



# Our strategic plan

2021-2024



ROYAL  
HOLLOWAY  
UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON



*“The Founder believes that the education of women should not be exclusively regulated by the tradition and method of former ages; but that it should be founded on those studies and sciences which the experience of modern times has shown to be the most valuable, and the best adapted to meet the intellectual and social requirements of the students.”*

**Deed of Foundation, 1883**

# Foreword

Our founding documents underpin our identity as an institution. They set out our purpose, the values we hold and how we govern ourselves. These include Thomas Holloway's Deed of Foundation, the Act of Parliament that creates our legal identity and Statutes which regulate how we operate. We also recognise the significant influence of Elizabeth Jesser Reid, social reformer, anti-slavery activist and philanthropist who founded Bedford College, the first college for women, and was committed to equity for all in society. Inevitably, our founding documents are broad in the language they use, setting out general principles that have applied over the university's history.

To help us each make decisions on a day-to-day basis, a strategy provides a bridge between our founding documents and the world in which we currently live. It sets out shorter-term ambitions and goals that will help us make a valuable contribution to society, whilst holding true to our principles.

At the heart of our institution lie principles of achieving academic excellence (in teaching and research), focusing upon the needs of our students and our wider society, whilst creating an environment in which we are all inspired to succeed. Our behaviours are driven by fairness and equity, innovation and freedom to explore new ideas and ways of thinking. Our last strategy (2013-2020) saw us become a top 20 university and, through modest student number growth, remain financially sustainable.

Our new strategy, taking us to 2024, is organised around a focus on who the university serves – a diverse student body and a world that has urgent need of insights derived from research.

**Dame Margaret Hodge**  
Chair of Council

**Professor Paul Layzell DL**  
Principal



# Contents

- 4 A bold vision for our future
- 5 What we want to achieve
- 7 Addressing the challenges and opportunities of our modern times
- 8 Serving the higher education needs of students in an expanding London population
- 10 Expanding the horizons of all our students by building strong and sustainable international partnerships
- 12 Addressing key issues of our modern time by developing our strengths in challenge-led research
- 14 Enabling the success of our strategy through simplification and digitisation
- 16 Creating value through and for our people
- 18 Key performance indicators





# A bold vision for our future

Royal Holloway College (1886) merged with Bedford College (1849) in 1985, and today's university is rooted in the purpose and ethos of our two original colleges, providing the foundations of the university we are today.

The colleges combined their heritages of academic excellence, social justice, philanthropy and entrepreneurship, together with a shared tradition of challenging social and cultural norms by being among the first to open the doors to higher education for women, to form one university – now known as Royal Holloway, University of London.

Royal Holloway's history and origins in equality and social justice are a source of pride. Thomas Holloway set out in the College's Deed of Foundation a vision that met the key access challenge of the day, the access of women to Higher Education.

Our new strategic plan (2021-2024) considers how we can meet the needs of our modern times in terms of the provision of higher education and research-based innovation. By building on our

well-regarded academic strengths, and by aligning to needs, for example in graduate employability, programme portfolio, access, civic influence, partnership and knowledge exchange, we can deliver on our purpose as a university.

Our strategic plan has three strategic priority pillars:

- Serving the higher education needs of an expanding London population
- Expanding the horizons of all our students by building strong and sustainable international partnerships
- Addressing key issues of our modern time by developing our strengths in challenge-led research

The world around us is undergoing a digital revolution, which is changing the economic and social environment. To thrive in this changing world the university must transform, and recognises the need to embrace digitisation of our education and operations. Underpinning the plan is a strong focus on managing our resources effectively, efficiently and sustainably. In doing so we protect the legacy of our founders and enable Royal Holloway to meet the modern needs of future generations.





