

READY FOR THE FUTURE

Strategy 2035





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Vice-Chancellor's message



It is an honour to be leading Southampton Solent University as we celebrate our 20th anniversary as a university. While our roots in the city span over a century, we are a relatively young institution, and the coming decade offers an opportunity to redefine and shape our organisational identity.

We have achieved much since the development of our last Strategy in 2020, and we have done so in a uniquely turbulent period for the higher education sector, our society, and the world. The changes we have made have provided us with strong foundations to build on with confidence, ensuring our continued success in the future.

This document outlines where we aspire to be by 2035.

Southampton Solent will be the leading practice-led university in the country. To achieve this, we must innovate and evolve. To guide our progress, we present in this strategy three new innovative directions developed in partnership with our students, staff, alumni, and external stakeholders. These directions to success build on the excellent work we are already doing – not least the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching, as well as excellent student outcomes as recognised by our triple gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (2023).

The thread that ties these new pathways together is access to excellence. Just as our TEF gold rating shows how we drive excellent opportunities and outcomes, so our new vision envisages how we will create radical openness to excellence. We will open Southampton Solent to; learners at different stages of their lives; our communities; our partners; and, to the world. Our new campus vision proposes to open the University to the widest range of communities and stakeholders, enacting these principles.

In developing our strategy, we analysed the external contexts that we will face over the next decade, including shifting demographics and the challenge of financial sustainability, climate change, rapid technological and digital transformation, and pervasive global instability. These challenges are complex, interrelated, and unpredictable and they will shape our future and that of our graduating students. But we will also look to our institutional heritage of creativity and technology, and our institutional culture of innovation and inclusion to tackle these issues. As we deliver this strategy, we must be prepared to transform the university, its education, and its culture, to meet these challenges, while also seizing all opportunities to ensure that our students, our alumni, our partners, and our city-region not only adapt to these futures, but also thrive in them.

Professor James Knowles, FRSA

Vice-Chancellor



“We have achieved much since the development of our last Strategy in 2020”

Solent in 2025



over
9,000
students



121
nationalities



15th
for graduate
start-ups
in the sector
HESA 2023



Overall: **Gold**

Student experience: **Gold**

Student outcomes: **Gold**

Teaching Excellence Framework



£106m

income 2022/23



963 staff



over
200

qualifications

from HNCs to
PhDs



Our mission and vision

Our mission is to become the UK's leading practice-led university – an open and collaborative institution, rooted in our region and connected to the world – transforming the lives and opportunities of our students, partners, and communities.

Our vision

By 2035, Southampton Solent University will be a more open, collaborative, and future-focused institution, driven by the passion to expand access to excellence.

Building on our founding principles as a practice-led university, we will transform Southampton Solent as a multiversity, opening our campuses to students at all stages of their lives, offering a flexible and adaptable approach to excellent education, and fostering diversity, social mobility, and lifelong learning.

We will stimulate innovation through our impact-led research, reframing our position as a diffusion engine to drive the best of innovation and development into society through a new, more open approach to knowledge exchange. Collaborating and co-creating with businesses and wider society we will proactively solve problems, deliver future solutions, and enhance prosperity.

To refocus our global connectivity, we will open Southampton Solent to the world, ensuring our students have a global perspective in the classroom and beyond, growing the reach of our partnerships, and increasing our impact, and delivering the finest global knowledge to enrich our region, and physical and digital campuses.

Bringing these three directions together with our existing strengths, will enable our students, partners, and our city and region to thrive in a rapidly changing and more unstable world.

Our people, culture, and values

We pride ourselves on a culture that ensures everyone belongs, feels empowered to deliver to their full potential, and is supported by an environment that enables them to thrive.

Essential to the realisation of our vision and delivery of our innovative pathways are our committed and talented staff. Our priority is to provide an excellent people experience, with our 6 core values: Respect, Ownership, Inclusivity, Engagement, Integrity and Teamwork, at the heart of what we do.

At Southampton Solent University, we value the diverse contributions that come together and create our distinctive, innovative and globally connected community. We take pride in all we do and are committed to celebrating our successes, rewarding excellence, fostering innovation and creativity and working collaboratively across the University and with industry partners.

We are dedicated to developing future-ready staff who aspire to deliver excellence, supported by leaders who enrich, inspire and empower. Our purpose is to provide a springboard for our staff and students' growth, cultivating practical, real-world initiatives and allowing space to imagine and stretch.

