BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

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THRIVE
28

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY
2022/23 – 2027/28

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FOREWORD

Thrive 28 builds on the University's Impact 2022 strategy, delivering our mission of transforming lives through inspiring, employment and profession-focused education, and enabling people positively to impact society and their future.

The Thrive 28 strategy affirms the long-term strategic vision for the University to become a University that is highly connected, permeable, student- and customer-focused, business-oriented, strategically aligned, impactful and aligned to strategic partners.

The education we provide will be flexible, inclusive, enquiry-based, employer-informed, and designed around the needs of all our students. We will develop our position as an innovative, teaching-oriented University, delivering sector-leading and life-changing educational and employment outcomes, and deliver research and innovation that impacts and enhances lives and society and underpins our educational offer.

BNU will be an outwardly-focused institution, entrepreneurial in spirit, meeting our ethical and social responsibilities, expanding our reach through working together with learners, employers, the public, and strategic partners. We will reach out to all our communities, cementing our position as Buckinghamshire's University, and building on our civic engagement within the county, London and the South-East.

As a learning organisation, we will enable our staff to flourish, build their expertise and professional practice, and continuously excel and improve BNU's organisational effectiveness.

The University will be financially strong, ensuring our sustainability through realising efficiencies, growth, expansion, and investment.

BNU will be a vibrant, inclusive community that inspires learning, develops potential, widens participation and ambitiously transforms lives.

Thrive 2028 will make effective, substantial and lasting change to ensure that each of the four central pillars underpinning the University's success is thriving: our relationship with our customers, our product base, our people, and our environment.

Our community of staff and learners takes great collective pride in BNU and I look forward to working with them, and our partners, to ensure that BNU continues to develop, prosper and flourish.

Professor Nick Braisby
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer

THRIVE 28

BY 2028 WE AIM FOR THE UNIVERSITY TO HAVE:

Raised overall student satisfaction to best in sector

Achieved a recurrent annual surplus of 5-10%

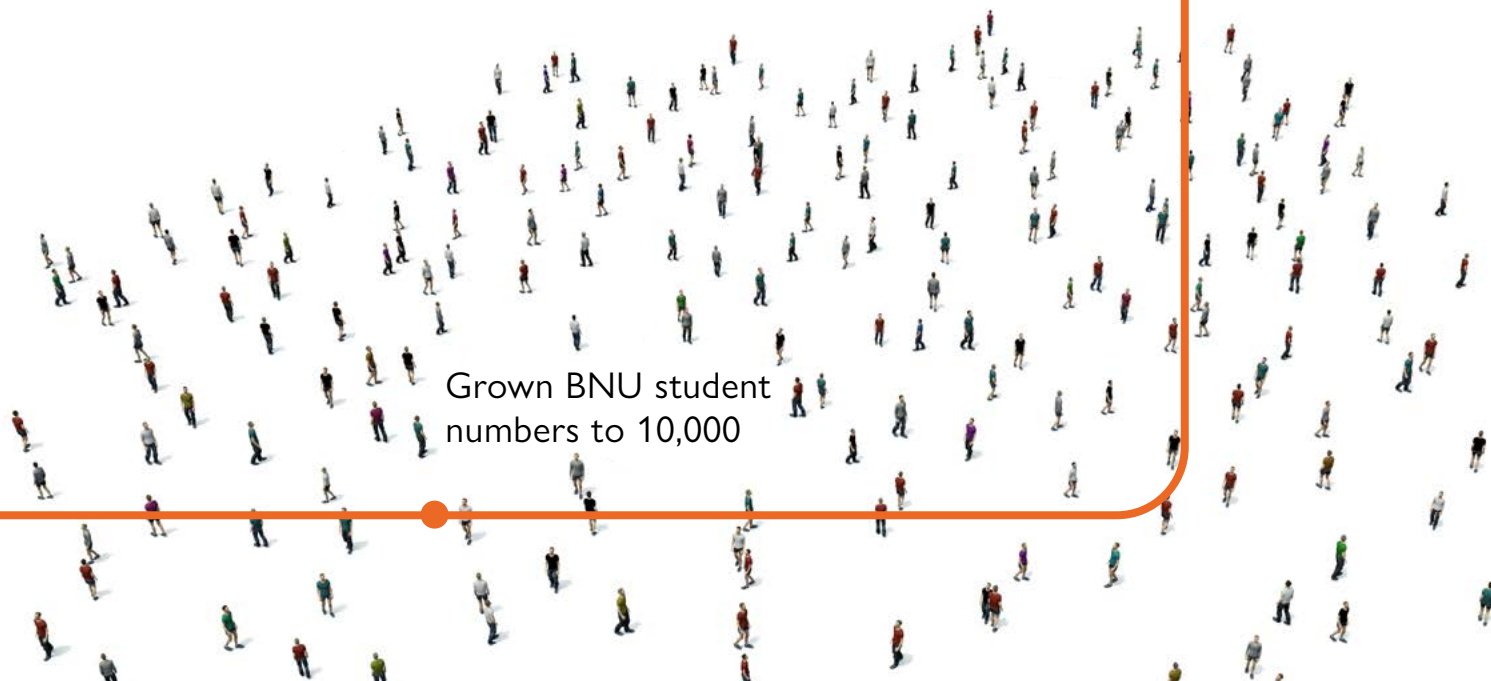Improved continuation and highly skilled employment indicators above benchmark

