



Writtle  
University  
College



# STRATEGIC VISION 2015-18





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## Executive summary

Writtle University College is a highly distinctive, specialist University College offering an inspiring portfolio of university sector and Further Education vocational study options designed to meet the needs of a diverse community of learners.

Writtle celebrated 120 years of educational excellence in 2013, illustrating its rich pedigree and heritage as a leading knowledge centre for the land-based and associated industries. Generations of students, many of whom have become leaders in their fields, have benefited from the unique experience gained during their studies with us, helping them to secure rewarding careers.


The Strategic Vision 2015-18 is designed to enable the University College to blossom and flourish as an independent and sustainable education provider for generations to come. It is published at a time of unprecedented change within the Further and Higher Education environments, combined with unparalleled pressures on global land and food resources.

The Vision is ambitious in its aspirations and broad in its scope. It reflects the maturity of the institution as it has become a University College in its own right through the successful attainment of taught degree awarding powers. It celebrates the high quality standards which are maintained throughout all curriculum delivery and most recently recognised through Writtle's achievement of an Ofsted GOOD rating for its Further Education provision.

Having enjoyed a long and fruitful partnership with the University of Essex, the Vision considers how Writtle will transition to a new arrangement where it may, by 2017, award its own degrees.







Recognising the value of the University College's mixed economy academic structure, in terms of both scale and reputation, the Vision seeks to develop and grow in parallel its Higher and Further Education strands. It sets out to encourage greater collaboration between these academic areas, further enhancing opportunities and progression for learners.

The student experience is at the heart of the Vision and the University College recognises that, in addition to the opportunity to learn from the University College's talented academic staff who are experts in their fields, students deserve a campus and learning environment that is well equipped for their specialist programmes whilst also providing an engaging and relaxing social space.

The Vision is therefore a catalyst for a refreshed and bold Estates Strategy which sets out to meet the priorities for the growing areas of the curriculum. Alongside this, upgrading of existing teaching, recreational and living spaces and services over a longer timeline will be rolled out.

The University College will explore opportunities to collaborate with other education providers where strategic alliances will add value to the learner experience and will grow its network of feeder schools and colleges through formal linkages both in the UK and internationally.

All of this will further enhance the profile and reputation of the University College which is already acclaimed nationally and internationally in some of its areas of excellence. It will also enable the potential for some joint delivery of programmes to provide students with more choice and a wider range of facilities and services.

The Vision describes how the University College will seek to consolidate its position as a leading Higher Education provider in the land-based industries whilst also building on the quality of its Further Education provision by positioning itself as the pre-eminent and outstanding Further Education provider in the Eastern region of the UK.

Success in achieving the aspirations and ambitions of the Vision will enable the University College to look forward to long term financial security with the capability to reinvest in the student experience. Writtle's reputation in research, consultancy, short courses and conferencing is established and growing. Innovative ways to develop these income strands further will be explored and staff will be encouraged and rewarded for their contributions.

We recognise that future challenges will continue to drive change throughout our community and we will strive to handle these challenges sensitively and collaboratively to achieve the best outcome for all our stakeholders. We will continue to invest in areas that excel and target resources to support these areas.

Our Strategic Vision 2015-18, whilst aspirational, is realistic and deliverable. It recognises the distinctiveness of our specialist offering and what is required to enhance this. The Vision will enable Writtle to develop as a University College and build an outstanding portfolio of Further Education programmes.

**Dr Stephen Waite**  
**Vice-Chancellor**



A photograph of three young adults sitting on the ground in a park. A man in a striped shirt is leaning against a tree trunk on the left, talking to two women. The woman in the middle is wearing a green jacket and blue jeans, and the woman on the right is wearing a blue plaid shirt and blue jeans. They are all looking towards each other in conversation. The background shows trees with autumn foliage in shades of green, yellow, and red.

