School of Humanities

Powering Potential

Whatever your background, wherever you are from, higher education can be a transformational experience. And whoever you are, the application of university research can impact your life. We are committed to having a positive transformational impact on every member of our university community, and to sharing our successes with the community around us.

Professor Quintin McKellar CBE

Vice-Chancellor

Ranked 4th globally for research culture

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, 2019

Awarded an Ecofriendly campus platinum award

EcoCampus

Ranked 4th globally for research culture

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, 2019

One of 17 universities awarded the Race Equality Charter Mark

One of only 20 universities awarded University Enterprise Zone status

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Welcome to the University of Hertfordshire

Set across two campuses in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, just 20 miles from London,

we’re an innovative, enterprising university, focused on transforming lives. We give staff and students the opportunity to succeed no matter what their background.

We drive economic growth through cutting-edge research, creative and innovative thinking, skills development, bespoke training, and facilities that help businesses achieve their potential. All of our activities are underpinned by our core values; we are friendly, ambitious, collegiate, enterprising, and student-focused in everything we do.

We have more than 25,000 students studying over 550 undergraduate, postgraduate and research degrees. Of those students over 4,000 are international students from 100 countries. We also have more than 6,000 students taking courses outside the UK through international partnerships and franchise arrangements.

Our teaching is delivered across eight academic Schools: Creative Arts, Education, Health and Social Work, Hertfordshire Business School, Hertfordshire Law School, Humanities, Life and Medical Sciences, and Physics, Engineering and Computer Science.

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Our history

1952-1959 Hatfield Technical College

1952 saw the opening of a new Technical College in Hatfield, with HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh performing the opening ceremony. With its roots in Britain’s pioneering aeronautical industry, the College soon established itself as an innovative force in education, awarding our first BSc (Engineering) qualifications to external students of the University of London in 1959.

1960-1968 Hatfield College of Technology

In 1960, the institution was renamed Hatfield College of Technology and began to invest in computer science, buying the College’s first digital computer in 1963 – a National Elliott 803B digital computer, at a cost of £24,010. In 1965, the college became recognised for 13 Honours Degree courses, including Computer Science and Civil Engineering, with BA (Hons) Business Studies coming a year later.

1969-1991 Hatfield Polytechnic

In 1969, the College was designated as Hatfield Polytechnic, and by 1970 had formed the best equipped and staffed Computer Centre in the public sector in education. In 1975, the Polytechnic was reorganised into five schools of study and a centre for Management Studies.

1992-Present University of Hertfordshire

Hatfield Polytechnic became The University of Hertfordshire on 29 June 1992. In 1998, our prestigious Formula Student team competed in the first ever competition held in the UK, winning the prize for the Best Presented Team. In 2003 the de Havilland Campus, a £120 million project, opened. Today, we have a student community of over 25,000 on UK based programmes across our two campuses.

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Executive team

As Chief Executive, the Vice-Chancellor exercises considerable influence upon the development of University strategy, the identification and planning of new development and the shaping of the University ethos. The executive team - the Deputy Vice-Chanellor, Group Finance Director, Secretary and Registrar, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Business and International Development, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, and the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience all contribute to this aspect of work.

Professor Quintin McKellar CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

Quintin has been the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University since 2011. His responsibilities include the day-to-day running of the institution, the delivery of strategic and operational plans, performance, its internal structure and organisation, and its interface with external bodies and agencies. In 2015 he was elected as a Board member of Universities UK, and in 2020 was elected as Vice-President (England and Northern Ireland). He was made Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2011 for services to science.

Professor Matthew Weait, Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Matthew joined the University in March 2020, and as the sole Deputy Vice-Chancellor he is engaged in all strategic and operational decisions which underpin the positioning and success of the University. He will be leading the implementation of a new strategic plan for the University. Matthew has overall responsibility for University planning, including the development of all academic areas through the respective deans, staff development, international and regional partnerships and developments, recruitment, induction and retention of students, student experience and student outcomes.

Dr Mairi Watson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)

Mairi joined the University in May 2020 as Pro Vice- Chancellor Education and Student Experience. She leads strategy and performance, as well as policy development and delivery, in learning and teaching, student experience, quality assurance and student union relationships. Mairi is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute and regularly contributes to external events on the leadership of educational change in challenging contexts.

Professor John Senior, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)

Appointed in 2006, John is responsible for leading University research and the delivery of research degrees, chairing the University Research Committee, developing international research partnerships in Australia, China, Malaysia, and Vietnam, and overseeing the Doctoral College, which is a community of more than 700 research degree students.

From 2003 to 2006 John was the University Director of Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer as well as being a Dean of Faculty.