We will inspire our students to be adaptable, innovative, creative, and responsible, and support them to develop work ready skill sets. Through these qualities students are enabled to transform communities and lives and allow them to achieve their personal and professional ambitions.

We encourage our staff, students, and alumni to be agile to change and leverage technological advancements. Through trust and accountability, we empower our staff and students to be leaders in sustainability, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to make a positive impact on our planet. By embracing sustainability as a core value, we aim to inspire a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable world.



Foundations

In developing this strategy, we have reflected on our strengths as a university. These provide the foundations on which we will build for the future.

All our endeavours are intrinsically founded in practice. Our teaching, research and collaborations bring real world experiences to provide rich opportunities. In this, we have always been, and are proud to continue to be, a practice-led university.

There can be no complacency, and it is important that we continue to develop our strengths while also pursuing new strategic opportunities.



Our strengths include:



Our excellent learning and teaching

Our teaching, assessment and feedback methods are excellent, as recognised in our triple gold Teaching Excellence Framework award. Our courses are centred in practice and infused with inclusive, real-world learning to prepare students for success in their chosen futures.



Our commitment to widening access and participation

Through our regional work, we continue to build strong partnerships with schools, colleges, communities and third sector organisations. Together, we are raising attainment and actively expanding and promoting study pathways.



Our exceptional levels of student support

Our academic and pastoral support is exceptional and ensures that our students thrive throughout their time with us. Whether our students need help with their studies, their finances, or starting their own business, we support our students to access the freedom to achieve.



Our dedication to impact-led research and innovation

All our research is embedded in practice. From raising awareness of the consequences of violence against women and girls to simulation models of the manoeuvrability of wind assisted cargo ships, impact is intrinsic to our approach. We work closely with partners to ensure our process and outcomes have relevance and significance.



Our outstanding staff

Our staff across all our campuses are the beating heart of Southampton Solent and our work is enriched by their diverse perspectives, willingness to collaborate and commitment to excellence. Through their hard work, we deliver exceptional education, student experience, research, innovation, knowledge exchange, and services.



Our engaged student community

Our students, wherever they choose to study a Southampton Solent University course, contribute to a rich and diverse community. Through the practice-led skills and values they develop our students make waves across the world.



Our connection to our city region

Our work in creating economic and social benefits and promoting social justice for the communities we serve. We are enriching our city-region with creative talent, supporting start-ups and encouraging diversity. We are collaborating with partners to enhance our city and region's reputation as a place to study, work, live, and thrive.

Our strategic directions

REFORMING SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT: UNIVERSITY TO MULTIVERSITY

Southampton Solent University will address the dual challenges of demographic change and financial sustainability through a considered repositioning of our institution. We will diversify from university to multiversity to meet the needs of our region and to capitalise on the massive demand for higher skills and education globally. We will make education accessible to all, offering opportunities at a wider range of life-stages and through a wider range of study modes based on changing learner needs.

We will prioritise a future-facing, flexible and adaptable educational offer that responds to the needs of our communities, industries, and workplaces, and is designed for all learners. We will ensure both our students and employers requirements shape our education offer; levels of study, qualifications offered, where we educate, and how we educate.

Southampton Solent University will evolve from traditional to intergenerational learning. While the University's main population, traditionally those aged 18-21, will continue to be central to our community we will have a significant growth in mature learners. Students will benefit from an enriched education experience by studying with, and alongside, learners at different stages of their lives and careers, forging a multigenerational learning community that reflects the future global workforce.

Our future facing learning will ensure learners build the skills to thrive in a volatile and changeable workplace and society. We will break down the walls between formal learning and the workplace, providing a more flexible offer that facilitates learn and earn, enabling learners to develop the right skills at the right times throughout their careers. For employers, this means we will work with them to ensure new competencies, including new digital capabilities, are embedded into their workplace more quickly.

As a civic university, Southampton Solent University will extend access to our excellent education and world class facilities. Making our spaces more accessible for local and regional stakeholders will challenge perceived barriers to a university education and support the social mobility of our learners, bringing the benefits of excellent outcomes to a diverse demographic population

As a multiversity, Southampton Solent will build on its collaborative ethos and heritage through active participation in, and partnership with, tertiary education providers and employers. We will create clear pathways for students of all backgrounds to move into higher education to support them to access the opportunities that an excellent education unlocks.