**Our mission:**

**Transforming lives and  
the environment through  
inspiring education.**

**Our strategic vision: A distinctive place to study and  
to serve the environment through science and the arts.  
Recognised for the quality of our specialist education  
locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.**





## Our values

We strongly value learning and working in an inclusive and ethical environment, respectful of all those with whom we interact. We strive to encourage the highest achievement for all our stakeholders, nurturing progression and adding value in all our areas of operation.

At the heart of our value system is a commitment to:

- **A safe and rewarding environment for our students and staff.** We recognise the investment our students make in their time with us and we will seek to deliver an exceptional experience, placing our learners foremost in all of our areas of operation. We will invest in our staff and reward excellence to ensure our students continue to receive training and support from a highly professional and dynamic team.
- **A culture of quality delivery and performance.** We will present our learners at all levels of our portfolio with opportunities to excel by focusing on offering and delivering inspiring teaching and learning. In so doing, we will enable our students to maximise their potential in our supportive learning environment.
- **A spirit of cooperation.** Our mixed-economy institution will thrive through close collaboration between our academic and business-facing areas of operation. Our student-facing teams and professional support staff will work closely to ensure our continued success. This will be enabled through our developing Human Resources Strategy.
- **An inclusive and welcoming community.** As a small specialist provider with clarity of vision and common threads of interest within our diverse curriculum and business offering, we will nurture a culture of mutual support and respect, where stakeholders feel welcomed and empowered to gain from their experience with us, as students, as staff, as visitors and as business partners.
- **An ethical approach.** We are committed to delivering a curriculum that is fit for purpose, of quality and sound financial value; maintaining a safe environment in which to learn and to relax. We will take care in selecting partners with a synergy of vision and a shared passion for developing the environment and our aspirations to make a positive difference to the world around us.





# Our ambitions

To establish Writtle University College as a leading university sector college within our specialist area of provision throughout the UK and internationally. To be an outstanding college for Further Education in the Eastern region.

Writtle University College will be:

1	Nationally acclaimed. Internationally recognised as a distinctive University College in our specialist fields
2	Standing out in the Eastern region, providing outstanding Further Education
3	A thriving mixed economy institution, celebrating diversity and achieving high levels of progression
4	A business partner of choice





Realisation of our ambitions will propel us to be:

<p><b>1 An independent college in the university sector</b></p> <p>Nationally acclaimed. Internationally respected. A specialist University College acclaimed for the calibre of graduates, quality of research and innovative approach to preparing students for rewarding careers and continued study.</p>	<p><b>2 An outstanding Further Education provider</b></p> <p>Standing out in the Eastern region. An outstanding Further Education provider in the Eastern Region, offering a distinctive vocational portfolio of programmes enabling learners to achieve their aspirations and surpass their expectations.</p>
<p><b>3 A high quality diverse community</b></p> <p>As a mixed economy institution, Writtle will celebrate the diversity of its learners, providing a high quality, valued vocational education with a reputation for innovative delivery and exceptional progression opportunities.</p>	<p><b>4 A business partner of choice</b></p> <p>A partner of choice and preferred provider of expert training and consultancy for businesses and industries related to the University College's specialist fields. An attractive venue for conferences and events.</p>

We were ambitious in our plans to achieve taught degree awarding powers, thus securing our position as a University College. This achievement will enable us to develop new partnerships, particularly in an international context and maximise our potential for continued sustainable independence as a Higher Education institution.

Equally key to our strategic aspirations, as a mixed economy institution, is our aim to move from an Ofsted GOOD rating to an outstanding inspection outcome by providing our learners with the very best opportunities for vocational training and progression in a supportive, dynamic and inspiring campus environment.

Alongside our Higher and Further Education streams, we will seek to develop our third stream income, building long-standing loyal partnerships and new business opportunities through our conferencing, research and consultancy capability.

