



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
BUCKINGHAM

# For Independent Minds

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
2023-2028

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# Foreword from the Chair



As we commence a new chapter in our institution's narrative, it is with optimism and growing confidence that we leave behind a period of difficulty, setting our sights towards a brighter future. Our new strategy, carefully crafted to tackle the multifaceted challenges ahead, serves as our beacon in this journey.

In the creation of this strategy, we have developed several, key guiding policies, tailored specifically to meet our institution's unique circumstances and the evolving landscape of higher education. The road before us won't be without obstacles. But armed with this realistic yet ambitious strategy, we are prepared to confront these challenges with unwavering commitment and resolve.

Integral to its development has been the diversity of perspectives we've sought. Our stakeholders - faculty, students, alumni, staff, and partners - have shared invaluable insights, moulding an approach that not only stands us apart but truly represents us all. This comprehensive, collective approach will ensure our roadmap is both resilient and inclusive.

Executing this plan will require tenacity and strategic allocation of our resources. We pledge to tirelessly implement what is contained in this document with the aim of providing the best experience for our students by reinforcing our sustainability whilst facilitating ample resources to invest in our future.

As we embark on this transformative journey, it is important to remember that change is a process, not an event. Together, we will navigate the complexities and celebrate the triumphs. I am confident that, guided by our new strategy, we will emerge stronger, more dynamic, and ready to tackle the ever-changing educational horizon.

**Mark St John Qualter**

Chair of Council

The University of Buckingham

# Preface from the Vice-Chancellor

**The University of Buckingham was created as an antidote to the undermining of independence and academic freedom in universities. The need for this corrective is even more pronounced today.**

Independence and academic freedom had been at the core of the Medieval university. But by the early 1970s, notable academics were worried about the ways in which government was impinging upon university autonomy. They sought to launch a new university as a beacon for independence.

Its founders were not some fringe group. Chaired by Sir Sydney Caine, Director of the London School of Economics (LSE), the planning board included distinguished professors such as Oxford's Max Beloff, and the LSE's Michael Oakeshott and Alan Walters. A Board of Patrons was established, with eminent figures such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbi and Margaret Thatcher.

Sir Sydney wrote about the way "academic freedom was being affected by the almost complete financial dependence of universities on the state". Universities, too, had become inflexible and rigid in their approach. A new independent university could be innovative rather than conformist.

Right at the start, the idea was mooted of two-year degrees, which we have championed with great success ever since, to use the estate and student and staff time more efficiently and effectively.

At the inaugural matriculation speech for the University College at Buckingham in 1976, Margaret Thatcher, then the first female Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, spoke of the urgent need for educational freedom: "independence, we must remember, is not a gift", she said. "It is not something that governments confer, but something that a free people enjoys—and uses." She concluded: "... unless we are worthy and able to take advantage of a freedom not yet extinguished in our land, we shall become pale shadows, like civilizations before us who were eventually thrust aside and dispossessed by more vigorous rivals".

Innovation and entrepreneurship as well as ideals of independence and academic autonomy were threaded through the University's vision from its

commencement. However, our founders were also aware that the new independent university must succeed above all as a university. This emphasised two additional important themes:

The first was academic excellence, in the end "the only justification for an independent university". The independent university had to feature an "exceptionally high standard of teaching" or it was nothing.

The founders also noted the importance of internationalism. Sir Sydney Caine wrote that, qua university, the new independent university "will develop strong international interests. Links with universities overseas will be sought. There will be a pronounced emphasis on staff and students from other countries."

As recent deliberations about our identity in the current landscape for Higher Education have shown us, each of these original reasons for the establishment of the university remain an important part of our vision for the future – for our students, our staff, our alumni, and our ever-growing international community of supporters and benefactors. Innovations made possible in large part because of our independence include our thriving Medical School (with an accelerated four and a half year degree, compared to five or six years elsewhere), our innovative

Education Faculty (founded by leading contrarian figures in the field) and our collaborative future earnings agreements, (helping students finance their studies through a cutting-edge market initiative).

This document sets out our proposal for achieving our vision.

I am incredibly proud of our University of Buckingham, this beacon of educational independence and academic freedom, built on the foundations of academic excellence and international reach.

In the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of our Royal Charter, which made us a University proper, I commend the strategic plan to you.



