

# Vision 2021

A World-class  
Civic University

Excellence  
with a Purpose

A portrait of Mark I'Anson, a middle-aged man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red patterned tie. He is standing in a modern building with large windows and columns.

# Foreword

**Mark I'Anson**

Chair of University Council and  
Pro-Chancellor

We launched *Vision 2021: A World-class Civic University* in 2009, anticipating the landmark 150th anniversary of the establishment of the College of Physical Science in Newcastle.

Three years on, our upward trajectory has continued. Considered against an array of measures including research success, student and staff satisfaction, international presence, and financial sustainability, the University is delivering its mission and fulfilling its objectives.

This success has been achieved during a period of great uncertainty in higher education and in the early stages of a fundamental rebalance of funding and major changes to student number controls. As an ambitious, civic institution such turbulence demands we review our strategy and long-term objectives. Inevitably, some adjustments have emerged, but only as subtle changes of direction or emphasis. Indeed, this second edition of *Vision 2021* is essentially a reflection of our growing strength in the sustained delivery of our ambition.

This updated document restates our core values and maintains the clarity of our mission and principal objectives. Crucially, it is founded on the clear and consistent communication of these issues to all academic and professional units and permeates detailed plans and targets at the operational level.

Newcastle is a great University, which over the past three years has further enhanced its position as a major force in our city, region and nation, and has also taken significant strides in extending its international presence. Our vision to 2021 maintains this growth in the University's academic standing and in our pre-eminent role in social, civic and economic terms.



# Vision and Mission

**Professor Chris Brink**  
Vice-Chancellor

**Our vision is of Newcastle as a civic university with a global reputation for academic excellence.**

We wish to be a world-class civic university. The juxtaposition of ‘world-class’ and ‘civic’ means that we aim to put academic excellence to work, to make a contribution to civil society. Over the past three years our contribution to civic engagement has blossomed through the successful launch of three selected Societal Challenge Themes, of which you can read more in the rest of this document. These are global challenges, particularly relevant in our own city and region, for which we have the academic expertise to contribute towards significant and lasting solutions.

In doing so we are acting out our mission statement, which is:

- **to be a world-class research-intensive university**
- **to deliver teaching and facilitate learning of the highest quality**
- **to play a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England**

Over recent years the scale and speed of change has been dramatic, both in our own sector and in the wider global society. On a national level, the new funding arrangements for higher education in England, and the UK’s slow and tentative emergence from recession, present significant challenges to all universities. They will not, however, distort our institutional vision, or divert our mission, both of which we reaffirm.



# Principles and Values

There are certain fundamental values shared throughout the higher education sector to which we are committed, including: academic freedom; the pursuit of knowledge and understanding; a sound academic disciplinary base; a methodology based on reason and evidence; social responsibility; and transparency.

In addition, we:

- are committed to excellence
- value diversity
- respond to societal challenges
- accord parity of esteem to research and teaching
- educate for life
- are globally ambitious and regionally rooted
- invest in excellent staff





# History: A World-class Civic University

Newcastle upon Tyne is one of the oldest university cities in England – there has been teaching here for a tertiary qualification for longer than anywhere else in England except Oxford, Cambridge, London and Durham. Newcastle is also the only city in England where university teaching began with medicine.

Newcastle University developed as a civic university in response to the regional demands of the industrial economy. Since the early days of the formation of a College of Medicine in 1834, through the foundation of a College of Physical Science in 1871, and its successor Armstrong College, to the eventual formality of receiving its own University Act in 1963, it has maintained strong and productive links with civil society.

For a long time the North East of England was a powerhouse of the industrial economy, and the various shapes and structures of what eventually became Newcastle University provided the intellectual underpinning for the economic and industrial activities of the region. The first Chairs at the Colleges were not only in fundamental disciplines such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Arts and Literature, but also in the regionally important applied sciences such as Geology, Mining, Naval Architecture, Engineering and Agriculture.

For some, ‘civic university’ came to mean a particular focus on the economy and civic infrastructure of their own cities. However, we emphasise that the primary feature of a civic university is its sense of purpose – an understanding of not just what it is good at, but what it is good for. We see ourselves as delivering benefits not just to individuals or individual organisations, but to society as a whole, using our academic knowledge, creativity and expertise to come forward with innovations and solutions that will make a difference.