**To achieve our ambitions, we will:**

- Be aspirational, innovative and visionary in our plans for the future.
- Aim to deliver excellence in all areas of our operation and be celebrated for the highest standards of teaching and learning.
- Further develop our culture of continuous improvement through our staff for our students, thus maximising the potential of all our stakeholders.
- Be accessible to all, opening and supporting access to our programmes more widely.
- Break through layers of bureaucracy which hamper progress and move to more closely integrated online processes and information management systems.
- Create an enhanced financial position and long-term secure platform, enabling us to realise our ambitions and invest in our future.





## An independent college in the university sector

Nationally acclaimed. Internationally respected. An historic institution educating a modern world.

Gaining our own taught degree awarding powers has enabled us to achieve our goal of becoming an internationally acclaimed University College, building on our heritage of more than 120 years of educational excellence. We will achieve this by:

- **Ensuring** our students are at the heart of the institution. We will engage with our students and respond positively to their voice. We recognise students as partners and stand by our commitments outlined in the Student Charter, collaboratively published with the Students' Union.
- **Nurturing** our talented expert academic staff, who bring a blend of cutting edge consultancy and academic merit to the lecture theatre, ensuring they continue to deliver the quality of educational experience and personal approach to study expected of a small specialist provider.
- **Encouraging** innovation in portfolio development where this enriches the student experience and strategically aligns with the mission and vision of the University College. Growing curriculum areas will be supported through our ambitious Estates Strategy and we will listen carefully to student feedback about our existing facilities as we roll out a programme of enhancement across our campuses.
- **Developing** our world-class research capability continues to enrich our student experience. Research conducted by our staff, PhD and Masters' students provides valuable solutions to the pressures facing the world's natural resources, land and environment.
- **Expanding** our consultancy operation. Our reputation for finding innovative solutions and adding value to our national and international clients is growing. We will engage with business and industry to share our knowledge for mutual benefit.

All this will lead to a continued succession of high calibre graduates benefiting from the Writtle Experience, going on to take up rewarding careers, following in the footsteps of the University College's prestigious alumni, many of whom are now leaders in their professional fields.





## An outstanding Further Education provider

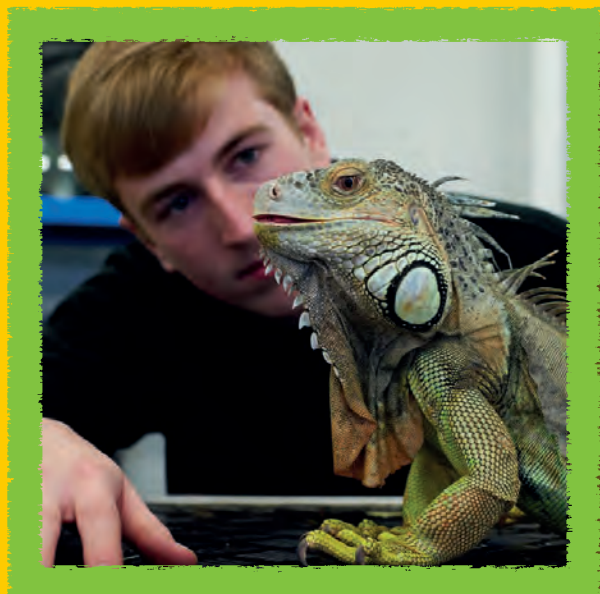
Outstanding in the Eastern region. Offering inspiring education for rewarding vocations.

Building on the growing reputation of the University College within Essex and the surrounding counties, we aspire to position Writtle as the pre-eminent and outstanding Further Education provider in the Eastern region of the UK for our specialist vocational courses. We will achieve this by

- **Building** on the areas of excellence identified through the University College's achievement of a GOOD rating by Ofsted, and responding to areas for development, to move to outstanding across all aspects of Further Education provision.
- **Effectively** adopting core elements of the Further Education Strategy and implementing these successfully across all Further Education curriculum areas.
- **Nurturing** our links with business and industry. We will fully engage with employers and seek their input into curriculum content to ensure that the portfolio of programmes offered meets their needs whilst also satisfying learner requirements.
- **Placing** employability at the centre of programme design and providing opportunities for students to develop entrepreneurial and enterprise skills during their learning. Alongside this, to offer work experience and apprenticeships.
- **Ensuring** learners benefit from the full range of additional vocational qualifications available through our experienced staff, our professional-accredited awards and short course training.