Generated £2.5m income from enterprise & research activities, with 25% of academic staff research-active

Established BNU as a sector leader in the Civic University Network

Achieved 80% advocacy score from BNU staff

Grown BNU student numbers to 10,000

STRATEGIC VISION

To thrive
To grow or develop strongly, vigorously…; To prosper, flourish

If someone or something thrives, they do well and are successful, healthy, or strong.

Synonyms:
prosper, do well, flourish, increase, grow, develop, advance, succeed, get on, boom, bloom, wax, burgeon, grow rich

Thrive 2028 is designed to ensure the University's relationship with its customers is thriving, that its product base is thriving, that its people thrive, and that its environment thrives, and will make effective, substantial and lasting change to ensure this happens. For each of these four, over-arching pillars, it aims to ensure that the University is better able to compete in the markets in which it operates – that is thrives, grows, develops, is successful, healthy and strong.

OUR FOUR PILLARS

SUPPORT STUDENTS TO SUCCEED

DELIVER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

BECOME A FIT AND AGILE ORGANISATION

SUPPORT OUR PLACES AND OUR PARTNERS

KEY THEMES

Health and well-being

We will work to help all our people – students and staff – thrive in regard to their health and well-being, improving their satisfaction and fulfilment.

Digital

We will work to provide our people – students and staff – with digitally-enabled ways of interacting and communicating, enabling them to thrive in learning, studying and working.

Sustainability and carbon net-zero

We will work to meet all carbon net-zero and nature-positive commitments, helping our environment and all whose life depends upon it to thrive.

Student outcomes

We will work to the highest quality standards, helping our students to thrive in their studies, and so achieve excellent academic, experiential, and employment outcomes.

Academic footprint

We will expand and grow our range of subjects, courses and academic expertise, ensuring always that the University's subject- and knowledge-base thrives, building resilience and enabling core growth.

Civic University

We will work with our local and regional communities, and key community and civic organisations, helping them to thrive.

Inclusivity

We will work to embed inclusivity throughout our organisation, ensuring that all feel they fully belong to and can participate in the BNU community.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Thrive 2028 sets a number of ambitious, strategic objectives, that when met will enable the University to thrive in respect of customers, products, people, and environment. This section expands on these and outlines what objectives we will pursue relative to these four pillars of the strategy.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO SUCCEED

Thrive 2028 will build on our historic mission to widen participation and ambitiously transform lives. But it will render these commitments in a way that is relevant to the times and improves our competitive position. Widening participation, for example, does not mean only appealing to students who have experienced disadvantage in their educational journey. To transform lives, we will ensure the University appeals also to students already succeeding in their educational journey.

