Leadership Development Strategy: Developing Leadership Excellence

1. Introduction

The Strategic Plan 2015-2020 sets out an ambitious roadmap for our University with clearly defined aims, which will further enhance our reputation for academic excellence. The successful delivery of these aims requires skilled and confident leaders at every level of the organisation and the Strategic Plan identifies the need to “enhance our leadership capacity and capability, encouraging a responsive approach and a capacity for renewal”.

Our Vice Chancellor, Sir Alan Langlands, has described the leadership behaviours, which underpin the high trust, academically led environment set out in the Strategic Plan:

*Our leaders need to be credible, competent and authentic: known for what they do – the results they deliver – rather than what they say. Known less for what they control and more for creating a positive working environment. Less concerned about titles and position and more about enabling their colleagues to make progress. Leaders are measured by how they help others to achieve their potential and how they support the overall development of the University.*

This aspiration of leadership excellence reflects our University’s values of inclusivity, community, integrity, professionalism and academic excellence and, by demonstrating these behaviours on a daily basis, our leaders will be acting as change agents who can realise the individual and collective potential of our people and our University.

1.1 Developing the Strategy

It is important that our Leadership Development provision is specifically tailored to our University’s priorities and the development of this Strategy has been informed by a process of research and consultation including interviews with members of the University Executive Group (UEG) and other senior colleagues combined with focus groups made up of colleagues from faculties and professional services including University Academic Fellows and Trade Union representatives. A range of data was also analysed including the profile of our leadership community and information regarding our current leadership development provision. The resulting leadership development proposals were further refined through feedback from UEG and other key stakeholders.

1.2 Aims of the Leadership Development Strategy:

This Leadership Development Strategy aims to deliver a capable and diverse community of current and future leaders by;

- Defining what leadership means at our University and how this can be seen in our ‘Leeds Leaders’;
- Establishing the key leadership behaviours which will deliver a high trust, high performance working environment;
• Clarifying the roles and responsibilities which senior colleagues and managers at all levels of our University will play in developing current leaders and those with leadership potential;
• Implementing high quality and high impact leadership development and resources tailored to the needs of individual leaders and leadership teams;
• Ensuring access to relevant leadership development for under-represented groups;
• Providing a clear framework within which effective and transparent talent management and succession planning processes can be developed;
• Applying systematic evaluation to our leadership development activity to monitor progress and assess impact

2. Who Are Our Leaders?

The terms ‘leader’ and ‘leadership’ are very broad and are often not words that people associate with their roles. In some cases they become conflated with formal responsibilities such as line management but leadership extends beyond these types of management activity. For the purpose of this Strategy the terms are being used in the following ways:

Leadership – colleagues in any role and at any level in our University should display leadership behaviours in the way that they undertake their work, involve others, engage with long term goals as well as short term outcomes, provide mentoring and support and seek to make a positive contribution to their teams.

Emerging or Future Leaders – emerging leaders are a key group who will shape the future of our University. In practical terms, emerging leaders are deemed to be individuals who are seeking appointment to a more senior role or some form of change in role, which will require them to develop their leadership skills.

Established and Senior Leaders – is a term intended to refer to colleagues in positions of mid to senior leadership roles who are expected to demonstrate the leadership behaviours set out below to an advanced level including continued engagement with their own professional and personal development.

Managers – a number of individuals in the emerging and established leader categories will also be managers and have a range of line management responsibilities to fulfil. Within the context of this strategy we refer to management development as the technical knowledge, tools and skills a line manager will require to enable them to undertake their role successfully. Therefore some colleagues will benefit from both management development and leadership development activities.

These general definitions are intended to explain how the terms have been used in this document and also to make it clear that leadership is something we can all demonstrate in different ways and contexts. This strategy is intended to be inclusive in building leadership capability at all levels of our University.

3. Leadership Excellence Attributes

Our Leadership Excellence Attributes have been developed to establish a set of clear definitions and expectations which reflect effective leadership in the context of our University. They describe the way that our leaders are expected to behave and, in so doing, how they promote a positive, high trust work environment for all. The introduction of a common set of behaviours provides a
shared vocabulary through which colleagues can describe, discuss and review their leadership capability both as individuals and teams.

Each of these attributes is described in more detail in the Framework attached at Appendix 1.

The Leadership Excellence Attributes defined in this strategy are not reserved for specific job roles or grades and provide a guide that every member of our University can assess themselves against to help identify their development needs or interests.

Participants on our Leadership Excellence Development programmes will be assessed against these attributes and given access to feedback tools to generate further awareness regarding their effectiveness.

The Leadership Excellence Attributes will be reviewed annually to ensure they continue to support our University’s strategic priorities.

4. Our Approach to Leadership Development

Our leadership development provision will be designed to develop and embed our Leadership Excellence Attributes and will incorporate the following features:

**Experiential and Applied:** the design of learning interventions for our leaders will recognise the value of learning that happens in the work place. We will aim to maximise opportunities to design learning interventions that combine formal workshops with real work experiences and practical challenges.