- **Encouraging** all of our learners to maximise their potential and realise their dreams and ambitions through nurturing and delivering a highly challenging, whilst equally supportive, learning environment.

Our learners will leave their vocational studies equipped to either progress to Further and Higher levels of academic achievement or join the world of work in their specialist area, with a sense of real achievement in the realisation and attainment of their personal goals.







Dr Sife Chikunya with Matt Baker during filming for the BBC's Countryfile Programme.

## A high quality diverse community of international acclaim

Writtle University College aims to bring dreams and ambitions to life through empowering education for all our learners at all levels of the curriculum. Whether our students are joining us on a short course or certificated programme, completing vocational diplomas and apprenticeship training or studying at degree, postgraduate or post-doctoral research levels, our committed staff will help our learners to exceed their expectations.

Our students benefit from our diverse campus community and flexible learning approaches, helping them to achieve their goals and preparing them for rewarding careers. The opportunity to learn alongside students from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and faiths, including our thriving international community, is valued by our stakeholders.

The University College is committed to maintaining the high standards and personal approach to study guidance valued by our small specialist community. Our Further Education learners are excelling across all curriculum areas, illustrated through their award wins. Our Higher Education staff and learners are undertaking pioneering research, breaking boundaries in vocational excellence and making strong contributions to the professions they join upon graduation.

We will maintain an emphasis on sharing their rich knowledge outputs with the wider world and continue to encourage diversity in our lecture theatres, classrooms and campus community.

**“I never thought when I enrolled on this course at Writtle that within less than two years I would be capable of making a gold-winning show garden”  
- Abigail Hume, on winning gold at the Young Gardeners of the Year competition at the Ideal Home Show 2014.**







# A business partner of choice

## Pushing our boundaries

Areas which are attractive to commercial partners both within and alongside our core education portfolio are valuable in providing us with the income streams and financial flexibility to invest in our core business.

The University College is becoming recognised increasingly as a partner of choice, offering:

- A source of high calibre professional consultancy expertise in the industries served by our specialist educational portfolio. Our expert staff bring a blend of real world professional experience alongside their academic specialist knowledge. Their collaboration with businesses and industry, including multinational corporations and creative partners, keeps them at the forefront of their fields.
- A quality provider of vocational and professional development and training. Our flexible approach to meeting business and individual needs by offering tailor-made programmes in addition to our popular and extensive range of courses is valued and recognised by our high volume of returning clients. We value these ongoing relationships and will aim to expand our work in this specialist vocational area.

- An attractive venue for conferences, weddings and events. Our stunning campus setting, landscaped gardens, lecture theatres and in-house catering provision are popular with a diverse client base - from summer schools to away days through to film locations and business meetings. We have earned a reputation as an attractive option for all types of conference needs. We will support and grow this valuable income stream in support of our academic operations.

To encourage and enable growth in these areas the University College will:

- Create a culture of reward for ideas that lead to the realisation of additional valuable third-stream income through our professional development process.
- Develop elements within our Estate Strategy to support growth in third-stream areas.
- Remove barriers to rapid implementation of income generating proposals through a commitment to removing any avoidable bureaucracy in our systems and processes, whilst still maintaining quality.



# Enriching our environment

Our exceptional setting and unique blend of outdoor and indoor learning spaces provide an inspiring location for education, training, research, consultancy and corporate events.

Valued by our students, visitors and staff, our campuses will benefit from a major development plan to cover the creation of new bespoke training areas, upgraded accommodation and enhanced social spaces.