We will broaden our appeal, ensuring all our learners can succeed – whether from challenged or privileged backgrounds, with traditional or vocational qualifications, and no matter what their personal characteristics.

We will develop support to enhance our students' health and well-being. We will adopt and adhere to the highest quality standards, ensuring students achieve excellent academic, experiential, and employment outcomes. We will work to create a deep sense of belonging, promoting continuation and retention. We will review and reform systems for giving personal and academic advice, learning from best practice. We will ensure our systems support lifelong learning. We will create our distinctive brand of education, building on our historic mission, and implementing Curriculum 2023.

Health and Well-Being

We will

- Ensure that BNU is recognised as a sector-leading University for its support of health and well-being, embedded across all activity streams;

- Invest in providing training and tools for students, so that support for mental health is provided throughout students' university experience;

- Build on the experience of Mind's Mentally Healthy Universities programme, inter alia, embedding Wellbeing Essentials sessions for students, introducing Tools and Techniques for Mental Health and Looking After Your Mental Health at Work sessions for students; and

- Develop and implement a Suicide Safer Strategy in conjunction with relevant partner and community organisations.

Student Outcomes

We will

- Set and embed high quality standards at subject (course) level throughout the organisation, using both absolute values and appropriate benchmarks;

- Deploy learning analytics intelligently across the organisation to improve student success, reforming educational design and delivery, and encouraging and incentivising learning-positive behaviours; and

- Implement a tariff strategy, ensuring entry tariff remains appropriate to the University's core markets and the aspirations of future students, and supporting contextual admissions.

Retention and Belonging

We will

- Create and embed an effective engagement and retention strategy, with clear KPIs for improving continuation, degree completion and good honours; and

- Ensure the highest standards of customer service are met throughout the institution; and

Personal Tuition and Advice

We will

- Implement Peer Supporter and Mental Health Champion roles;

- Develop our systems to promote holistic relationships with our students; and

- Review and reform systems for providing excellent academic and personal advice ensuring their seamless integration.

Student experience

We will

- Ensure an unparalleled, sector-leading student experience;

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the University's operations in terms of market and student demographic segments;

- Comprehensively map the student journey, reducing pressure points, ensuring the provision of timely, high-quality advice and support;

- Design programmes of activity to enhance the student experience, encouraging a sense of belonging and identification with the University

- Deepen our feedback culture, ensuring that the learner's voice is always heard and translated into timely and effective action, and that feedback loops always operate effectively; and

- Ensure learners are well prepared for life and study at University, removing barriers to entry and to success.

Inclusivity

We will

- Ensure that all students benefit from our focus on supporting students to succeed, paying particular attention to demographic factors that might signal disadvantage or a marginalised status; and

- Encourage all students to be meaningfully involved in ensuring the University's sensitivity and responsiveness to the student voice.

Lifelong Learning and Engagement

We will

- Develop and implement a flexible, easy to operate, and easy to understand, credit accumulation and transfer system, supporting step on/step off throughout a learner's lifetime, working with and paying particular attention to the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

Curriculum

We will

- Develop a distinctive BNU brand of education, built on our historic mission and values;

- Encourage innovation in teaching and learning;

- Implement a curriculum with a common framework for academic credit, and designating core, option and pathway modules;

- Introduce a set of BNU-wide modules, ensuring all students have access to common learning and teaching in areas such as inclusivity, sustainability, and digital technology;

- Reform the academic calendar to facilitate teaching blocks or terms, with a common first year on all degree programmes and options at level 5 and 6; and

- Embed placement opportunities within all curricula.

DELIVERING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Thrive 2028 reaffirms the University's position as teaching-focused and research-engaged, celebrating the role of vocational, profession-focused and skills-based education. It aims to expand the quality, size, geographical reach and competitive position of the institution; ensure our students are provided with valuable skills and technical as well as academic expertise; and strengthen our research through impact, enterprise and knowledge exchange.