**Flexible:** our development will be delivered across a range of formats to ensure it is flexible, accessible and suited to a range of learning styles. This approach will include making effective use of our virtual learning environment and online tools.
Working in Partnership: our leadership development will be delivered in partnership with colleagues across the institution alongside external partners and thought leaders to provide our leaders with access to a broad range of insights and best practice from the HE sector and beyond. It will also be leader led with the active participation of our existing leaders in sharing their insights and experiences with new and emerging leaders.

Continuous Professional Development: leadership development is not a one off event and it is clear that sustained change will not be achieved by attendance at single workshops. Participation in our leadership development programmes will require colleagues to identify development needs in advance, owning their own learning and engaging in a range of activities during and after formal programme delivery to help ensure that learning is embedded.

Innovative and Impactful: our leadership development will be regularly refreshed to remain up to date and reflect our institution’s developing needs and priorities. Our commitment to innovation will be evident both in the way that materials are designed and delivered and in the way that programmes generate innovative leadership practice.

Bespoke Provision: individuals and teams will be able to access leadership development, which is tailored to their specific development needs and includes a range of provision from coaching and mentoring to external programmes, online delivery and internal workshops. Leadership provision will be designed to ensure all staff stepping into new leadership roles are equipped for their appointment before they start in order to accelerate their leadership impact.

Coaching and Mentoring: coaching and mentoring represent different approaches to personal development which we will use to support colleagues at various stages of their career with us. The delivery of this strategy includes an investment in our internal coaching capacity to ensure that individuals engaged in leadership development or making the transition into a new leadership role are able to access qualified coaches from within and beyond the institution. Mentoring also continues to be an important focus in providing colleagues with access to advice, guidance and informed support in equipping them for career progression and leadership responsibilities.

Outcomes Focus: this strategy reflects a significant investment in a range of provision to increase leadership capability for the specific purpose of enhancing our University’s performance and ability to adjust quickly to the complex and fast changing environment in which HE operates. The outcomes and impact of leadership development will be reviewed and reported on a regular basis and these outcomes will drive further changes to what we deliver. An internal consultancy approach will identify real needs and flexible, tailored solutions to enhance the University’s performance.

5. Building a Community of Leaders

Developing ourselves as individual leaders is an important priority for this Strategy. However, for our leadership behaviours to become embedded across our University, colleagues need to regularly engage with the wider leadership community and to operate as effective leadership teams. Further activities designed to build and embed leadership excellence include:

Annual Leadership Excellence Conference: An annual University of Leeds Leadership Excellence Conference will be introduced in 2017 with the intention of bringing together senior colleagues from across our University to monitor progress against our Strategic Plan and engage with leadership priorities and best practice. The conference will include a broad range of
contributions from across and beyond the sector to promote best practice and create opportunities for collaborative working.

**Leadership Fora:** Our University Leadership Forum, Women in Leadership Forum and other leadership networks/groups will provide opportunities for case studies, speakers and ongoing review of our progress in developing and applying Leadership Excellence.

**Connected Leadership:** We will work in partnership with other significant employers across the region to further develop leadership networks and provide our leaders with access to development, resources and assignments which will broaden their experiences beyond the University.

**Leadership Teams:** Senior colleagues will be expected to develop these Leadership Excellence principles within their local leadership teams. Bespoke team development informed by the Leadership Excellence behaviours and an assessment of local development needs will be available through HR and the Professional and Organisational Development Centre.

### 6. Key Stakeholders:

The successful implementation of this strategy will require the contribution of a range of stakeholders:

**University Executive Group:** UEG members will act as key sponsors and have collective responsibility for the successful delivery of our Leadership Development Strategy. As senior and visible leaders in our University they are required to demonstrate our Leadership Excellence Attributes through the ways in which they act as role models, listen and learn from others and share their personal insights and experiences with the broader leadership community. They also play a vital role in developing current and future leaders across our University by providing a clear, strategic direction within which colleagues understand what is expected of them, receive good quality feedback and are able to access the relevant support and development.

**Leadership Excellence Development Steering Group:** A steering group made up of the Director and Deputy Director of Human Resources, Director of Professional and Organisational Development, a DVC, Dean representatives, Head of School, Director of Finance and Director of Communications will maintain oversight of the implementation of this Strategy providing feedback and guidance as required. The Group will monitor outcomes and key performance indicators to ensure that the Strategy is delivering impact and a return on investment.

**Professional and Organisational Development Centre:** The Professional and Organisational Development team will be responsible for the delivery of the programmes and range of elements which underpin this Strategy. As development experts they are required to keep up to date with leadership practice and to ensure that delivery is relevant, innovative and high impact. They will evaluate the delivery of this Strategy with a view to both continuously improving practice and to reporting progress and outcomes to the Leadership Development Steering Group.