# What we want to achieve

Our vision as an institution is to cultivate an inclusive environment that supports excellence in teaching, research and student experience. Our last strategy (2013-2020) supported a mission of dual excellence in research and teaching. This was successfully delivered, evidenced by top quartile outcomes in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework and our place in the UK top 20 universities by 2020. Student number growth was achieved as planned (rising 17% over five years), improvements were made to our estate, a strong Law programme was introduced and we saw significant improvements in marketing and recruitment practice.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic we were in the midst of developing a new 10-year strategy (2020-2030), but the major disruption and uncertainty caused across the Higher Education sector led to a pause following the national lockdown in March 2020. As the university focused efforts on the immediate consequences of the pandemic and the unknown and potentially significant impacts on longer-term prospects, we embarked on the development of this three-year strategic plan to allow short-term actions to be aligned with the long-term success of the university, strengthening our dual excellence mission and maintaining financial sustainability.

The new strategic plan is ambitious and, if successfully implemented, will bring about significant repositioning.



## Ambition and focus

The focus of the new plan is on Education, Research and Financial Sustainability.

The plan aims to create a more inclusive environment, to encourage more students from diverse backgrounds, particularly from the nearby London region, to feel able to access the education and opportunities we offer. It also provides the space for the university to grow in new academic areas and to expand opportunities as a result of the digital revolution.

A priority is to develop strength in our relationships through new partnerships, both locally and globally.

Our research intensity is a foundation for the university's success and this underpins the education and environment we offer to students and staff. Traditionally we have focused on investigator-led research and, whilst this remains key to our success, our ambition is to bring teams together in new configurations to enable challenge-led research and to strengthen the role the university can play in the development of our region, the UK and the world.





# Addressing the challenges and opportunities of our modern times

Our strategic plan sets out what we will do over the next three years to position Royal Holloway towards long-term success in meeting the challenges of our modern times, by strengthening our dual excellence in teaching and research and ensuring financial sustainability.

The plan outlines three core pillars, an ‘enabling’ fourth pillar, focusing on enhancing the way we work, simplifying our processes and introducing technology, where possible, to help drive improvement, ensure financial sustainability and support our academic objectives, and a fifth, to create the necessary staff environment.

## We will

**1** Serve the higher education needs of an expanding London population

**2** Expand the horizons of all our students by building strong and sustainable international partnerships

**3** Address the key issues of our modern time by developing our strengths in challenge-led research

**4** Enable the success of our strategy through simplification and digitisation

**5** Create value through and for our people





# Serving the higher education needs of students in an expanding London population

Pillar 1 of the strategic plan responds to the higher education needs and ambitions of an expanding population.

By 2030, the population of students in London is projected to increase by 50%\* and their needs are changing. These students are committed to their subject, but they also want to know what it will deliver for them next, in life beyond graduation.

Some 50% of all young people go to university, and their needs, aspirations and backgrounds differ hugely. We need to modernise our offer, address awarding gaps, reconfigure our services and develop and improve how we support students academically and in terms of their wellbeing if we are to meet our responsibilities to serve these students from London, the UK and overseas.

We will create the academic offer that will allow the university to respond to the demographic uplift, particularly in London, over the next decade, and then promote it effectively. To be in the best position to respond to the uplift we need to answer the profound and important questions about the elimination of awarding gaps for students from particular backgrounds and how to build on and adapt our approach to student wellbeing for a more diverse student body who are studying in different ways.

\* Projected increase in students aged 18-24 domiciled in London between 2016-2030, *Preparing for hyper-diversity: London's student population in 2030*, Access HE







Three projects in this pillar have been identified as priority projects for 2021/22;



**Align teaching programme outcomes with Skills 4.0**

Our vision is to align undergraduate programmes with skills identified in the Skills 4.0 initiative, created by Skills Development Scotland.\* This involves tangible extraction of skills to provide a holistic view, as part of delivery of ‘learning, teaching and assessment’.



**Inclusive education: accelerate progress on awarding gaps**

Internal analysis shows we are making progress on most of our awarding gaps, but addressing remaining awarding gaps is a priority focus. We will launch prizes in spring 2022 to generate ideas from staff to positively affect the awarding gaps both in their school and more widely.