He has an international research profile in the field of optical fibre communications and networking, is on the Executive Committee of the Engineering Professors Council and chairs the Research and Enterprise Network for Universities (RENU).

Professor Julie Newlan MBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business and International Development)

Julie is responsible for innovation, international growth and partnerships, enterprise, business development, and marketing and communications. As well as overseeing strategy in these areas, she manages teams and initiatives relating to commercial income, knowledge transfer, graduate enterprise and employability, reputation management, fundraising, and recruitment. Julie’s role also covers leveraging intellectual property and developing enterprise and entrepreneurship opportunities for students and staff.

Alistair Moffat, Group Finance Director

After a career in senior finance positions in the commercial world, Alistair was appointed Group Finance Director in 2009. He has responsibility for all aspects of financial management within the group, including financial control, statutory reporting, treasury, tax, insurance, payroll, pensions and procurement.

His role also incorporates board responsibility for the management of the Estate and Sport. He is a director of UH Holdings Limited, which oversees the commercial subsidiaries in the group, and is a director of our subsidiary companies.

Alistair is joint chair of the London and South-East British Universities Finance Directors’ Group (BUFDG).

Sharon Harrison-Barker, Secretary and Registrar

Sharon was appointed in January 2020. She was previously the Academic Registrar, Head of the Student Centre and Faculty Registrar for the Business School and has worked in various further and higher education institutions. She achieved an MBA in Higher Education Management from the University of London in 2010.

Sharon is responsible for the management and operation of the Board of Governors and the Academic Board, compliance with University policies, regulations and procedures, legal matters of the University and its wholly owned subsidiaries, health and safety, internal audit, equality, registry, the office of the dean of students, process review and professional staffing.

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Our vision and strategic plan

Our vision reflects the ambition and inspiration that is central to the University. It is built on the belief that whatever your background, wherever you are from, higher education can be a transformational experience. And whoever you are, the application of university research can impact your life. We are committed to having a positive transformational impact on every member of our University community, and to sharing our successes with the community around us.

The development of our strategic plan began with engagement with staff, students and governors at the University – which informed our focus on transforming lives. It reflects the values of ambition and inspiration that are central to the University of Hertfordshire. Our three key themes of opportunity, community and flexibility also grew out of this engagement. They reflect both what is important to the University, but also how we will approach challenges in the coming years.

The 2020-2025 strategy will build on our strengths and embed our focus on employability, enterprise and business partnerships into our plans. It also looks to future challenges. In 2018, we asked a group of students to present the challenges that they anticipated that they would encounter in the future to our Board of Governors.

They focused on new technologies, the changing world of work, and increasing interconnectivity across the globe. They were excited about the future, but they recognised that they needed to be ready for it. The pandemic has changed the way we live, work and study, and the future could look different but we are confident our students will have the skills to face those challenges.

Our strategy will develop graduates who are capable and professional, building on the engagement of employers and professional bodies who contribute to the development of our curriculum. We will encourage students to be creative and enterprising, as one of only 20 University Enterprise Zones. We will build student’s social and global awareness, and increase proportion of international students on campus, and the number of UK students who have international experience. We will be compassionate and inclusive, supporting students in their learning and their living.

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Education and student experience

We deliver high-quality and distinctive education that transforms lives by providing opportunities to develop students’ skills for life, working in partnership with our student community, and delivering flexible education with clear career pathways.

Our country’s education system is highly respected all over the world, and achieving a qualification at a British University is a passport to a rewarding career.

Higher education qualifications in Britain are rigorous and intellectually challenging. They have to be because we’re continuously assessed to make sure we give students the exceptional education they deserve.

We know that coming to university is a major investment of time and money, so we make sure our students graduate with the best possible knowledge, experience, skills and career prospects. Our lecturers have a wealth of experience in their field, not just in an academic setting, but also out in industry – whether that’s in business, law, healthcare, sciences, engineering or the creative sector. They’ve built businesses, developed technologies, saved lives, pushed boundaries and made a real difference. They’re here to help our students do the same.

In 2018, we were awarded the top accolade of gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), a system introduced by the government to help students judge teaching quality and the importance of teaching excellence at universities. A gold rating indicates that we have demonstrated the highest quality teaching standards and provide outstanding outcomes for students from all backgrounds, in particular retention and progression. It is a mark of excellence that no Russell Group university hold.

We passionately believe in powering potential; for students this means equipping them with skills for life. We are very proud that our teaching has been recognised as the highest quality found in the UK, having been awarded gold in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework.

Mairi Watson, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience

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Research

We carry out research that transforms lives, and addresses fundamental global and societal challenges. We do this by offering research opportunities for staff and students, engaging the community in impactful research, and adapting flexibly to research partnerships.