Our priorities are to:

- ✔ deliver practice-led, real-world, inclusive learning by working with industry, partners and civic leaders, anticipating future workforce requirements
- ✔ provide the opportunity for all our students to work alongside studying by re-designing our modes of study, delivery and assessment unlocking our students' ability to learn and earn
- ✔ enhance employability and increase social capital by awarding credit for educational experiences and work opportunities outside of the classroom ensuring practice-led learning is accessible to all
- ✔ expand our offer beyond our region by being recognised as partner of choice with education organisations, nationally and globally



By 2035, we aim to:

- ✔ increase our student population to reflect the diversity of our city-region
- ✔ provide greater flexibility in the way we deliver education by introducing multiple entry points and a wider range of awards
- ✔ expand the range of qualifications to reflect the needs of our students and employers, creating recognition of learning for our multigenerational population
- ✔ ensure our educational offer is recognised as sector leading in key metrics such as National Student Survey, graduate outcomes data, and teaching excellence framework
- ✔ expand our education portfolio globally, introducing our unique way of practice-led learning into new markets, both in the UK and overseas

Our strategic directions

REFRAMING SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT: INNOVATION TO DIFFUSION

Over the next decade, Southampton Solent will become a 'diffusion engine' of intellectual and social innovation. Our intersectional city location will form the core of our identity and purpose. We will bring staff, students, businesses, alumni, and our wider stakeholders together to exchange ideas and co-create through a more open institution and campus. Our approach will build excellence across the development and application of research to deliver inclusive growth.

Working as a diffusion engine for innovation, we will carefully foster a culture of both research and development. We will pursue talent creation and development, targeting inward investment opportunities to promote regional economic growth and support a vibrant, creative and entrepreneurial culture. We will be a leader in university-led innovation that catalyses the absorptive capacity of businesses and accelerates the adoption of existing ideas and good practice. We will achieve this through close working with businesses both on campus and through our physical and digital innovation hubs and services.

Our role as a diffusion engine has important regional resonance where comparatively high economic growth for some communities' masks areas of low aspiration, low skills, and high deprivation. Partnering with others to tackle these issues, we will share good practice and innovative approaches for the benefit of businesses and society.

By embedding enterprise and entrepreneurship throughout our education, our professional culture, and our institutional growth and development plans, we will increase our capacity for creative, flexible, and positive collaborations. By deploying our outstanding campus facilities, alongside digital services and mobile offers, we will ensure everyone is able to take advantage of, and benefit from, the opportunities we offer to make a meaningful and positive difference to our city, region and beyond.

Access to our world-leading provision in areas including marine and maritime, simulation, healthcare, creative industries, engineering and technology will be expanded to a wider range of stakeholders, regionally and nationally. Our strategic partnerships will purposefully address challenge-led issues informing and invigorating our impactful research and practice-led methods. Both postgraduate and short course provision will be driven by the needs of industry, tailored specifically to create a modern, highly-skilled workforce that serves our domestic communities but which also attracts highly skilled talent from across the UK and the world.



Our priorities are to:

- ✔ grow our national and international reputation for practice-led research and knowledge exchange by achieving grant funding success and creating positive impacts
- ✔ embed entrepreneurship throughout our educational offering and culture such that we are recognised for our entrepreneurial mindset
- ✔ become the largest provider of higher-level skills delivery in our region through vibrant and dynamic partnerships with targeted civic and industry partners
- ✔ expand our Industry-led postgraduate, short course, and professional doctorate provision, ensuring we remain responsive, agile and relevant to external needs



By 2035, we aim to:

- ✔ achieve global recognition for our world-leading practice-led research and innovative knowledge exchange
- ✔ cultivate a national and international reputation for the creation of entrepreneurial talent aligned with impactful research
- ✔ increase partnership and non-regulated income for the University
- ✔ drive forward regional economic growth through co-creation activities with civic and industry partners
- ✔ redefine our physical campus to create multiple, interdisciplinary vibrant spaces that enable our communities to interact, engage, learn, and develop practice

Our strategic directions

REFOCUSING SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT: GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY FOR REGIONAL GAIN

Southampton as a port city with international trading links of unique character, has shaped an institution profoundly informed by global developments. Ports have been framed as knowledge trading zones, where traditions of theoretical and cognitive, and practical and physical knowledge come together. We are proud to be an institution of the city; where Southampton has thrived on the exchange of goods and people, our university has thrived on the creation and exchange of knowledge.

Southampton Solent University has always been shaped by its city location which, through its excellence in the maritime education area, fosters both regional and global connectivity. It is recognised that the Solent region needs to continue to evolve to drive further economic growth and meet the needs of its communities.

