in an area where skills and employment have significant gaps
- Collaborative partners sought possibly internationally to enhance research reputation and income

5. Sustainability/Energy

The NALEP sectors include energy referencing the regional expertise in oil and gas, nuclear and renewables, solar and micro generation alongside a globally competitive renewables support chain and support industry. UoS has an interest in sustainability with the launch of the Suffolk Sustainability Institute. However, the vision of this institute is on sustainability wider than just the energy sector although energy is one of the areas of interest. We are also working with East Coast College with their new Energy Centre.

We need to question what we want our focus to be and whether we can really focus on the five areas initially identified and how Energy can be a key to our work and what aspect of energy we wish to address, particularly from a research perspective. One area for further exploration is linked to environmental sustainability; this would be of interest not only to our energy sectors for whom impact on environment is critical relating to government targets but also to other sectors such as the ports where dredging and other work to ensure good capability to manage the supply chain and logistics includes a focus on maritime environmental sustainability. Once this is defined we will need to work up a business case as our current capacity and capability in this area is small. It is likely that we will need significant support from external stakeholders to include academic posts that are partially or fully funded externally (business/industry/grants/ LEP etc. if we are to be able to move in this area over the medium term.

In the future as with the other areas it is likely that we will need to identify a professorial lead and business engagement support, PhD studentships etc.

6. Pedagogy/learning and teaching

Our primary focus needs to be on our portfolio learning and teaching quality and enhancement for the next year or two alongside developing our curriculum to meet our new strategy; however beyond achievements in this area we need to develop our research into pedagogy. In order to do this, we need to progress discussions with CIRES and confirm the relationship between CIRES and CELT, in a way that will enable us to drive our pedagogical research across the education sector, not just within HE.

As with the other areas there will be a need for professorial leadership, PhD studentships etc.; however, it is envisaged that our research in this area this will be on a slower trajectory than the other work due to having to prioritise our student learning and teaching experience as well as staff development in this area. We do need to capitalise on the implementation of our new learning and teaching approach as set out in the learning and teaching strategy and begin to identify where we could make progress in our research into progressive learning.