**Building skills, experiences and opportunities for all**

Our vision is that 100% of first year students will be empowered to access work experience. We aim to develop first year experiences as part of the curriculum and improve engagement with vacancies as part of career planning.

Further initiatives focus on:



**Develop effective assessment approaches that measure students’ abilities regardless of their background**



**Develop strategic relationships with London boroughs**



**Targeted student recruitment activities for the London market**



**Launching a new Department of Health Studies, and repositioning in other disciplines for their future success**



**Improve education and support to commuting and community students**

\*Skills Development Scotland in collaboration with the Centre for Work-based Learning (Strathclyde, RGU, Herriot-Watt)



# Expanding the horizons of all our students by building strong and sustainable international partnerships

In the last 20 years the number of international students coming to the UK has increased significantly, driven by developments in countries such as China and India.

Many of these students have joined Royal Holloway, where we have been able to offer them a supportive learning experience on our campus. This has also helped to create a strong international dimension to our university that benefits all students and the local area. The strategic plan has a key focus on expanding our teaching, to meet the needs of students from both home and overseas. We plan to extend our postgraduate offer and, in particular, to cultivate our programmes to be more professionally-focused and practical, as well as enabling more students to study in London as well as Egham.

We are opening up new options for international students, diversifying the range of study routes open to them. Partnering with Study Group we are enabling students to take an International Foundation Year or International Year One, to enter our degree courses well-prepared. We are working to expand our partnerships with overseas universities and, working with the University of London distance learning operation, we will increase the number of degrees we can provide via online study or University of London accredited Teaching Centres worldwide.

The focus of the projects in this pillar is to meet the changing needs of students from across the world, enabling them to take advantage of a Royal Holloway degree online, in person, in London and on our campus.







### Immediate priorities:



#### Expanded pathway programmes

Developing our International Study Centre offer (ISC), in partnership with Study Group, to deliver new initiatives such as the International Year One and a Pre-Masters programme. A redesigned International Foundation Year begins in September 2022 and other online options are being explored.



#### London Graduate School

Students at our London campus will benefit from increased teaching space and services. Relevant courses will move to London (e.g. our MSc Project Management), and further improvements will ensure our London-based students enjoy the same great experience of those on our Egham campus.



#### Postgraduate taught portfolio refresh

We aim to align our portfolio better with market demand, identifying new course opportunities – like our new degrees in Health Studies – as well as existing courses where content changes could make them even more attractive.



#### Distance Learning expansion

Working with University of London Worldwide and online education platform, Coursera, we are expanding our Distance Learning offer. Seven new degrees, in a range of subjects, will be launched during the period.



#### Strategic partners overseas

Our vision is to develop a small number of strategic cross-university agreements, initially focusing on China and India.

### Longer-term projects are:



#### University of London Teaching Centre expansion



#### Improving our Study Abroad offer



#### Entry route attainment monitoring



# Addressing key issues of our modern time by developing our strengths in challenge-led research

Our research is at the heart of our purpose as a university and provides an underpinning for both the education that we offer students and the environment that we offer to staff.

Royal Holloway has a proud record in the academic standing of the outputs of our research, and now our strategic intent is to expand further the importance of this research to the challenges of our modern times, benefiting society and positioning us to increase the enabling funding and partnerships.

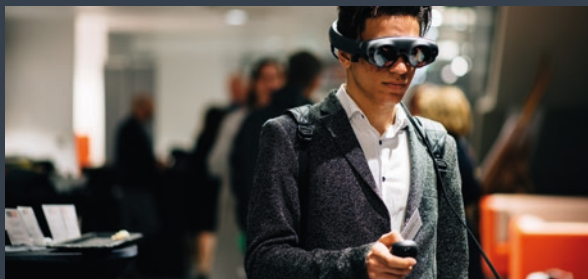
The plan for this pillar is to develop a number of significant thematic strengths which will be used to catalyse a university-wide strength in challenge-led research, building on our traditional strengths in investigator-led research, energising our

intellectual environment and driving influence in our locality and beyond. Four themes have been identified in topics where there is significant potential for challenge-led research and where there are institution-wide strengths to build on.