We realise that we cannot do everything, and that it would be counterproductive to dilute our efforts by spreading our work too thinly. We therefore focus our interaction with civil society, regionally, nationally and internationally, around three particular large-scale Societal Challenge Themes:

- Ageing
- Social Renewal
- Sustainability

We selected these challenges on the grounds that (a) they are of global import, (b) they are particularly relevant in our own city and region, and (c) we have a demonstrated track record of academic excellence in addressing them. With the adoption of these Societal Challenge Themes as the manifestation of Newcastle as a civic university, we give effect to our motto: Excellence with a Purpose.

<sup>1</sup> Chemical Engineering and Advanced Materials students.

<sup>2</sup> Armstrong Building, the site of the original College of Physical Science, founded in 1871.

<sup>3</sup> The Students’ Union, at the heart of student life.

<sup>4</sup> Devonshire Building, home of the Newcastle Institute for Research on Sustainability (NIREs).

# Functions and Structures

Arising from the three elements of our mission statement, we have three core academic functions:

- research and innovation
- learning, teaching, and the wider student experience
- engagement and internationalisation

Strategic leadership of these areas is provided, university-wide, by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and two Pro-Vice-Chancellors. Delivery of the core functions occurs in the three faculties, each headed by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor:

- the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- the Faculty of Medical Sciences
- the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering

Each faculty consists of a number of academic units, typically a school or a research institute. The core functions and core structures combine to form the academic map of the University, in which we envisage the faculties as vertical columns, with the core functions as cross-cutting institutional activities.

Interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary activities are co-ordinated and supported by the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, while academic staff are line-managed within the faculties. The academic enterprise is supported by a number of corporate activities within the professional support services, all of which report to the Registrar.

The University is led and managed by the Vice-Chancellor and Executive Board, consisting of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, three Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors, three cross-cutting Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Registrar, the Executive Director (Finance) and the Executive Director (Human Resources). Executive Board functions to an agreed set of principles, and each year agrees a set of recurrent and project-related responsibilities.

The University Council is our governing body, Senate is the academic decision-making body, Court is an advisory body, Academic Board represents our academic and professional staff, the Students' Union represents our students, and Convocation represents our alumni.

- 1 The University's Dove Marine Laboratory, Cullercoats Bay.
- 2 The Great North Museum: Hancock, of which the University is a lead partner.
- 3 The University's Cockle Park Farm.
- 4 A Night at the Museum for Tyneside secondary school pupils.
- 5 University research.
- 6 The spectacular Hatton Gallery on campus.





# Institutional Objectives and Strategy

The Strategic Plan for the University is articulated through the plans of individual units, which collectively describe how we aim to realise our vision and mission. The implementation of these plans, and our day-to-day operations, are rooted in our principles and values.

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We unpack the vision and mission into a number of institutional objectives, categorised in terms of our core functions, core structures and corporate activities. The Strategic Plan articulates the strategies we follow to achieve these objectives. Each strategy, in turn, cascades down to more detailed goals and targets.

As a university, our institutional objectives are to achieve and maintain the following:

- top 20 in the UK for research
- top 20 in the UK for student satisfaction
- focus on three Societal Challenge Themes: Ageing; Social Renewal; Sustainability
- a significant international, national and regional profile and reputation
- financial and environmental sustainability



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# Core Function Objectives

Our overall institutional objectives are defined in terms of our three core functions: research and innovation; learning, teaching and the wider student experience; and engagement and internationalisation.

## Research and Innovation

Our overall objective is to be a world-class research-intensive university. Under this heading we group objectives regarding the classic conception of blue-sky research, the idea of research responding to societal needs and challenges, the promotion of an interdisciplinary approach in doing so, the application and commercialisation of research, and the broad ideas of innovation and entrepreneurship, including the engagement from our research base with business and industry.

Our Research and Innovation Strategy specifies the following objectives:

- to perform high-quality research that is internationally recognised
- to provide a high-quality environment for students and staff
- to develop an innovation culture embedded throughout the University

## Learning, Teaching and the Wider Student Experience

Our learning and teaching philosophy is based on the concept of education for life. By that we mean two things: providing knowledge and understanding that will last a lifetime, and providing knowledge and experience relevant to life and the world around us.

Students are at the centre of the learning experience, and their feedback lies at the heart of our future strategy. Our students are encouraged to be active educational

citizens, sharing ownership of their learning experience and becoming a member of a lifelong network of alumni. In addition to an excellent education, informed by leading-edge research and scholarship, we provide a wide variety of enterprise and volunteering activities, student societies and an active presence in recreational and competitive sport.