We will ensure that our subjects, qualification and courses, support students' aspirations for flexible, high-quality higher education across their careers and lifetimes. We will innovate in creating new qualifications, supporting module-based registration, and developing our undergraduate, postgraduate, apprenticeship and sub-degree provision. We will develop our knowledge-base, introducing new subjects of study and research. We will launch the new Missenden Abbey International Hotel School and scope other subjects for development. We will develop a significant trans-national education provision.

We will learn from and build upon our results in REF2021 to strengthen units of assessment, creating and resourcing Impact Centres to support researchers, seed excellence, and translate research into meaningful impact for the economy and society. We aim to secure research degree awarding powers.

Academic footprint

We will

- Scope, develop and successfully launch at least two new substantive subject areas, expanding the University's footprint; and

- Invigorate the course production process to ensure that the academic portfolio of each subject area is expanded in cognate areas and continually refreshed while remaining cost-effective.

Curriculum

We will

- Support students' aspirations for higher learning across their lifetimes;

- Embed learner choice and flexibility of pace and mode of learning in the curriculum; and

- Develop a system for module-based learning and support and module-based marketing, enrolment and certification.

New Qualifications

We will

- Offer a wide variety of qualifications across the full range of subjects, including modular learning, undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees, apprenticeships, sub-degree awards, and postgraduate research

Missenden Abbey International Hotel School

We will

- Create the Missenden Abbey International Hotel School, offering internationally relevant education and work experience to students, drawing on the high-quality work and events of the hotel; and

- Develop academic leadership and infrastructure to develop high-quality programmes in hospitality and tourism, for example, hotel management, hospitality management, and associated subjects of event management and tourism.

Transnational education

We will

- Scope, identify and develop opportunities for careful and compliant expansion of TNE, congruent with international strategy and to future-proof international student recruitment

Impact and Knowledge Exchange

We will

- Implement, establish and resource Impact Centres; and

- Review KEF performance and implement actions to improve performance in subsequent exercises with meaningful improvements in engagement with industry.

Research and RDAP

We will

- Fully embed preparations for REF 2027;

- Implement resource plans to maintain existing UoA strength and develop potential UoA submissions; and

- Prepare the institution's RDAP application and successfully achieve RDAP.

FIT AND AGILE ORGANISATION

Thrive 2028 recognises the significant transformation that will be needed, building on the work of Impact 2022, to deliver our promise to be carbon net zero by 2030. Alongside this, however, the strategy broadens our commitment, aiming for our operations to become nature-positive, and positioning the University in the vanguard of that growing movement.

Thrive 2028 also recognises that to compete effectively much continuing work is needed to transform the way our people are supported, how their work is enabled and governed, and how we deploy management processes to reward and recognise excellence and challenge under-performance. We will continue to embed inclusivity meaningfully in all our practices, ensuring that all staff feel they belong fully to the University's community. A key ambition is for the work of all our people to be digitally-enabled, so they draw on the best that digital technology has to offer, are equipped with the skills to do so confidently, and always remain safe and secure.

We aim to grow and nurture our workforce by provide a sector-leading focus on the health and well-being of our staff. We will reorganise our activity, especially the ways in which work is structured through roles, committees, and working groups, reforming all of these to ensure the talent of our people is developed and their efforts translated into effective action more efficiently.

Health and Well-Being

We will

- Adopt the whole university approach set out in and build on the experience of Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter and Universities UK's Stepchange: Mentally Healthy Universities;

- Sign, champion and embed the Mental Health at Work Commitment, a framework based on the strong evidence-based Thriving at Work standards;

- Train staff in relation to mental health and stigma, introducing staff Mental Health Champions; and

- Train staff to be Mental Health Peer Supporters, providing peer support to their colleagues in their workplace.

