SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS

SCHOOL STRATEGY [UPDATED]

Introduction

The School of Informatics is faced with unprecedented opportunities, being at the centre of the University's Data-Driven Innovation agenda. The School Strategy and Plan reflect that context, whilst maintaining key priorities that have been developed over the last three years. As previously, our Strategic Framework is based on three key enablers: `People', `Income' and `Strategic Engagement and Collaboration'. The School continues to grow with respect to People and Income, and has a wealth of opportunities for Strategic Engagement and Collaboration.

Strategic objectives:

The School's strategic objectives are:

- Further enhance our international leadership role in Informatics, including retaining the leading position in the UK.

- Provide world class high quality education in Informatics for a broad constituency of learners.

- Engage broadly with stakeholders in pursuit of our objectives.

Strategic priority: Research Excellence

Informatics at Edinburgh has international leaders in many areas of research. Our priority is to further develop the breadth and depth our research, and consolidate the areas where we are already strong. In particular we will seek to:

- Strengthen our links with other Schools across all three Colleges where specific opportunities for collaboration and funding arise. In the immediate future this will include Biological Sciences and Medicine, but in the longer term will encompass the Edinburgh Futures Institute and associated Schools.

- Take advantage of funding opportunities arising in Artificial Intelligence, Data-Driven Innovation and Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to attract world class researchers at all levels to the School

- Continue to ensure a good stream of high quality PhD students to underpin the research in the School.

To support this we will work to ensure that all researchers develop to their full potential, through support in their route to research leadership and in the continuance of their leadership roles, once achieved, through induction, training and mentorship.

Strategic priority: Teaching Excellence

The programmes offered by the School are highly attractive to students from around the world. A key strength is our academic breadth, which allows us to offer a variety of multi-disciplinary programmes of study. Recent sharp rises in student numbers combined with the large number of courses offered has led to a substantial increase in teaching load which is inequitably distributed. In order to sustain high quality teaching it is essential that we re-examine how our programmes are structured and how our teaching is delivered. This will lead to:

- A systematic review of our curriculum to better match student demand to teaching resource.

- Alternative career paths to support excellent teaching and student experience including University Teachers and Student Support Officers.

- Continued support for student induction and transitions and improved mechanisms for student engagement and community building.

- Development of on-line approaches to delivery for distance learning but also to address large scale on-campus learning – the blended learning approach.

Within the context of Bayes and the City Region Deal, the School will explore opportunities in the area of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to foster our interaction with local industry.

Strategic priority: Knowledge Exchange

The School has the leading research position in the United Kingdom and an international reputation for Informatics knowledge exchange and industry engagement.

We produce extraordinary science, scientists, and knowledge that is the source of disruptive change. Through our research, education, knowledge exchange and public engagement activities the knowledge that we create impacts upon the international academic community, upon policy and society, upon industry and businesses, upon our local community and upon individuals. The opening of the Bayes Centre offers further opportunities to strengthen these impacts, particularly through working with companies and local and national governments. This will be enhanced by improved customer relationship management.

The Bayes Centre now houses our entrepreneurial education programme which is both inward and outward facing. Whilst the WAYRA Accelerator programme attracts start-ups from across Europe to work in close proximity with the School, we are also seeking to strengthen the entrepreneurial opportunities offered to staff and students to generate more start-ups and spin-outs.

We will continue to capture our impact and reflect it back to Informatics people, funders and industry, to promote a stronger understanding of the substance and impact of our research. A consequence will be greater preparedness for the impact component of the next Research Evaluation Framework.

Strategic priority: Organisational Development

The substantial growth that the School has experienced over recent years has led to unprecedented numbers of staff and students. This has brought challenges with respect to how we organize ourselves. We have recently restructured the professional services team to better support the increased volume of activity within the School. We will now address the academic management structure to ensure that there is adequate developmental support for all academic staff to fulfil our duty of care. This will allow a more planned approach to staff development.

Key enabler: Income Stability

The School's strategic objectives and priorities can only be achieved from a position of financial strength. The School will continue to leverage its position as the UK leader in Informatics research and knowledge exchange to secure funding from public funders whilst seeking to further develop other sources, including funding from industry, charities and alumni. In addition, stable numbers in our student body, especially undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, will contribute to

income stability.

Key enabler: People

We will continue planned strategic investments in additional academic staff and postgraduate research studentships in order to allow us to take advantage of the opportunities available to us. Further investment in support services will ensure that research and teaching staff are relieved of administrative functions which are more appropriately undertaken by staff employed to undertake those duties. Only by recruiting, supporting, developing and retaining the best academics, research staff and support staff can the School maintain and build upon its UK leading position and international reputation.

The School holds an Athena SWAN Silver Award for its contribution to gender equality amongst academic staff, researchers and students. The Silver Award was successfully renewed in 2016. We will build upon this success to further embed all aspects of equality and diversity into our policies and practices. We will increase support for career development for all staff, academic, research and support. We will celebrate diversity amongst staff and students and implement our Athena SWAN action plan, to further address issues of gender imbalance within the School and our discipline.