



Education and the student experience

The University continues to represent higher education at its best by investing comprehensively in facilities, training, technology and services, and by seeking to create new inroads to university for people from backgrounds where going to university is not the norm via widening participation, e-learning, outreach and international research projects.

The University's priorities in this area are to:

- attract and retain academically gifted and highly motivated students from a wide range of backgrounds, creating a diverse and international University community;
- provide an education of the highest quality that is research-led and focused on the needs and expectations of our students;
- ensure students have a fulfilling, challenging and intellectually stimulating experience while at University, that prepares them for employment and worldwide opportunities when they leave;
- provide effective and enabling educational leadership and structures that support educational enhancement;
- ensure that learning takes place within a high-quality environment that enables both students and staff to achieve their full academic potential.

Education Strategy

Professor Avril Waterman-Pearson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education), and members of the Education Committee completed work on the University's new *Education Strategy, Education Strategy 2010-16: Learning in Partnership*, which expands on the priorities stated (see left) and focuses on what students from diverse backgrounds need in order to take full advantage of the opportunities available, to thrive academically and personally and to succeed in a global context. You can find a link to the Strategy (downloadable as a PDF document) at <http://tinyurl.com/edstrat10>.

The new Strategy has provided a framework for the continual improvement of the educational experience at Bristol. During the year work focused on addressing the areas highlighted by the QAA Institutional Audit visit in May 2009. In particular the way that degrees are classified across the University has been reviewed so as to improve consistency and transparency. Further work improved the provision of advice and guidance for staff and students with respect to assessment and feedback, and this was incorporated into new *Regulations and code of practice for assessment of students on taught programmes*.

Feedback from students was gathered through local and national surveys, specifically the National Student Survey (NSS) and the International Student Barometer, and action was instigated at University and departmental level to address issues raised.

In the NSS, at institutional level 84% of our students expressed satisfaction overall (against a national average of 82%) and 79% were satisfied with our learning resources provision; subject level average

scores for library satisfaction increased from 58% to 70% this year with subject specific scores improving in 32 subjects. While the institutional level of satisfaction for assessment and feedback improved by several percentage points, at 58% there is still more work to be done. Our overseas student satisfaction rate was 85% (against a sector average of 82%) with the quality of our education and many of our support services being particularly highly rated.

Employability and skills development

The Careers Service, which now has overall responsibility for supporting the development of the generic skills and employability of our students, offered a wide range of workshops, including job-hunting workshops, summer opening, short courses for unemployed graduates (through Jobcentre Plus) and a telephone helpline. The Service also launched a funded internship programme for Bristol graduates.

The Careers Service launched the new Bristol Plus Award, which recognises and rewards students who have gained significant professional and life skills through involvement in extra-curricular activities. The award is designed to enable students to reflect on the skills they have gained, and learn how to articulate these skills successfully to potential employers. It also incentivises students who already engage in some extra-curricular activities to develop new skills in different areas such as sport, IT, work experience and societies. The award is available to all students and may be attained at two levels: the Bristol PLuS Award or the Bristol PLuS Award (Outstanding Achievement). There is also a Sports+ variant. Over 400 students attained the award in 2009/10 and it is planned to extend the streams available during 2010/11.

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Innovation and excellence in teaching and learning

The University invested over £100,000 during 2009/10 in extending the capability of its virtual learning environment, BlackBoard. Investment was also made in library facilities, including refurbishment of the Medical Library and the Arts and Social Sciences Library (ASSL). Opening hours were extended in the ASSL and provision made for an increase in textbook budgets of £250,000 (virtually doubling the spend; see also p24).

Both Bristol ChemLabS and AIMS, the University's two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, marked their success at the end of their first five years of existence by developing their plans for sustainability, as funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) ended.

