



Council of  
Deans of Health

**Securing a  
Sustainable  
Future**  
Strategic Plan  
2018-2021

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# Foreword

The Council of Deans of Health represents the UK's university faculties engaged in higher education and research for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals. This year we celebrate 20 years of our Council's existence. Established in 1997, the Council has grown considerably and now has 83 institutional members and five associate members.

Over the last three years, we have raised our profile politically, increased our Council's resources and organised our work around five portfolios: workforce, research, regulation, global and education impact. We set the foundations for our Executive leadership and established the Council of Deans of Health Scotland and the Council of Deans of Health Wales.

The strategic context of health higher education has changed considerably since 2015. Changes in healthcare and higher education and an increased market economy nationally and globally are resulting in new relationships with government and regulators, healthcare employers and other education providers. Brexit will affect student and staff mobility, teaching exchange and research funding. The digital revolution empowers students, influencing how we lead and network.

In the next three years, we will continue to be a UK wide and multiprofessional organisation. Working in partnership with other key organisations, we will influence policy using evidence supported increasingly by intelligence from within our own membership and beyond. Our focus on research will increase while we continue to influence decisions on funding for the healthcare and academic workforce. Times are challenging but we have opportunities to influence sustainability in our sector.

We are committed to working in partnership, strengthening membership engagement and intelligence gathering to influence policy UK-wide for high quality education and research.

**Professor Brian Webster-Henderson**

Chair, Council of Deans of Health

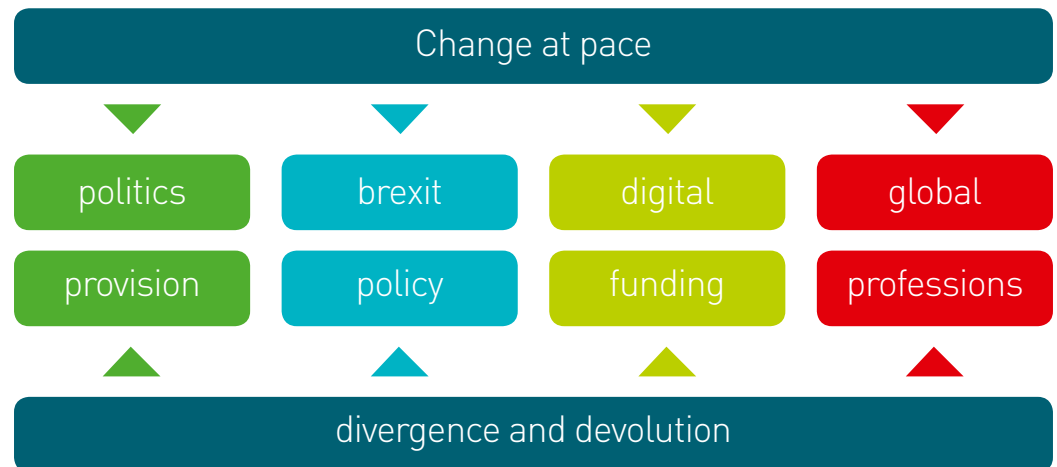
**Dr Katerina Kolyva**

Executive Director, Council of Deans of Health

# 1. Our context is one of change at a pace with increasing devolution and divergence

The context in which we will operate in the next three years will be one of change at a pace with increasing devolution and divergence. Alongside change in higher education and healthcare regulation we will start to feel the impact of Brexit, continue to focus on the internationalisation of our sector and follow developments in digital transformation.

## Our context is one of change, divergence and devolution



## Regulatory and commissioning reform

Regulatory and commissioning reform is affecting both the higher education and healthcare sectors simultaneously for the first time in a decade. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and the Bell Review 2017 will result in the merging of existing, and the establishment of new, public bodies bringing a stronger focus on risk-based regulation of higher education and opening the market to new providers. Changes in standards and the merging of healthcare professional regulators may influence interdisciplinary work. Health Education Wales will be the new body to lead education commissioning and workforce planning in Wales.

## Brexit in healthcare and higher education delivery

Leaving the EU poses concerns for higher education, which include increased barriers to recruiting talented European staff and students, potential damage to collaboration including participation in Erasmus + and Horizon 2020 programmes, loss of funding and reduced outward mobility for UK nationals. In relation to healthcare, Brexit is likely to affect staff mobility, accessing treatment here and abroad, regulation and legislation, cross-border cooperation and funding.