Specialist facilities to support growing curriculum areas will be the primary focus for investment and will include an upgrading of the equine unit at Cow Watering Campus, refreshment of Sturgeons Farm and expansion of our animal science and care facilities at the Titchmarsh Centre.

Alongside this, a refurbishment programme to upgrade accommodation for students and conference visitors, further refinement of our picturesque landscaped gardens and updating of our sports facilities will create an attractive and dynamic environment in which to work and study.

We will build links with funding councils and grant awarding bodies, submitting successful bid applications to help us finance our vision.

Linking our estates plans to our Information Systems Strategy, we recognise the role of technology and the need to invest in state of the art learning facilities. We will strive to exceed our stakeholders' expectations, providing excellent connectivity and online systems, improved management information and enabling a break away from bureaucratic processes.

Our updated Estates Strategy, published in 2015, is designed to deliver a plan of continuous improvement alongside areas of new build, the Strategy unveils ambitious goals and creative designs, ensuring our community will benefit from an enhanced study and recreational environment.











More than 20 postgraduate research students are conducting pioneering studies supervised by our academic experts.

# Delivering groundbreaking research and scholarship of national and international acclaim

Writtle University College's academic staff are recognised nationally and internationally for the quality of their scholarship and research. As a small and specialist education provider with a vocational focus, the depth and breadth of the University College's submission to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework illustrates the quality of research being undertaken within our academic community and signals our ongoing commitment to expose our students to a teaching and learning environment of the highest calibre.

The University College collaborates with leading universities and colleges, successfully winning bids for major research projects funded through globally-respected research agencies.

Additionally, Writtle currently counts three National Teaching Fellows among its academic community. These coveted awards represent the pinnacle of academic achievement in scholarship within the university sector.

Our high level performance in Higher Education is complemented by vocational excellence at Further Education level and we will build on this in our aim to achieve outstanding recognition from Ofsted.

We will support our academic community in further developing its strengths through research and scholarship, ensuring our students continue to benefit from an exceptional learning experience at all levels in our specialist fields.

Dr Jonathan Amory, Principal Lecturer in Animal Behaviour and Welfare:

*"The cow tracking research at Writtle is pushing forward our understanding of the individual behaviour of cows and the social interactions in dairy herds using the latest technology."*



Dr Anya Perera was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship – the most prestigious award for excellence in Higher Education teaching and support for learning from the Higher Education Academy in 2014.





## Measuring our success

Our success in pursuit of realising the ambitions set out in the Writtle University College Strategic Vision 2015-18 will be recognised by:

- The attainment of taught degree awarding powers in 2015, enabled Writtle to achieve University College status in 2016.
- Being recognised as outstanding by Ofsted in the next inspection of our provision.
- A positive outcome from the Research Excellence Framework in 2015, recognising the quality of our research outputs and the value this adds to the University College experience.
- Improved student satisfaction, measured through enhanced league table performance as a result of our efforts to develop the curriculum and our estate.
- Closer links with industry, illustrated through sustained levels of conferencing business on our campuses; enhanced commercial consultancy contract achievement and new significant awards for research related to our specialist portfolio.
- Strategic alliances developed to enhance our curriculum and improve recruitment to our specialist programmes.
- An improved financial position, ensuring the long-term sustainable independence of the University College.
- An increase in the number of students enrolling on our full-time university and college-level programmes year-on-year.
- A more diverse campus as we increase participation from under-represented communities.
- Continued growth in our international student community as we nurture links with our primary recruitment markets and foster relationships where opportunities emerge.

Our success will be formally measured through agreed Key Performance Indicators (to be published separately) and will be regularly reviewed by senior stakeholders with the ultimate oversight of the University College's Board of Governors. Underpinning strategies in Higher Education, Further Education, Estates, Human Resources, Information Services & Technology and Marketing will be revised to align with the Strategic Plan 2015-18 and its supporting KPIs.

The underpinning Strategic Action Plan to support the Strategic Vision will incorporate the core measurables and KPIs.






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