**Professor James Tooley**  
Vice-Chancellor  
The University of Buckingham

# Our Vision

A beacon of independence and academic freedom, we will be a university internationally recognised for fostering the leaders, thinkers and achievers of the future.

# Our Mission

Inspiring and empowering individuals to achieve the extraordinary through excellence in learning, teaching, research and entrepreneurship.

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing glasses and a green jacket, is shown in profile, looking thoughtfully to the right. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with some light sources.

# Our Values

**Our values underpin all we do.**

## **COMMUNITY**

We are a global community of students, scholars, professionals and alumni, sharing our passion for understanding.

## **AUTHENTICITY**

We are true to who we are: an independent university, wholly committed to the pursuit of free enquiry.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

We take responsibility for our actions and our words, and how we maintain and utilise our physical, financial and natural resources and environment.

## **EXCELLENCE**

We are professional, collegiate and hard-working, and we strive for success in all that we do.

# One Strategic Aim Four Guiding Principles



We will grow our student numbers, income and surplus in a planned, measured and sustainable manner.

We will grow our academic provision in both breadth, depth and rigour

We will grow our people by supporting them with professional development and state-of-the-art systems and processes.

Underpinning our growth will be four guiding principles: independence and academic freedom; academic excellence; student partnership; innovation and entrepreneurship.

# ☆ Independence and Academic Freedom

Founded as an independent University College in 1976, and granted our Royal Charter in 1983, we will **celebrate as milestones** in our history our 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2023 and 2026 with targeted campaigns.

At a time when many UK universities are being criticised for stifling free enquiry, we will **foster free speech** and understanding of the importance of academic freedom amongst students and staff.

We will **promote** Buckingham's status as a seat of learning that nurtures **criticality and independent thinking** and is committed to pluralism and the tolerance of different perspectives and viewpoints

We will **build** on our track record of inspiring sponsors to create **beautiful and practical spaces** conducive to research, innovation and professional development. We will seek donations and capital funding from philanthropists and investors who understand and value our commitment to independence and academic freedom.

We will **pursue academic partnerships** with other independent universities across the world.



# Academic Excellence

We will **build** on our reputation for **teaching excellence** by continuing to deliver **small group teaching** and **personalised learning** across all our provision.

We will **capitalise** on our status as the “home of the two-year degree” by developing a **diversified and relevant range of courses** that meet the needs of students both today and tomorrow.

We will **explore flexible learning models** and collaborations in tandem with the campus-based learning our students value so highly to meet demand and optimise delivery.

We will **support** our students to **build long-lasting** careers by developing their skills and employability through integrated, co and extra-curricular training and workplace experiences.

We will **develop** existing and new routes to external funding and collaborative partnerships to increase **support for research**, innovation and enterprise, build our **research outputs** and enhance the quality of our **research environment** for both students and staff.



# Student Partnership

We will **cultivate** life-long partnerships with our students that are founded in our values and **facilitate their contribution** to the Buckingham community.

Believing in the link between wellbeing and academic success, we will continue to **support** our students with **person-centred services** that offer the advice, guidance and practical help they need to thrive during their time at Buckingham.

We will **pursue** the best ways to make a Buckingham education available to all who may benefit from it, developing new and innovative ways to improve **accessibility and affordability**.

We will **provide** students with **high-quality learning resources** that enable students' academic achievements to flourish.

We will **develop** the functionality and appearance of our **campuses, teaching and social learning spaces** and unlock the potential of our indoor and outdoor sports and leisure spaces and facilities.



# 💡 Innovation and Entrepreneurship

We will **inculcate** an **enterprising spirit** in which innovation drives our search for solutions and provides both inspiration and value-for-money for our students, staff and stakeholders alike.

We will **support disruptive innovation** by **collaborating with like-minded organisations and individuals** across the globe and, in so doing, build Buckingham's reach and reputation.

We will **embed enterprise and entrepreneurship across the curriculum**, so that students have opportunities to develop these critical skills and qualities.

We will work with students, staff and partners to **develop and implement creative solutions** to the complex problems of both today and tomorrow.

We will **grow** the University's **research and knowledge-exchange activities** through the development of spin-out companies, products and services that monetise our innovative ideas to the mutual benefit of Buckingham, our students, staff and partners.





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