As changes take place in higher education funding, research funding is also going through change mainly due to Brexit. The UK is one of the largest recipients of research funding in the EU. Over the period 2007-2013 the UK received €8.8 billion out of a total of €107 billion expenditure on research, development and innovation. Although only a small part of that funding goes to our disciplines, continuing collaboration with the EU is important in order to enhance our academic rigour and strengthen diversity of knowledge and workforce capacity.

With the UK's only land border with the EU, Brexit poses a unique set of challenges for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Current practice such as cross-border staffing and consistency in professional regulation may not be possible, while other key issues include: cross-border consistency in employment regulation, recognition of psychological impact on existing staff, the need for greater access to workforce data and fast and efficient communication of new and emerging policies.

## Digital transformation

Digital technology has transformed the way we live our lives. Patient-facing health care technology is expanding fast as people become increasingly interested in using digital tools

to manage their health and wellbeing. 75% per cent of the UK population go online for health information and 50% use the internet for self-diagnosis. Yet the NHS has frequently been portrayed as one of the most backward industries in responding to digital technology, and policy-makers are understandably concerned to limit the growing gap between the digital experience we have as consumers and the experience we have as patients. While all governments in the UK have embarked on significant programmes of transformation and eHealth strategies, it will be increasingly relevant for Higher Education Institutions to embrace technology in education and research.

### **Increased internationalisation**

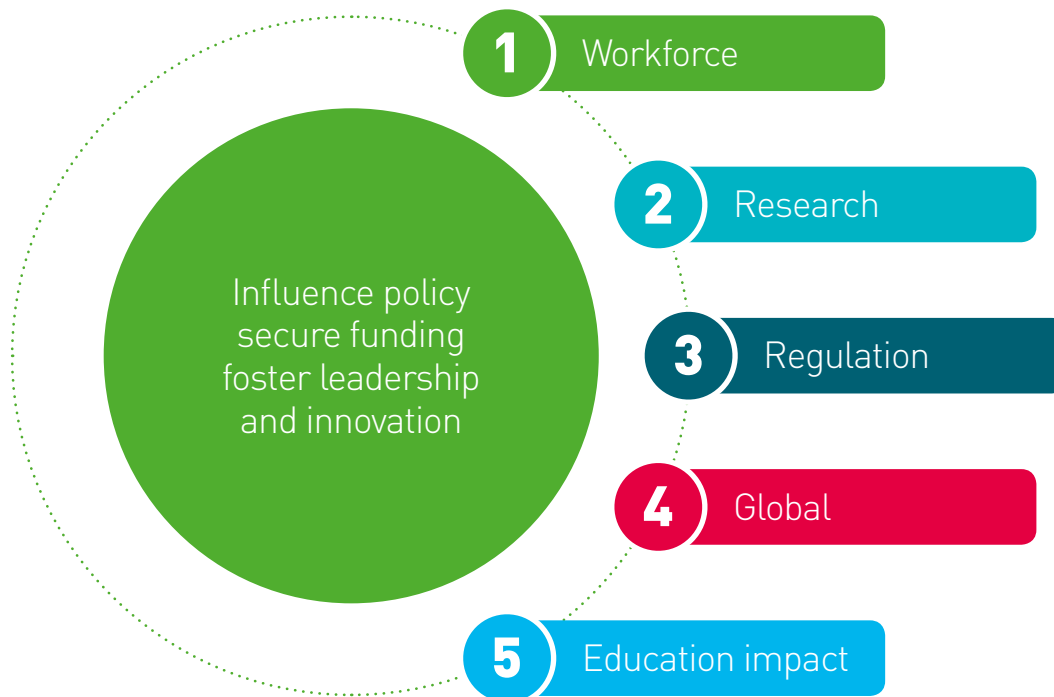
Recognising the importance of internationalisation in UK higher education, all funding bodies in the UK are keen to ensure that the international reputation of UK higher education continues to be preserved and enhanced. The development of the European Higher Education Area through the Bologna Process has contributed to an increase in cross-border exchanges and cooperation in higher education and facilitates the enhancement of trust and confidence among higher education systems. There are however increased challenges to attract international students to study in the UK due to visa controls and the potential to make the UK an unattractive place to study in the future.