**Line Managers:** Managers are responsible for working with their direct reports to identify their development needs and provide them with good quality feedback regarding their leadership behaviours. Managers also play a key role in supporting colleagues to translate the learning from leadership development programmes back in to the workplace.

**Participants:** All participants on leadership development programmes, attendees at events and workshops are required to actively engage with their own development by thinking about their learning objectives, seeking feedback and looking for ways to try new things in their work.
environment. Participants are also required to support the development of others by actively engaging in discussions, action learning and other collaborative activities.

**HR:** HR will operate as an active partner in embedding our Leadership Excellence Attributes by integrating them into our recruitment, talent, succession planning and performance management policies and processes.

### 7. Evaluation of Leadership Development

Our Leadership Development provision will be the subject of ongoing review, evaluation and continuous improvement as each phase is delivered. In particular, the implementation and further development of our provision will be overseen by the Leadership Excellence Development Steering Group.

Our internal leadership development programmes will be the subject of systematic evaluation informed by Kirkpatrick’s model:

![Kirkpatrick's Model](image)

In particular the following evaluation processes will be implemented:

- Participant responses to individual workshops and sessions will be the subject of a satisfaction rating to gauge the learner experience and make improvements as required for future events.
- Participant learning will be evaluated through short assessments to assess understanding and learning both prior to and after workshops (or online modules).
- Impact will be assessed through questionnaires, psychometrics and selective interviews with participants and their managers 3-6 months after completion of a structured programme of development to assess sustained change in behaviours.
- The longer-term impact of results and return on investment will be measured through identified performance indicators set out at the beginning of any development programme.

An annual review will be conducted to assess the success of the Leadership Development programme and validate the plan for delivery for the forthcoming year. The annual review will be informed by a set of robust and specific key performance indicators which will be agreed with the Leadership Development Steering Group.
8. Conclusion

Our Leadership Development Strategy puts effective leadership at the heart of our University’s commitment to delivering the Strategic Plan. It maps out key behaviours which, combined with our Values, represent the positive, healthy and productive working environment required to sustain our long term success.

The implementation of these behaviours forms part of a wider programme of change to ensure that we recruit, retain, develop and promote high quality leaders equipped to respond effectively to the changing landscape of Higher Education. As a result the implementation of our Leadership Excellence Attributes is supported by a range of flexible and experiential development activity to equip our people with the leadership skills they need.

Our Leadership Development provision will be the subject of systematic evaluation against agreed performance indicators and will be regularly reviewed and developed in line with feedback and the changing needs of our University leadership community.
**Appendix 1 – Leadership Excellence Behaviours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposeful Leadership:</th>
<th>We understand the goals and values of our University, set a clear direction and help colleagues to translate strategic priorities into the delivery of specific outcomes which are informed by evidence and insight. We build confidence and commitment in the way that we listen to the views of others, act on our plans, learn from our setbacks and celebrate our successes.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Thinking &amp; Decision Making:</td>
<td>We make informed decisions and take considered risks, which incorporate both short and long term factors and are aligned with our University Strategic Plan and values. We prioritise activity and make choices which are most likely to enable the delivery of shared goals. We scan the horizon for emerging opportunities and plan current activities with the future in mind.</td>
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<td>Creativity and Innovation:</td>
<td>We actively seek and use feedback to drive continuous improvement. We challenge ourselves and others to be the best we can and share best practice from across our University and beyond. We create an environment where new ideas and creative problem solving are encouraged and acted on.</td>
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<td>Collaborative:</td>
<td>We build effective working relationships with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to shape the future through creative collaborations and teamwork. We demonstrate the impact of our contribution through regional, national and international partnership and we work in partnership with our diverse range of colleagues, students and partners to understand their needs and deliver excellent outcomes.</td>
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<td>Communicating with Impact:</td>
<td>We build trust and gain buy in to shared goals through our professionalism, integrity and effective communication skills. We influence and engage others across and beyond our institution through active two way dialogue and by promoting a clear and targeted message which positively reflects our University.</td>
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<td>Delivering Results:</td>
<td>We take responsibility for delivering change efficiently and making things happen. Barriers and challenges are resolved promptly and success is celebrated. We are committed to ensuring that positive change is sustained and embedded to drive future success. We take a proactive approach to developing services, solutions and processes which are accessible, inclusive and user friendly.</td>
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<td>Developing Others:</td>
<td>We equip colleagues to perform to the best of their ability and realise their potential through ongoing feedback, coaching and development. We value and recognise the benefits of working with a diverse range of talented colleagues and actively seek to build inclusive teams in which all team members can thrive.</td>
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<td>Resilience &amp; Adaptability:</td>
<td>We are able to adapt to changing priorities and seek to create a positive and healthy working environment in the way that we engage with and support others.</td>
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<td>Self Awareness:</td>
<td>We understand our individual leadership style and adapt our approach in response to the situation and the needs of others. We regularly seek feedback to increase our levels of self awareness and are committed to undertaking development to improve our personal effectiveness.</td>
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