Admissions, fair access and widening participation

Our document *Widening Participation Strategy 2009-2016: Realising Potential* continues the policies and initiatives that have proved successful in recent years, while responding to changing contexts and developing new ideas to ensure we remain a leader in the field. The Strategy introduces student support as a key theme, articulates our commitment to our Widening Participation Research Cluster and places new emphasis on monitoring, evaluation and developing links with employers. While maintaining a commitment to collaborative, generic awareness-raising activities, the focus of this strategy will be more on widening participation and fair access to the University of Bristol.

In 2009/10, specifically:

- We expanded the Access to Bristol Scheme to offer 15 subject streams, accommodating 275 students from over 40 local schools. A graduation ceremony was held for 400 attendees, including parents, teachers and careers advisers.
- The Director of the Widening Participation Research Cluster's work on assessing

educational disadvantage and the use of contextual data received national attention and was featured in the report by Sir Martin Harris on access to highly selective universities.

- The University was awarded the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark for supporting care leavers. In addition, 61 local schools and colleges took part in Aimhigher-funded activities involving 5,000 young people and 1,500 parents and carers.

Attracting the 'most able but least likely' students to a research-intensive university like Bristol remains a significant national challenge. In order to seek to understand the constraints and to identify the most helpful interventions, the University – in collaboration with 12 other highly selective universities – made a successful bid to HEFCE for funding to undertake a national study. The project, entitled *Realising Opportunities*, offers a nationally agreed framework of support for able students from disadvantaged, low-performing schools. The programme will support over 700 students through a range of aspiration-raising activities and the development of research skills to enhance their applications to research-intensive universities. The programme will include activities such as e-mentoring, study support and an opportunity to demonstrate their academic potential. Students who apply to any of the partner universities will be given additional consideration at the point of offer-making, in what is a very competitive time for places, as well as recognition through tariff of additional project work they may undertake, where appropriate.

The year also saw a new partnership between the University and the College of Law (a leading provider of legal education and training) which aims to encourage disadvantaged students from state schools who want to enter the legal profession. The scheme targets young people who will be the first in their family to attend university, and whose parents are in non-professional occupations. The partnership, in conjunction with the Sutton Trust and supported by



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Top: Dr Tony Horseman and student in the Communication Systems and Network Laboratory, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Bottom: Undergraduates at Goldney Hall, one of the University's halls of residence

several Bristol law firms, will pool expertise and resources to deliver the Pathways to Law scheme, designed to attract fresh talent to the sector. These students will be offered careers advice, guidance on university applications and mentoring at school and university. The scheme will also introduce them to contacts in the legal world, opening up possibilities for work experience and placements. Participating legal firms include Clarke Willmott, Bond Pearce, Osborne Clarke, Bevan Brittan LLP, Beachcroft LLP, Veale Wasbrough and Lyons Davidson.

Supporting and rewarding teaching staff

In 2009/10 the University launched its Teaching Fellowship Scheme to mirror its existing Research Fellowship Scheme. The recipients will be funded to take time away from their day-to-day work to develop and disseminate their pedagogy. Following an open competition across all six faculties, Professor Judy Harris and Dr Phil Langton, both in the Faculty of Medical and Veterinary Sciences, were awarded the inaugural Fellowships.

University Teaching and Learning Awards, which were instigated to recognise excellent teachers, were awarded this year to:

- **Dr Genevieve Liveley**
Department of Classics and Ancient History
- **Susan Hooper**
Department of Oral and Dental Science
- **Professor Christine Willis**
School of Chemistry

The Rising Star category of award, for those who have been teaching in higher education for less than five years and who show excellent potential, was given to:

- **Dr Lauren Hughes**
Department of Physiology and Pharmacology
- **Dr Ben Maughan**
Department of Physics
- **Magnus Feldmann**
Department of Politics

We also recognised innovation and the effective use of e-learning in the delivery of programmes and the support of staff and students through the University e-Learning Award, which this year went to **Dr Gus Cameron** (Department of Biochemistry).