### **Widening participation in higher education**

While nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions are all educated at degree level, widening participation in higher education remains a key priority for all governments across the UK. Recognising the importance of social mobility and economic upskilling, the focus of the widening participation agenda is on improving progression pathways into higher education, prioritising retention and student success while increasing flexible learning opportunities through part-time study, workplace learning and technology-enhanced learning. The regulation of new roles such as nursing associates and the use of higher degree level apprenticeships form part of this agenda.

More young people are going into higher education than ever before, including more from disadvantaged backgrounds but access remains uneven. As apprenticeships and different routes to higher education are being developed, more and different providers of education may enter the space including further education providers, NHS and private organisations. The education provision landscape will be therefore busier than ever.

## We will focus all our work on five portfolios



## Our priority areas in the next three years

- 1 Influence policy UK-wide
- 2 Secure sustainable funding
- 3 Foster leadership and innovation



## 2. Strategic Priorities 2018–2021

### **Influence policy agendas UK-wide**

In the next three years, we will continue to influence government agendas across the UK for all the professions we educate. Using our membership intelligence effectively we will be working in partnership with others seeking positive impact across our professions as we will engage in high level policy agendas UK-wide.

In line with our five portfolio areas our focus will be on:

#### **Workforce**

Influencing sustainable workforce planning both for healthcare and academic professionals providing evidence for the real costs of higher education

#### **Research**

Strengthening the research agenda in relation to government strategies

#### **Regulation**

Encouraging outcome-focused and risk-based regulatory reform for higher education institutions and healthcare professionals

#### **Global**

Securing strong higher education and research cooperation worldwide post-Brexit reducing regulatory burden for global partnerships

#### **Education impact**

Engaging with government in measuring quality and impact of higher education including the delivery of digital agendas

## **Secure sustainable funding for our disciplines**

Recognising the diversity in the funding and commissioning of higher education and research across the UK, in the next three years we will focus our energy on advocating for sustainability of funding for higher education and increased focus in research funding for our disciplines.

In line with our five portfolio areas our focus will be on:

### **Workforce**

Securing funding for the future and current healthcare and academic workforce

### **Research**

Negotiating and securing appropriate research funding for our disciplines

### **Regulation**

Ensuring regulatory reform allows growth in funding higher education

### **Global**

Facilitating global partnerships for our members while seeking international funding activities for the Council

### **Education impact**

Seeking the best funding outcome for student support and learning in practice

## **Foster leadership and innovation**

As healthcare higher education leaders navigate the complexity of our political and economic landscape, it is now more crucial than ever to recognise that strong leadership of our professions will lead to better outcomes for education and research in our sector. Recognising that our research community needs strengthening, we are committed to enhancing research capacity, building our academy and making the case for stronger government focus and public understanding on the contribution research and innovation make to the economy and society.

In line with our five portfolio areas our focus will be on:

### **Workforce**

Encouraging succession planning and career advancement through targeted leadership initiatives for our membership (from deputy head to vice-chancellor level)

### **Research**

Fostering research networks, promoting clinical academic roles in nursing, midwifery and allied health and encouraging innovation in research

### **Regulation**

Making the case for leadership to feature strongly in professional standards

### **Global**

Facilitating global networks of healthcare research academics and higher education leaders

### **Education impact**

Promoting student leadership as a key capability within education and research and promoting innovation in healthcare higher education

## Our vision is to become:

- An open and engaging organisation
- Maintaining a UK-wide multiprofessional focus
- Using our own intelligence and wider evidence to inform policy
- Opening our networks in the UK and globally

## We will listen, be open, transparent and engaging



## 3. The Council's growth

### **The Council's governance and funding**

The next three years will see the Council become an independent charity organisation, with its own governance and internal organisation independent of wider university networks. To support this new structure, we will oversee a financial strategy that will clearly set out a variety of funding sources for the Council going beyond membership subscriptions.

