



Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018

Impact through Partnership

Who we are

Universities West Midlands is a regional membership organisation working to represent the interests of the 12 Higher Education Institutions within the West Midlands.

We represent a diverse body of institutions, and collectively we encompass a wide range of universities which vary in shape, size and focus, where the views and challenges are sometimes shared and sometimes differ. We value our diversity as a core strength that allows broad-ranging debate where new ideas and solutions can be shared in a context of openness and trust.

Our members

Aston University
University of Birmingham
Birmingham City University
University College Birmingham
Coventry University
Harper Adams University

Keele University
Newman University
Staffordshire University
University of Warwick
University of Wolverhampton
University of Worcester

Key facts and figures

- Total revenue of West Midlands higher education institutions was £1.95 billion in 2011–12. Through knock-on effects they generated an additional £2.6 billion in other industries throughout the UK, with the majority (£1.9 billion) in the region.
- West Midlands Universities provided 23,674 full-time equivalent jobs across a range of occupations and skill levels and generated a further 25,361 full-time equivalent jobs outside the universities, with most of these (19,451) based in the region.
- Combined with the spending of their international students and students from other parts of the UK, regional GVA of £2.9 billion was generated, equivalent to 3% of total 2011 West Midlands region GVA.

- West Midlands Universities attracted 76,580 students from other parts of the UK to study in the region and 36,140 students from outside the UK to study in the region.
- West Midlands Universities produce over 45,000 graduates each year, who become the workforce for a wide range of manufacturing, professional and creative industries and public services.
- 57% of UK based graduates from West Midlands Universities chose to stay and work in the region, providing valuable talent and knowledge to a range of industries in the West Midlands.

Our mission and values

Our mission is to be a positive force for influence and economic, social and cultural well-being and public benefit. We strive to be recognised as the partner of choice for those seeking engagement with the universities of the West Midlands.

There have been significant changes in the Higher Education landscape in recent years, with conflicting demands on the public purse, different funding models for universities, the emergence of new partners like the Local Enterprise Partnerships as drivers of local economic growth, and growing expectations for universities to deliver and demonstrate the beneficial impact of public investment.

We value the collective approach that UWM can make to provide an educated population and skilled workforce, to deliver variety and choice of routes to educational achievement and to foster a pathway to HE through working with our Schools and Further Education partners.

Individually, our member Universities gains value by being part of a wider regional collective and the opportunities to build relationships that are fostered within the structure of Universities West Midlands.

Through our Board and structure of sub-groups, who engage directly with other national, regional and local organisations, we facilitate and encourage collaboration, share ideas and experiences and provide a forum for debate both amongst our member universities and with a wider audience.

Our strategic aims

Advocacy and communications

We seek to be an organisation that is recognised as offering a valuable forum for open and dynamic debate with government and policy-makers. Our breadth and diversity represents a microcosm of Higher Education in the UK, where a diversity of views is acknowledged and accommodated.

During the period of this plan, we will work to raise the profile of higher education in the West Midlands and of Universities West Midlands as an organisation which can add value to regional and national debate around key issues.

During 2015 we will refresh our online presence, delivering a more dynamic and interactive website. We will work with national partners, such as the HEFCE, UniversitiesUK and GuildHE to enhance our visibility on the national stage.

We will build on the evidence that has been developed by our member universities to promote the economic, social and cultural value of West Midlands universities as anchor

institutions within their locality, together with the contributions they make to addressing national and global challenges.

Engagement in the region

We recognise the important role of Local Enterprise Partnerships, within and bordering the West Midlands region, as partners in harnessing the best of skills development, knowledge and research from our member universities. We will seek to grow our relationship with the LEPs, working together to meet the skills and knowledge needs that are foundations to regional success.

At the same time, we recognise that working boundaries are fluid and we welcome partnership with neighbouring institutions and structures.

During the early stages of the plan, our Employer and Business Engagement Group (EBEG) will develop a register of assets and expertise available to support university-business collaboration.

Collaboration and business engagement

We are built on the foundations of the first West Midlands regional HE association which was formed in 1999 to foster collaboration and build regional partnerships. Through our structures we identify and evaluate opportunities at strategic and operational levels where there are benefits through taking collaborative action.

Stakeholders and influence

We will focus our efforts on growing our relationships with key stakeholders at regional and national levels, through arranging UWM events and producing targeted promotional material and evidence. Our key stakeholders are:

- Government departments at local and national level, most particularly those with interests in higher education, science, research, skills, growth and regional policy.
- UK and European politicians, particularly those with a base in the region or an interest in higher education and associated areas.
- Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Higher Education policy-making, funding and national service-delivery organisations.

We will use a range of mechanisms to meet our aims, including:

- Pursuing a programme of events and communications which promote our interests and are targeted at our key stakeholders.
- Facilitating relationship building where there are clear outcomes that meet strategic objectives
- Working with partners with common interests.
- Gathering and presenting evidence to inform decisions and policy-making.
- Providing a portal to UWM institutions through our online presence and group structures.

How we work

Governance and executive

Our strategic direction is provided by the Board of 12 Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The Board meets quarterly and is chaired on a rotational basis by one of the Vice-Chancellors. The organisation is run on a day to day basis by an Executive Office, which delivers operational support, provides policy advice and manages relationships with key regional and national stakeholders.

Sub-groups and task and finish groups

The Board is supported by three permanent sub-groups. All of the sub-groups provide direct links to critical partners, which allows the groups to provide strategic input and advice to the Board and Executive on the challenges and opportunities within their remit; to promote the collective interest of all Universities West Midlands members by engaging with critical regional and national stakeholders; and to facilitate collaboration and partnership amongst member institutions. From time to time, the sub-groups may also deliver specific projects on behalf of the Board.

- Our Employer and Business Engagement Group (EBEG) includes representatives from all 12 UWM universities who engage directly in the innovation landscape, working with businesses, the Local Enterprise Partnerships and national business networks. The group provides a forum for member universities to consider issues and engage with relevant bodies in relation to policies and initiatives and to develop collaborative approaches in relation to employer and business engagement, workforce development, innovation and economic regeneration.
- The Deans of Education Group comprises the nine UWM universities involved in delivering teacher training, both directly and in partnership with Schools and Colleges across the region. The group provides a vital link with national networks and policy-influencers.
- The Deans of Health Group comprises the nine UWM universities involved in delivering health education, working with NHS partners across the region. The group represents Universities on local and regional bodies with responsibility for the quality and commissioning of health education, including the Local Education and Training Board.

Additional task and finish groups are established on an ad hoc basis to meet specific objectives.

Managing our performance

In 2015 we will develop the first of our annual action plans which will identify key outputs and will introduce mechanisms to monitor performance and review and refresh our goals.

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