In addition, we continued to recognise the contributions made by support staff to supporting teaching and learning, and the following were recognised in this way:

- **Christine James**
Department of Anatomy
- **Maggie Gamble**
School of Biological Sciences
- **Sandra Osmond**
Department of Sociology

The University's annual Learning and Teaching exhibition was held at the Priory Road Complex in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law on 7 January. The event, organised by the Education Support Unit, featured talks and sessions given by staff from across the University. The keynote presentation, on the Higher Education Achievement Record, was given by Professor Stephen Hill, Director of Teaching and Learning Innovation at the University of Gloucestershire. During the event, the 2009 University Teaching Awards were presented.



Above: New arrivals on Bristol's Harbourside

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Statistics and commentary

Financial support to students

The University provides financial support to students in the form of bursaries, scholarships and discretionary assistance from hardship funds. In 2009/10, the University disbursed the following amounts in these kinds of financial support:

	Bursaries £m	Scholarships £m	Hardship funds £m
Undergraduate	2.9	0.3	0.3
Postgraduate	0.1	1.9	0.1
Total	3.0	2.2	0.4

Total student numbers 2009/10

	Undergraduate	Postgraduate taught	Postgraduate research	Total
Arts	3,127 (83.57%)	363 (9.70%)	252 (6.73%)	3,742
Science	2,831 (80.79%)	110 (3.14%)	563 (16.07%)	3,504
Engineering	1,735 (69.76%)	425 (17.09%)	327 (13.15%)	2,487
Medical and Veterinary Sciences	1,469 (81.21%)	99 (5.47%)	241 (13.32%)	1,809
Medicine and Dentistry	1,693 (72.29%)	463 (19.77%)	186 (7.94%)	2,342
Social Sciences and Law	2,613 (55.23%)	1,556 (32.89%)	562 (11.88%)	4,731
Year total	13,468 (72.35%)	3,016 (16.20%)	2,131 (11.45%)	18,615

Total student numbers 2008/09

	Undergraduate	Postgraduate taught	Postgraduate research	Total
Arts	2,774 (83.81%)	248 (7.49%)	288 (8.70%)	3,310
Science	2,950 (81.16%)	87 (2.39%)	598 (16.45%)	3,635
Engineering	1,584 (67.84%)	424 (18.16%)	327 (14.0%)	2,335
Medical and Veterinary Sciences	1,414 (81.59%)	62 (3.58%)	257 (14.83%)	1,733
Medicine and Dentistry	1,658 (71.50%)	468 (20.18%)	193 (8.32%)	2,319
Social Sciences and Law	2,583 (53.68%)	1,501 (31.19%)	728 (15.13%)	4,812
Year total	12,963 (71.45%)	2,790 (15.38%)	2,391 (13.18%)	18,144

Number of degrees awarded

	2009/10	2008/09
Undergraduate	3,028	3,471
Postgraduate taught	1,739	1,810
Postgraduate research	533	409

Graduate destinations

Every year, new graduates are asked to complete a questionnaire concerning their employment or study status. The resulting figures enable the University to build a year-on-year picture of the destinations of its graduates.

The impact of the economic downturn continued throughout 2009/10, and vacancy numbers changed little from the previous year. Although the 'unemployed' figure for 2009 graduates rose to 6.1%, this is still well below the national average for graduates.

Graduate destinations 2009

Full-time paid work	50.0%
Part-time paid work	6.1%
Voluntary/unpaid work	2.4%
Work and further study	6.0%
Further study	21.5%
Assumed to be unemployed	6.1%
Not available for employment	4.8%
Other	1.2%
Explicit refusal	1.9%

Graduate destinations 2008

Full-time paid work	51.0%
Part-time paid work	5.3%
Voluntary/unpaid work	1.8%
Work and further study	7.5%
Further study	22.0%
Assumed to be unemployed	5.4%
Not available for employment	4.9%
Other	0.7%
Explicit refusal	1.4%