Through their research, UK universities are contributing more than ever to future economic growth and to positive changes in the way we all live, work and learn. At the University of Hertfordshire we are proud to play a significant role in these developments, engaging with other academic institutions, business and industry.

Our research culture, which is defined by a strong spirit of enquiry, innovation and enterprise, also feeds into teaching and learning to enrich our students’ experience. Artificial intelligence and robotics, data innovation, climate change together with toxicology and pharmaceutics, food security and health care are just some areas where we are breaking new ground for societal benefit, and our research has helped keep people safe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Professor John Senior, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise

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Enterprise

We deliver transformative benefits for the economy and our communities through outstanding expertise in business, innovation and skills.

To support micro, small and mediumsized businesses in Hertfordshire that are struggling as a result of the pandemic, we launched the Volunteer Business Support Scheme in partnership with Hertfordshire Growth Hub. The scheme, which is funded by Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, matches businesses with mentors that are highly experienced in managing or coaching at a strategic level. They provide tailored support and point businesses in the right direction of finance and support packages in the county. The scheme has supported over 140 businesses across a range of sectors, including health and retail.

We provide regional firms with access to research expertise to help them translate their ideas into successful products and services, and we contribute to eight ongoing Knowledge Transfer Partnerships – a three-way collaboration between a business, the University and a talented graduate.

The Enterprise Hub on de Havilland Campus significantly enhances and expands the existing support we provide to businesses both big and small, locally and nationally, together with our talented students and graduates that are looking to start their own business.

Our start-up challenge award, flare ignite, offers student entrepreneurs the support, advice and training they need in areas like proposal writing, planning, finance and marketing, and the opportunity to win up to £8,000 to get their business idea off the ground. With more than 100 entrants each year, flare ignite has awarded more than £200,000 to student start-ups since it started in 2005.

It’s vital these businesses have access to the right support, particularly during this challenging period. The Enterprise Hub contributes significantly to the existing support we already provide at Herts and it will allow us to enhance and expand our community of practice, where entrepreneurs, with the support of their peers and like minded professionals, can discuss their challenges in a supportive environment and meet them head-on.

Professor Julie Newlan, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and International Development

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Global engagement

We are a globally engaged university, transforming lives by providing international opportunities for staff and students, building a diverse community on our campus, and increasing flexible programme delivery for the overseas market.

The University has a longstanding, successful history of engagement with international partners and we have been praised for our approach towards the extensive and complex range of collaborative partner institutions, by the most recent QAA Review.

With more than 70 international partnerships across five regions, and partnership models including franchise, dual awards, fly-in faculty, academic support, supported distance learning and recognition and articulation agreements, we remain passionate about offering the opportunity to students across the globe to study for a University of Hertfordshire award. This drives our commitment to continue with the development of strategic partnerships worldwide.

The University has been a pioneer in Transnational Education (TNE). In 1995 we became one of the first UK Universities to offer Franchise degree programmes in Malaysia, with college group INTI International University and Colleges.

In 2019 the University launched its latest large scale transnational education partnership with a new institution, Global Academic Foundation. Students will be able to study a University degree in multiple subject areas, including Business, Mass Communications, Pharmaceutical Science and Engineering.

Our strategy supports an international approach to education, and we have forged strong relationships with partners across the globe. This benefits our students by giving them diverse international experiences that prepare them for global careers, and it has helped us to build a vibrant global community and outlook, which also benefits our staff and the wider community.

Professor Julie Newlan, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and International Development

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School of Humanities

Subject areas:

English language, linguistics

and foreign languages

History, English literature and

creative writing

Journalism, media and

communications

Philosophy

Politics and International Relations

The School of Humanities is a diverse and vibrant community. Our staff are active researchers, scholars and practitioners generating outstanding publications and working closely with the heritage, education, and culture industries.

Humanities graduates are encouraged throughout their studies to explore the application of their learning and engage in work experience. They excel in the transferable skills that employers require. They have excellent communication, networking and teamworking skills and are trained to think critically and creatively in order to conduct effective research and analysis.

Our students are part of a supportive learning community, where we live the University’s friendly, student-focused values. We’re also ambitious and enterprising! Many of our staff have pursued their discipline professionally – the academics teaching creative writing are writers, playwrights, novelists, even a prizewinning poet. Their passion for their professional practice is what drives their teaching.