The themes will provide a focus for networking, partnering and investment to create the right conditions to enable us to build strengths which are impactful, productive and contribute significantly to solving the key challenges facing society today, based on discoveries and insights at the forefront of intellectual endeavour. The outcome of this activity will be a research environment that encourages, supports and recognises contributions to advancing knowledge and exploiting these advances for societal benefit, enabled by an increase in research income.







### StoryFutures

aims to transform the creative industries through use of immersive and digital technologies.



### Living sustainably

addresses the challenges of climate change, biodiversity, food and energy security, infectious disease, inequalities in education, work and participation, political polarisation and resource consumption.



### Advanced quantum science and technologies

will shape the second quantum revolution in which devices based on quantum rules are set to revolutionise information processing and sensing capabilities.



### Transformative digital technologies, security and society

builds on our strengths in cyber security and aims to understand the role of AI and digital technology in daily life, on the economy, and workplace.



# Enabling the success of our strategy through simplification, digitisation and environmental sustainability

To support the ambitions of our three strategic priorities, we have a fourth, enabling pillar.

Its initiatives are focused on enhancing the way we work, simplifying our processes and introducing technology, wherever possible, to help drive improvement, ensure financial sustainability and support our academic objectives.

Pillar 4 currently has a programme of initiatives which, if successfully implemented over the next three years, will provide us with the opportunity to modernise the way we operate and further develop the important partnership between academic schools and professional services.





Immediate priorities are:



### Enquiry management

Our vision is to introduce a new system that can provide a streamlined service for student enquiries and case management; a single entry point accessed through several routes for student enquiries, with consistent service levels and enhanced functionality to enable students to self-serve.



### Environmental sustainability

Finalise our detailed environmental strategy with ambitious targets



### Analytics and reporting

We plan to develop a technology platform to bring all university data together into one space, which will result in a consistent data model for Royal Holloway. Within the student data area, this will provide an infrastructure on which to, ultimately, bring student engagement data and learner analytics to life, to improve student learning outcomes and their experience.

Other initiatives focus on the opportunity to use what we have learnt from our response to the pandemic; consider how best to deploy our resources and how best to serve the needs of a changing and growing population of students, whilst maintaining quality services without increasing the overall cost of resources.



### Hybrid working for staff



### Academic administration



### Modernising our approach to Personal Tutoring



### Streamlining postgraduate admissions



### Curriculum Management

Updating our approach to curriculum development to ensure our courses meet the needs of students is a key project for this pillar. Underpinning this improvement with a new Curriculum Management system and streamlined processes will enable us to refresh our offer and ensure it remains suitable for the needs of modern students.



# Creating value **through** **and for** our people

It is only through the talent, dedication and commitment of our people that we are able to deliver exceptional outcomes for those we serve.

Royal Holloway has enjoyed great reputation and success in the past and retaining that status will require embracing the changing world. Future success will be realised by applying existing strengths into new contexts and creating new strengths for emerging contexts. We will look to attract and nurture colleagues with potential to think differently and creatively in developing services and solutions that have relevance within the context of our shared goals. We will work to attract and build the skills and attributes that support the flexibility and agility necessary to respond to our changing environment. At the same time we will recognise that success takes many forms, and value those colleagues who are

committed to improving and strengthening the core services and provisions on which potential can build.

We need to listen to, explore and build on differing perspectives if we are to genuinely value diversity and appreciate diverse voices. By authentically committing to this at all levels, colleagues will feel welcomed, included, valued and able to give their best. Highly-motivated and skilled leaders and managers will be crucial to the university delivering on our aspirations and creating the environment that enables colleagues to feel valued and thrive. Our processes will facilitate the collegiate working and foster ways of working which enable colleagues to deliver great outcomes for those we serve. Combined, our structures and processes will enable the institution to respond to changing circumstances and be agile in the face of new opportunities and challenges.