Over the next decade, we will enhance the global connectivity of Southampton Solent, being more outward looking and open to the world, working to connect our region with the best global knowledge and talent. We will ensure all students and staff have opportunities for an international experience by embracing new technologies to create globally- connected classrooms that foster transcultural literacy. As an access university, we commit to ensuring every student is given the opportunity to enhance their global skills and transcultural knowledge. We will make use of digital tools and online educational opportunities to bring our learning communities together in more sustainable and inclusive ways.

Global Connectivity expands the horizons of our learners, and developing more innovative partnerships and alliances will ensure that more students across the world will experience our high-quality education and unique mindset. By creating a thirst for knowledge and a passion to apply that knowledge to improve lives, societies, and economies in our students, we will encourage socially aware leaders determined to contribute to their communities.

By expanding our reach through education and research partnerships, we will take our entrepreneurial approach and academic expertise globally to ensure others can benefit and learn from our achievements. In doing this, we can ensure that our city region continues to thrive in a globally connected world.

Our strategy will ensure Southampton Solent will be a major stakeholder influencing and delivering the opportunities that a new regional designation and an emerging political devolution settlement will bring.



Our priorities are to:

- ✔ enhance our real-world classrooms with global perspectives through ensuring our advisory boards and curricula reflect Southampton's global reach
- ✔ facilitate and deliver the global exchange of research, knowledge and skills working in partnership with global education providers, civic organisations and industry
- ✔ prioritise engagement with European stakeholders working in partnership to develop areas of common interest that meet the needs of all parties to deliver impact and positive change
- ✔ ensure we remain a destination of choice for international students delivering an excellent experience



By 2035, we aim to:

- ✔ inspire graduates to be global citizens with a core set of transcultural skills
- ✔ increase our international partnerships, working in a wider global context, but also refreshing our European stakeholder engagement to achieve greater research and development funding and greater educational mobility between the UK and Europe
- ✔ expand global partnerships and alliances, ensuring the Solent practice-led, real-world, inclusive education model is accessible worldwide
- ✔ contribute to research and knowledge exchange activities that impact global sustainability as set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- ✔ ensure our students benefit from global best practice in every aspect of their education

The Southampton Solent approach

Practice-led



Our real-world educational approach will blur the lines between classroom and workplace and means that our learning and teaching is experiential and experimental. Practice-led is more than learning how to do something, it is learning why it matters and how to create something new, it requires the creative application of skills and knowledge to different learning experiences. It fosters a mindset of critical thinking, curiosity, innovation, and lifelong learning through collaborative learning and active engagement. Practice-led learning equips students with the practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and entrepreneurial spirit they need to thrive in today's fast-paced and ever-evolving job market.

We engage in innovative research that has strong foundations in both the methodological underpinnings and the implementation of practice-led approaches. Our practice-led research is itself concerned with understanding the nature of practice and leads to new knowledges that have operational and social significance.

Practice-led education and research will unlock the potential for innovation and development, delivering transformative benefits for our students, stakeholders, and society at large.





Future-led education

We will be driven by the continuing evolution of technology and discovery of new tools that impact our teaching, our research and our role in the community. We have led the way with real-world learning and simulated practice, and now with the advent of new technologies, we are at the forefront of delivery that capitalises on the freedom and flexibility that technology offers.

Being at the digital frontier requires thinking and developing future applications and solutions to problems that have not yet been considered. Through creative practice in all disciplines, we unlock the curiosity that is needed to define future technologies. From virtual production in the film industry to AI assisted navigation in maritime, Southampton Solent University will define how we live and work in the future.

Industry-led



Our students benefit from being immersed in the dynamic, and often unpredictable, modern workplace. With real-world projects, mentorship opportunities and exposure to cutting-edge technologies. This industry-focused approach not only enhances student learning but also strengthens Southampton Solent's reputation as a leading provider of high-quality education and fosters innovation and economic growth.

Industry-led learning is the cornerstone of our future. By collaborating closely with industry professionals, many of whom are Southampton Solent alumni and who bring their expertise back to the classroom, we ensure our curriculum remains relevant and prepares our students to become highly-skilled graduates ready for the demands of the modern workplace.

Impact-led



Involving our collaborators and partners in all aspects of Southampton Solent ensures that our education and research are constructed to deliver a demonstrable positive change to beneficiaries. We define this as impact-led research and education: we believe that it is essential for all responsible researchers to deliver benefits to people and society.

Impact embodies the good researchers do in the world. It is evidenced in the demonstrable or perceived benefits to individuals, groups, organisations and society in the present and future) generated by the work of research, innovation, and knowledge exchange.