Digital

We will

- Invest to ensure all our students and staff can draw on the best digital technology has to offer, enabling better and more efficient communications, efficiency, and enhanced functionality;

- Ensure that technologies allow our students and staff to work effectively over distributed temporal and geographical locations;

- Invest in training our students and staff to make the very best of digital technology, equipping them with valuable, new skills and instilling confidence in their use; and

- Implement best practice in ensuring our systems, resources, students and staff always remain safe and secure.

Sustainability

We will

- Ensure the University institution is prepared to meet all its commitments for a sustainable, carbon net-zero operation, no later than 2030, and including scope 1, 2 and scope 3 emissions as appropriate;

- Adopt and implement relevant commitments (e.g., Terra Carta) to ensure the University is people-, climate-, and Nature-positive;

- Create internal metrics to reflect the climate-impact and sustainability of Schools, Directorates, partners and subsidiary companies, and use these to introduce sustainability KPIs; and

- Work with our partners and supply chain to ensure that their operations fully align with the University's nature-positive and net zero ambitions as well as other strategic priorities.

Estate

We will

- Continue to invest in our estate, addressing its long-term challenges, and rendering our use of space more sustainable, productive and supportive of the student and staff experience;

- Ensure that the whole of the High Wycombe campus is brought up to the highest standards of University learning and teaching accommodation, inspiring and enthusing all in and beyond our University community;

- Review the provision of student residential accommodation, looking to secure and invest in additional capacity as demand and student numbers grow;

- Invest in Missenden Abbey ensuring that the buildings and grounds are fully commensurate with its operation as a high-quality country hotel, and an internationally excellent hotel school;

- Scope and secure a stable, long-term base for the University's London-facing operations, supporting especially our work in health and social care with London-based providers; and

- Working closely with carefully identified strategic partners, consider the extension of in situ learning and teaching provision where it meets market need and provides tangible benefits to student outcomes.

Service Excellence

- Scope and implement a customer service charter across the University; and

- Ensure all Schools and Directorates have in place effective arrangements for eliciting and assessing customer feedback and responding effectively.

Reward and Recognition

We will

- Develop a comprehensive and competitive benefits package for University employees, ensuring we are positioned as an employer of choice within the sector, enhancing our attraction, retention and development of talent;

- Develop and implement a clear framework for recognising and encouraging high performance in the workforce, ensuring this appropriately enables innovation and risk-taking; and

- Establish and implement a clear principles-based framework for recognition payments.

Inclusivity

We will

- Ensure that our policies comprehensively embed inclusivity, ensuring that all staff identify with and feel they belong to the University community; and

- Continue to champion inclusivity, working with other organisations as appropriate to address the need for higher education to change in order to meet the needs of disadvantaged and/or marginalised groups.

Managing for Success

We will

- Ensure robust, agile, easily understood and easy to operate processes for managing individuals and teams to achieve high standards of performance; and

- Ensure managers are enabled to deploy the full range of tools at their disposal to encourage high performance and effectively challenge under-performance.

Reformed Roles, Committees and Structures

We will

- Review and reform the University's structure of committees, groups, and working parties, ensuring it is effective, efficient, agile and nurtures innovation and risk-taking;

- Review and reform the course production process to ensure speed and agility in response to market conditions, and a continuously developing and healthy course portfolio;

- Review and redefine existing and create new role descriptors for all designated roles within the University to ensure empowerment and accountability;

- Ensure dedicated, hypothecated income streams to support and develop research, impact, enterprise and knowledge exchange; and

- Ensure the University's student-facing systems, processes and structures are designed to support and engage with students over their lifetimes.

SUPPORTING OUR PLACES AND PARTNERS

BNU is a University with local roots and global ambitions. Thrive 2028 positions it as outward-looking, recognising that its value and strength will depend upon how well it values and strengthens the communities in which it operates. These will be local, regional, national or global, depending on the expanding geographical reach of the University. To be successful the University must establish its relevance and instil public confidence. Playing a different and important role at each of these geographical scales, the University will work to enrich the civic fabric of the community, supporting its people, raising and meeting aspiration, developing culture, and all the while promoting our values, mission and strategic vision.