As a research-intensive university we recognise and value the importance of our postgraduate student community. Educating high-quality research students is vital not only to replenishing the academic base, but also to maintaining the flow of graduates to strengthen our regional, national, and global knowledge economy. We value our international students for their contribution to the University and the diversity of backgrounds and ideas they bring.

As a civic university, we contribute to the global skills base through our high proportion of professionally accredited degree programmes, and through a portfolio of courses of continuing professional development.

Our Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy specifies the following objectives:

- to deliver and promote teaching of the highest standard
- to facilitate and support student learning and achievement
- to support development of employability skills for national and global markets
- to provide programmes and services that meet relevant accreditation and quality standards
- to deliver a fully rounded, enjoyable and formative student experience





## Engagement and Internationalisation

Newcastle University aims to be a leading example of the beneficial interaction between world-class academic quality and civil society.

As a world-class civic university, our engagement with civil society is integral to ensuring that our academic and professional activities have economic, social and cultural benefits.

Our engagement activities are based on co-enquiry, mutual benefit, shared learning and reciprocity. They are grounded in our academic expertise and experience and all of our academic units are expected to build up an engagement portfolio based on research and teaching activities. The Societal Challenge Themes help us to make a difference by articulating our research interests with the wider society. Our alumni play a key role in furthering our engagement activity.

Our Engagement Strategy specifies the following objectives:

- to develop the public understanding of Newcastle as a world-class civic university
- to position Newcastle University as a recognised leader in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England
- to attain national and international recognition for the University as a leading institution in respect of the three Societal Challenge Themes
- to develop the public profile of Newcastle as a City of Science
- to develop and maintain good relations with stakeholders, alumni and the wider public

Over recent years we have grown our international student population and developed international campuses in Malaysia and Singapore.

Our Internationalisation Strategy specifies the following objectives:

### Internationalisation abroad

- to develop and sustain a number of high-quality in-country operations and partnerships to deliver excellence in teaching, training, engagement and research
- to promote international collaborations to ensure that our research remains at the forefront of world developments
- to develop a cohort of high-quality partner universities abroad that share our vision

### Internationalisation at home

- to recruit and retain strong and diverse cohorts of high-quality international staff and students
- to develop and maintain international opportunities for staff and students
- to attract the highest-quality international researchers to Newcastle for research collaborations

<sup>1</sup> UK schools competition winners aboard the University's new research vessel, *The Princess Royal*.

<sup>2</sup> Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia, the University's medical campus in Johor, Malaysia.

<sup>3</sup> Students meeting in our dedicated student services building, King's Gate.



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# Societal Challenge Themes

We deliver our notion of a civic university through a small number of Societal Challenge Themes.

Universities are used to working on the supply side of the knowledge economy. We create knowledge through our research, and we disseminate knowledge through our publications and our teaching. There is ample evidence of the long-term value of curiosity-driven and peer-evaluated research, and at Newcastle University we are proud of our track record in this regard. In addition, however, we have made it our aim to respond to the demand side of the knowledge economy. By this we mean that we wish to make a contribution towards addressing the big societal challenges of our times. To do so, we need to start from the issues affecting people's lives, and put our academic knowledge, creativity and expertise to work to come forward with innovations and solutions that will make a difference.

We have looked carefully at big global challenges which are particularly relevant in our own part of the world, and for which we have a track record of world-class scholarship. This process led us to focus our academic work on three Societal Challenge Themes. Each of these themes is led, on behalf of the University, by one of our faculties:

- Ageing (led from the Faculty of Medical Sciences)
- Social Renewal (led from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Sustainability (led from the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering)

Further information can be found on our website. (Just type 'Societal Challenge Themes' into the internal search engine.)



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- 1 The University's Moorbank Botanical Gardens.
- 2 Investigations into the potential of geothermal energy as a source of renewable heat.
- 3 The Social Renewal Societal Challenge Theme launched with the Great North Build, a Lego exhibition highlighting current issues in urban design.
- 4 The Grey Matters campaign image was chosen to launch the Ageing Societal Challenge Theme.
- 5 The LIVE concert series in King's Hall.
- 6 One of the University's standing PC stations.



# The Faculties

All our academic work is carried out within the faculties, and more particularly within the academic units making up the faculties. This is where the academics work, and the students study.