### **Membership engagement**

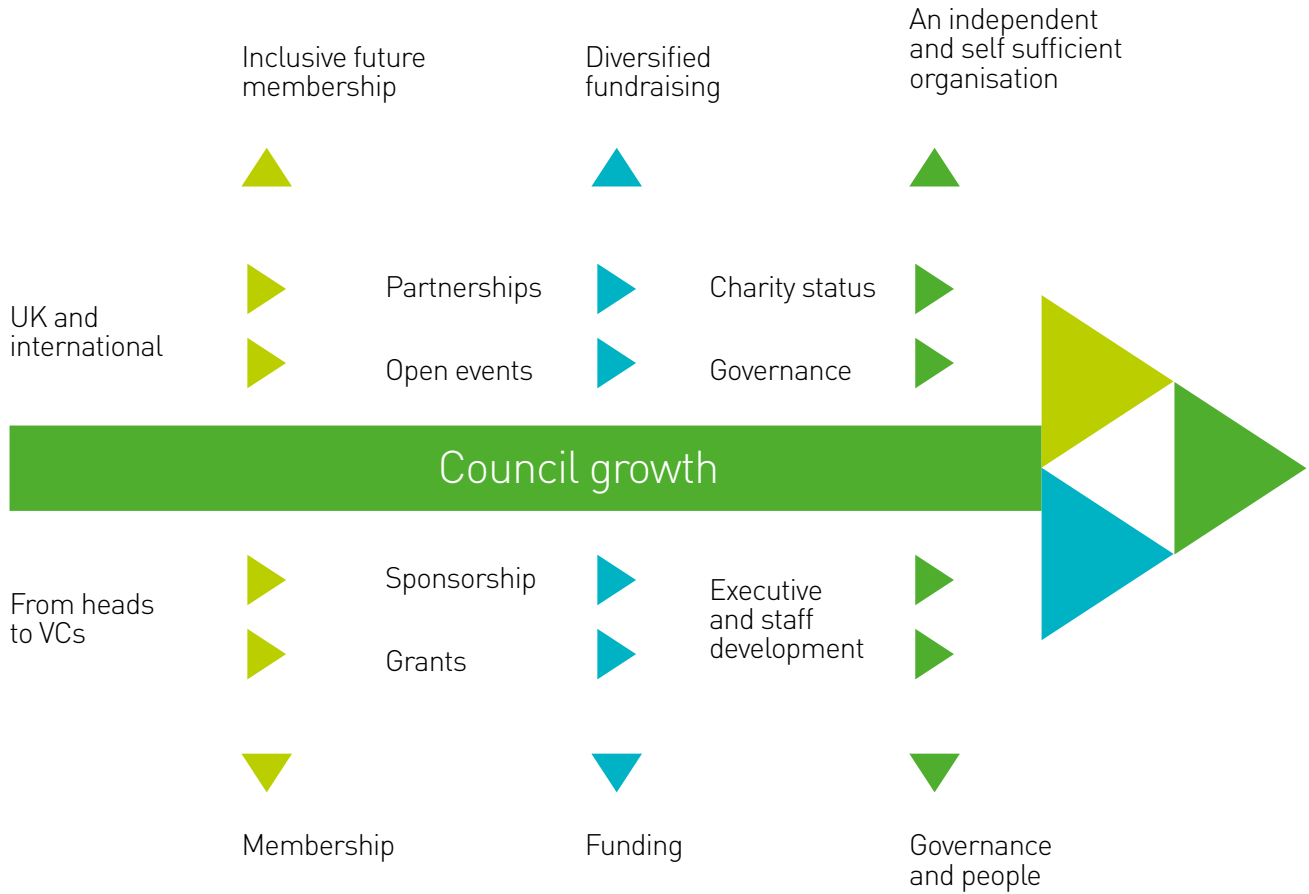
The effective delivery of our strategy depends entirely on enhanced membership engagement. We are committed as an organisation to being UK focused and ensuring a good balance of content and debate across the allied health, nursing and midwifery professions. While we will continue to visit members and invite them to visit the Council head office on a regular basis, we will ensure membership engagement remains strong both at national/country level and regionally where required. We will be increasingly using evidence from our events, member visits and online surveys to ensure we are listening and responding to members' needs.

### **External relationships**

The success of this strategy depends hugely on mature and effective relationships with other organisations. While we recognise that some policy agendas will be complex to navigate, our focus will be entirely on looking externally for horizon scanning, evidence gathering and for partnership working in influencing. Working together with others, building alliances and taking part in joint initiatives will characterise how we will operate in the future.

### **Annual corporate plan**

This strategic plan will be supported every year with an annual corporate plan setting out our key focus and delivery outcomes for the year, agreeing them and sharing them with our membership.





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