Thrive 2028 commits the University to collaboration, working closely with key strategic partners to achieve its wider goals and fulfil its purpose and promise. We will work with other higher education providers in key regional and national alliances, seeking to establish influence and the promotion of our strategic interests. We will work with franchise and validation partners to ensure strategic alignment including excellent student outcomes and rebalance the source of our student numbers. We will work in step with employers and industry, understanding their challenges and ensuring that our education, research, impact, enterprise and knowledge exchange are oriented to providing them with solutions. We will reach out actively to engage with our communities, opening our doors to build awareness, trust and confidence. Lastly, we will create an active alumni community, supportive of our mission, and eager for lifelong association with the University.

Public Confidence

We will

- Create and implement a public and community engagement strategy;

- Create effective fora and leadership for positively engaging with and supporting the University's local communities;

- Create a strong active alumni network supported by an alumni and development office;

- Create a model for mutually beneficial engagement with schools and colleges, ensuring that our involvement provides meaningful benefit to these partners, such as driving school improvement; and

- Scope and implement a set of indicators of public confidence in the University, using them to assess the success of our actions in supporting our places and partners

Civic University

We will

- Join the Civic University Network as a symbol of our commitment to the civic agenda, and build on its experience in ensuring we take meaningful action to build our civic role; and

- Create a new Civic Committee to lead and oversee our civic work, including the creation of a civic university agreement and accompanying action plan.

Partnerships

We will

- Fully implement the partnership strategy to rebalance BNU and partner student numbers and reduce the associated risks; and

- Ensure that contractual arrangements with partners achieve strategic alignment including excellent student outcomes.

Employers and Industry

We will

- Create Impact Centres with meaningful, continuing and high levels of engagement with employers and industry; and

- Create active engagement with industry and employers on our Industrial Advisory Boards, using them to ensure the continuing relevance of our educational programmes.

University Influence

We will

- Seek to strengthen our voice and influence in regional, national, and international networks and collaborative organisations, including higher education representative bodies.

STRATEGIC TARGETS

Thrive 28 Pillar	Strategic goals	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Definition	Target
Support students to succeed	Enhance student experience	Continuation of studies	Proportion of full time first degree entrants still active at BNU one year after entry.	84.3%
		Satisfaction with student experience	% of students expressing satisfaction with their experience at BNU	Best in sector
	Improve student outcomes	Graduate outcomes (occupying a graduate occupation 15 months after graduation)	Proportion of full time first degree qualifiers	76.0%

Thrive 28 Pillar	Strategic goals	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Definition	Target
Deliver knowledge and skills	Improve impact and knowledge exchange	Enterprise revenue	Income generated by enterprise and research activities, including NCB courses, facilities hire, intellectual property and consultancy, as per HEIF definition	£2,541,000
	Grow student numbers	Growth	Volume of student activity (FTE) on BNU-delivered courses. All modes and levels, with hindsight view	10,000
	Develop research	Research active staff	Proportion of staff with academic employment function who are research-active or who could supervise a post graduate student	25.0%

Thrive 28 Pillar	Strategic goals	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Definition	Target
Become a fit and agile organisation	Operate effectively	Surplus	Annual surplus as a proportion of income	5%-10%
		Liquidity	Number of days that cash assets could sustain costs	175
		Commercial Income	Income from 3rd stream activities, including student accommodation, facilities hire, other enterprise revenue but excluding contract research.	£12,400,000
	Grow and nurture our workforce	Staff Advocacy	Percentage of staff who would strongly endorse the University to friends and family as a great place to work	80%
	Transform our environment	Sustainable development	Total Scope 1 and 2 CO_2 emissions	426

Thrive 28 Pillar	Strategic goals	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Definition	Target
Support our places and our partners	Be a civic university	Civic engagement	Poll of local and regional residents and businesses on University brand recognition, warmth of attitude and willingness to engage	Action targets
	Instil public confidence	Reputation	Average position in domestic university rankings	80.0

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