The faculties are operational and managerial entities, whereas the core functions have an institution-wide co-ordinating role. While we articulate our institutional goals in terms of the three core functions, we carry them out within our academic units. It is vital that the work done within the faculties meshes with our institutional objectives. Accordingly, each faculty has its own strategic plan on how to support and attain our institutional goals in the context of its own disciplinary clusters.

The three faculties jointly subscribe to the following core strategic objectives:

- to achieve and sustain research excellence
- to deliver a high-quality student experience on all programmes
- to strengthen and deepen our international activities and reputation
- to expand international student recruitment
- to establish a lifelong engagement with our alumni
- to increase partnerships with companies through collaboration based on skills, know-how and inventions
- to contribute to Newcastle Science City
- to sustain a vibrant range of professionally accredited, research-informed, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes

The specific objectives of the faculties are as follows:

## The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS)

- to lead the University in developing Social Renewal as a Societal Challenge Theme
- to develop an internationally recognised Business School
- to deliver a high-profile and internationally recognised Doctoral Training Programme
- to realise the full potential of established and emerging capabilities in distinctive areas of creative practice through the establishment of the Newcastle Institute for Creative Arts Practice (NICAP)

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1 A student laboratory practical class in the School of Dental Sciences.

2 The impressive new Newcastle University Business School building.

3 A practical class using the Marine Technology towing tank.



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## The Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS)

- to lead the University in responding to Ageing as a Societal Challenge Theme
- to develop our cutting-edge research in ageing, cancer, genetics and stem cells, molecular and cell biology, neuroscience and health services research to become a world-class centre for Translational Medical Research
- to work with stakeholders including the NHS and other employers, professional bodies and sponsorship agencies to ensure that graduates are fit for purpose and that our programmes meet workforce needs
- to facilitate and guide the development of the MB BS (Malaysia) programme and other international programmes in and outside Malaysia

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## The Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering (SAGE)

- to lead the University in developing Sustainability as a Societal Challenge Theme
- to build on the impact of our Digital Institute
- to expand activity in teaching, research and engagement with Singapore

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# Newcastle Science City

We are partners with Newcastle City Council in Newcastle Science City, which aims to position Newcastle as a world-leading city of science.

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The University's contribution to Newcastle Science City is built around our research excellence and engagement activities in three critical areas of ageing and health, sustainability, and stem cell and regenerative medicine. This groundbreaking work is carried out by scientists and clinicians working in three separate, key locations across Newcastle:

- the Campus for Ageing and Vitality – where the challenge of healthy ageing is being tackled
- the International Centre for Life – the location for our stem cell and regenerative medicine research
- Science Central – the heart of the city centre – which will become a home for the science and engineering activities related to sustainability, and a focal point for regeneration

The implementation vehicle for positioning Newcastle as a city of science is Newcastle Science Company Ltd. The role of this organisation is focused on four key areas:

- support and inward investment – promoting and supporting inward investment both for the Science Central site and for science-based business elsewhere, leveraging funding through complementary projects
- marketing and communication – promoting Newcastle's science expertise externally and ensuring business and community engagement in science and technology
- business engagement and support – focusing on business engagement and networking and working with partners to ensure there is appropriate support for businesses, particularly high-growth and science-related activities
- community engagement – promoting the importance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) educational pathways, and to liaise with businesses and education and training providers to help ensure good alignment between the demand and supply for skills



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- 1 Developing a teaching pack exploring the geology of the Science Central site.
- 2 Research at the Institute for Ageing and Health.
- 3 Reception in our student services building, King's Gate.
- 4 Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia students.
- 5 Students at the Great North Museum: Hancock.
- 6 Relaxing in the Students' Union.



# Enabling Objectives

We do not regard the University in the first place as a business, because our primary motive is not profit but academic excellence. However, we endeavour to be business-like in our activities in order to attain our academic goals.

Our business-like approach requires focus on the following issues, for which we identify specific objectives and operational actions and performance measures.

These are:

- the digital campus
- environmental sustainability
- the estate
- finance
- human resources
- public relations
- student recruitment

## Risk Management

Risks are potential events which may prevent us from reaching our strategic objectives. We follow an approach of being risk-aware rather than risk-averse. The corporate risks are identified and reviewed each year for the year ahead in our Corporate Risk Register, and are the responsibility of members of Executive Board.



THE QUEEN'S  
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES  
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION  
2009

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