Dr Rowland Hughes, Dean (Interim) of the School of Humanities

Our experts

Dr Jo McDowell, Principal Lecturer in English Language and Linguistics

We have a wealth of knowledge and insight in the School of Humanities, including Dr McDowell who has been working on projects concerning primary school classroom teaching. This involves working with local primary schools, head teachers and practitioners in Hertfordshire. Her work informs education policy and can be used to develop teacher training workshops. She is the editor of a forthcoming publication for

De-Gendering Gendered Occupations: Analysing Communicative Practices in the Workplace, published by Routledge in 2020.

Professor Owen Davies, Professor of Social History

Professor Davies is the author of several publications, including ‘A Supernatural Struggle: Magic, Divination and Faith during the First World War’. He has worked with the Ashmolean Museum and a number of other heritage organisations to identify and preserve collections and to curate exhibitions. Owen is currently working on a project with the Museum of London to examine the phenomena of witch-bottles and their concealment.

Dr Andrew Maunder, Associate Dean Learning and Teaching, Reader in Victorian Studies, English Literature

Dr Maunder is leading a performance-based project ‘World War I Theatre’ which revives forgotten plays of the First World War period, working with professional actors and directors, schools and local groups. His productions have included J M Barrie’s A Well-Remembered Voice (1918), the premiere of Robert Graves’ play But it Still Goes On (1929) and St John Ervine’s 1913 play Jane Clegg written at the height of the suffragette campaign. It ran at London’s award-winning Finborough Theatre in London in 2019, and was directed by David Gilmore.

Our alumni

Eleanor Pilcher, History and Creative Writing, 2016

Marketing Manager at Avon, HarperCollins Publishers

Eleanor did a six month internship at a literary agency during her last year at the University, then went on to do a work experience placement at Penguin before getting a job in publishing recruitment. After eight months she was lucky enough to get a job with Canelo before securing her current role at HarperCollins.

“ My creative writing degree covered many aspects of writing from non-fiction, fiction and poetry. I was writing a novel which I later submitted to literary agencies, at the advice of my tutor, and through these submissions I came to realise that I had an interest in working for a literary agency. I applied for an internship at the start of my third year and was lucky enough to get it and from there continued to write and work in publishing.”

Charlie Edgar, Mass Communications, 2016

Coldwell Banker, Global Luxury

Charlie is an assistant to the Beverly Hills real estate agent, and Coldwell Banker, and sells high-end luxury property in the Los Angeles area.

“ My studies provided me with the opportunity to interact and communicate with a wide number of individuals from all backgrounds and experiences. I learnt how to be self-sufficient, motivated and pursue all opportunities for growth.”

Charlie chose to study at the University because of its study abroad opportunities and connections to London. He was also drawn to the architectural beauty of the de Havilland Campus, and the large selection of on-campus housing.

Research

Enhancing our understanding of the human experience

Our researchers work within heritage, education and the culture industries to enhance our understanding of the way we live now, our pasts and our future. Researchers in history and literature work closely with theatres, museums and archives to identify and preserve artefacts and memories and to curate exhibitions.

Our linguists’ research is reshaping understandings of how language influences behaviour and practice in the caring professions, especially in nursing and teaching. We also explore how language acquisition impacts upon learning.

Our research and practice includes work that helps us interpret and understand the world around us. Within the School there are researchers working on the impact of

modern media and communications alongside active and widely published academic and creative writers.

Our oral history team believe that memories matter. Every year, students, staff and members of the local community are professionally trained in the art of interviewing,

going on to take part in memory gathering projects. These preserve amazing stories which are made available in an online archive which can be accessed around the world.

Our partners in these projects have included Waitrose, Watford Football Club and the prestigious Society of Radiographers, plus local museums and a choral society! We have preserved the memories of those who worked for the de Havilland aircraft company, which was sited on what is now the University’s de Havilland Campus. In association with the University of Western Australia, stories were collected of migrants to Australia and their relatives who remained in the UK. Currently, team members are recording their own audio diaries and compiling a photographic archive

as part of our Virus Diaries project, which began shortly before the UK lockdown in March 2020.

Future aspirations

Our School creates transformative benefits for the economy and our communities through our teaching and training expertise in media and communications, preserving and curating our business heritage, and through our research to support and enhance the creative industries

Highlights

The School of Humanities is home to one of five national First World War engagement centres. The centre works closely with museums, archives, community groups and the Heritage Lottery Fund to support First World War centenary projects.

Our oral history team works with communities, institutions and businesses such as the John Lewis Partnership, to deliver oral history training and to create and capture historical evidence and memories. The Team’s BBC Radio 4 documentary ‘Instant History’ was commended by the judges in the 2018 Public History Prize by the

Royal Historical Society.

Philosophy Professor Constantine Sandis collaborates with Microsoft Research on designing explainable Artificial Intelligence.

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Contact us

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