Within this overall aim there are five strategic goals:



**Shared purpose and engagement**



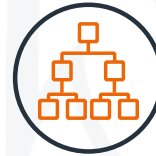
**A place for potential to thrive**



**Achievement through diversity and diverse perspectives**



**Confident and inspiring leadership and management**



**Aligned and enabling organisational structures and capability**



# Key performance indicators

Our plan outlines ambitious change to meet important strategic objectives. We aim to position the university to grow to 15,000 students and to increase research grant income by 75% by the end of the decade so that we will have the resources to underpin our academic ambitions.

We will monitor our progress and success in this positioning by keeping track of key performance indicators (KPIs). These focus on enabling us to understand where we are achieving success through our actions, so they are linked to a set of milestones. The milestones capture the key points in our strategic projects where the performance indicators will be impacted.

## Inclusion

Inclusion, access and participation are key drivers for our strategy - we want every student to succeed and meet their potential. Our work in this area is focused on the targets within our Access and Participation Plan. A reduction in awarding gaps between groups of students at the university is the highest priority in this area, but we also continue to work towards reducing gaps in access and progression to employment.

## Employability

Helping students achieve their potential includes supporting them in ways that help them achieve the careers they aspire to have. We have a strategic driver to increase the number of students achieving these careers, so an important KPI for us is focused on our action to increase those taking part in work experience early in their student lives.

## Challenge-led research

A key element of our strategy is to shift our emphasis in research towards 'challenge-led', responding to the challenges society faces now and into the future. Our KPIs here are focused on increasing our research funding to enable us to undertake more work in this area, and in particular increasing our funding from industry to develop more partnerships in our research.

## Growth

Student numbers are growing and in particular, the number of students expected in London the number of students in London is projected to be over 50% higher by 2030 than it was in 2016 (see p.8). In responding to the needs of these students - local, high-quality education in subjects they wish to study - we have a target to modestly increase our student numbers to around 15,000 by 2029-30 with interim targets along the way.

The key milestones for this achievement are the introduction of our new Department of Health Studies, a revitalised Business and Management offering and a focus on employability and skills development in our undergraduate offer. This is combined with a KPI to increase the number of students who make us their first choice.

In addition, we are aiming to increase our overseas student numbers by adding to our pathway programmes, distance programmes and postgraduate taught students. Revitalising our postgraduate offering is a significant project within our portfolio that enables us to respond to student needs in the UK and overseas.



Area	Strategic target	2019/20 values	Target by 2023/24
Growth	Number of Home (UK) undergraduates	6,984	7,999
	Overseas students from pathway programmes	245	490
	Distance Programmes headcount	1,787	3,100
Attractiveness	Proportion of Home undergraduate students through clearing	27%	24%
	Number of postgraduate taught programmes with more than 20 students	16	25
Challenge-led research	Research income	£17.2m	£21.5m
	Industry and commerce income from Research and Knowledge Exchange	£2.5m	£3.8m
Inclusion	Students in select groupings achieving a 1st or 2:1		
	Awarding gap between Black and White students	18%	7%
	IMD Quintile 1 and 5 gap*	16%	12%
Employability	Undergraduates benefitting from a work experience by start of Year 2	40%	100%
People	Staff agreeing with the statement 'I could explain to someone who didn't work here what the university is trying to achieve'.	72%	82%
	Staff agreeing with the statement 'I have a clear understanding about my role within the university'	89%	94%
External focus	Report on partnership development related to strategy		Report annually
Investment	Appointments of academic staff aligned to the strategy		91 FTEs
	Investment in new strategic IT projects to improve efficiency of operations		£3m p/a



Royal Holloway, University of London  
Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX  
01784 434455  
[royalholloway.ac.uk](http://royalholloway.ac.uk)