



**ROBERT GORDON
UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN**

Shaping the Future: Developing an Institutional Strategy

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Professional Values

- Passion for developing high-performing teams
- Commitment to post-secondary education, and role in the community
- Driven to succeed – with focus on process and outcomes

Today's Session

- **Personal:** New arrival to RGU and Scotland [Dec 2016]
- **Project:** Tasked with delivering strategy [March-June 2017]
- **Presentation:** Story of process, considerations and concepts behind new RGU Strategy



Starting with a Clear Sense of Purpose

- To reflect an aspiration for RGU in changing learning and global environments – forward-thinking, and built on the foundation and strengths of RGU
- To provide clarity and inspiration for members of the RGU community
- To underpin a more detailed business plan capturing work across teaching and learning, research, and administrative activities
- To set the stage for what's next for RGU – in the classroom and research, across the broader campus, and in the community

Setting the Stage: Project Context

The Opportunity

- Strong history, but future-focused – and seen as relevant by region
- Demonstrated commitment within campus community
- Exciting campus developments – in classroom, research & physical space

The Environment

- Significant structural, leadership and staff transitions
- Challenging performances in some historically strong areas
- Stated desire for clear vision and objectives

The Focus

- Embody and lead RGU as a partner to, and part of, the community
- Support a culture of “legacy custodians” of the university
- Secure high-performance through people, data, and systems
- Exhibit commitment to innovation and empowerment

Sensing What's Possible

Tangible Deliverables

- Maintaining a cohesive and visionary strategy
- Defining our space in a “busy” higher education system
- Inclusive of academic and administrative teams; front-line through leadership; disciplines and activities

Intangible Outcomes

- Fostering a sense of curiosity and discovery
- Distinction can't come from any one or a small collection of elements, but rather from the whole
- Community building as important as the end product

Responsible and Responsive Engagement

Consultation

- Demonstrating genuine desire for input from academic and administrative staff
- Capturing the great ideas
- Meeting different working and communications styles

vs

Leadership

- Setting clear direction and objectives
- Retaining authenticity
- Avoiding uninspired ↓ or unrealistic ↑ objectives, buzzword bingo, drafting by committee

THE CHALLENGE



Fostering Culture and Community

Simple, but necessary, actions

- Made DRAFT strategic framework available to ALL staff – personally responded to each piece of feedback by email, online discussion thread, phone, etc.
- Considered learning and feedback styles, and incorporated into consultation process [equitable weighting]
- Called out changes made from the input to staff, to leadership and exec, and to the board

LISTEN



Diverse Viewpoints and Expectations

- *Fuels an aspiration rooted in history*
- *Inclusive, but not comprehensive*
- *Authenticity retained throughout*

The RGU Identity

- Sets stage for “Who We Are”
- Reflects a “known truth,” coupled with an aspiration of where we go from here
- Rings authentic with our campus community – and our stakeholders
- Updated Vision, Mission and Values to capture purpose and feel

The RGU Portfolio

- Identifies areas of learning and research spectrum in which we specialise
- In a complex and busy education spectrum, necessary to define where we sit and stay true and committed to our provision
- Intended to be inclusive of existing learning environment; also reflect interdisciplinary nature of learning and research

What Makes US Unique

So What? Managing Uniqueness

- *Captures changes in all aspects of university*
- *Set against our deliverables and purpose; rather than implicitly against others*
- *Action-orientated; empowering with guideposts*

What Makes US Unique

The RGU Commitment

- Speaks to our value proposition – and connectivity – in learning and research space
- Further defines features of RGU that speak to our place in higher education space
- Demonstrates fluidity of knowledge, and how opportunities are seized at RGU

The RGU Distinction

- Sets priorities for immediate future – focus on responsive learning environment, RGU experience, commercial & financial success, and community engagement
- Delivers the change element of the strategy – building on strengths and opportunities
- Priorities within intended to shape business planning and KPIs/assessment

Return to the Key Questions

- **Does it present as authentic to RGU – and our future?**
- **Can we use this framework to inspire and provide clarity of the strategic direction for our staff, students and supporters?**
- **What should be considered to provide support and change management within the RGU community?**
- **Does it set the stage for tackling what's next for RGU – in the learning environment, across the broader campus, and in the community?**

Next Steps: Sticking the Landing

- Action plan under development to “manage change”
- Exhibit patience and discipline – while retaining momentum
- Actively build linkages into numerous aspects of the organisation

BUT

- Allow organisation to “breathe” – draw on talent and creativity



Questions ?

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Thank You



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