

Inspiring the extraordinary

Annual Report
and Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 July 2022



Durham University league table performance

League tables provide an assessment of our standing in relation to other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and are used by applicants and the wider community to judge performance.

The presentation of league table results has been revised from the previous year to align with other publications and to reflect that the rankings, while published in one year (e.g.2022), are held by the institution for the following year (e.g. 2023).

League Table	2023	2022	2021
Complete University Guide	6th	6th	7th
The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide	6th	6th	6th
The Guardian	6th	5th	4th
Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings	92nd	82nd	86th
Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings	=198th	=162nd	=149th
Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings	n/a*	101-200	87th
Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)	n/a*	301-400	301-400

*These rankings will be published during 2023.

Sustainable development goals

The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a blueprint to achieve a more sustainable future by encouraging organisations and individuals to address global challenges. We have mapped the SDGs onto our research, teaching, wider student experience and global activities. We will use this information to assess our impact, identify gaps and consider where to focus efforts to deliver an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable institution and help to balance social, economic and environmental sustainability for the world. This includes building the SDGs into our education offer, with programmes in climate science, sustainability, energy and development, and environmental geoscience. Throughout this report we highlight examples where our work is contributing towards these goals. Further information is published on the University website.

During 2022/23 we will be developing our Net-Zero and Biodiversity Strategies which will help to improve our performance against SDG13 Climate Action and SDG15 Life on Land. These strategies should promote our position in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, which last year assessed 1,400 universities worldwide against the SDGs.

United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals



Operational Review Education

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Strategic Risk SR1, SR2, SR3, SR4, SR5

Goal

To provide outstanding educational opportunities for undergraduates, postgraduates and research students, producing critically and socially engaged graduates of the highest calibre who enrich society through their employability and role as global citizens.

What has been achieved

We provide facilities and impart knowledge to deliver to our students a distinctive research-led education to enhance intellectual capabilities, the capacity for independent learning and problem-solving skills. We contribute to the government's agenda on higher education in supporting students to gain the skills they need for future employment or further study and improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education.

Our Access and Participation Plan reaffirms our commitment to widening participation in higher education, with initiatives aimed at enrolling students from under-represented backgrounds and supporting them while at Durham. We are already seeing evidence of progress through the following criteria. The 2020 figures relate to the admissions cycle for students that joined the University at the start of the 2021/22 academic year and is the latest available data.

	2017	2020
Students from low participation neighbourhoods	9.6:1	5:1
Students from targeted postcodes (Acorn 4 or 5)	13.7%	17.4%
BAME student enrolment	24.99%	29.6%

We aspire to provide our students an education of the highest quality. To fulfil this strategic goal, we must be diverse, equitable and inclusive. Access, student success and progression, and widening participation features strongly in our Strategy and we are working to achieve these goals by:

- Increasing applications from disadvantaged groups through highly targeted outreach activity
- Adopting a holistic approach to assessment of merit and potential, including the use of information about the context of prior achievement
- Ensuring a high degree of academic and non-academic support to all students, but to be targeted towards at-risk cohorts where necessary
- Focussing on employability by offering opportunities to develop key skills and to engage with employers
- Offering financial support packages to target access, success and progression where there is most need
- Using the experience and expertise of our staff and students to inform good practice.

We are improving our use of digital technologies to enhance our teaching provision and have invested in learning designers and digital developers.

Our normal teaching delivery during 2021/22 was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic for a period, although staff and students were able to adapt quickly. Industrial action added to the disruption and was felt unevenly across and within departments. Where appropriate, mitigations were introduced to enable students to meet their programme learning outcomes.

Our overall student satisfaction rating in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2021/22 is 80%, placing us in the top 25 in the UK and Top 5 in the Russell Group. The NSS is an independent annual survey which gathers undergraduate students' opinions on the quality of their experience at university. We continue to analyse and respond to concerns raised in the survey, including an improved annual quality review for academic departments to enhance the experience for our students across the institution, sharing best practice between departments and learning from other high-performing universities.

We support students to develop their employability skills alongside academic achievements. This aligns with our regulator's mission to ensure that future generations should have equal opportunities to achieve successful and rewarding careers, not limited by their background, location or characteristics. We have been engaging directly with student associations to reinforce our inclusive culture, generate student confidence and enhance engagement with our careers service activities.

During 2021/22, we increased the number of work experience opportunities by 53% compared to the previous year and saw a 78% increase in the number of students opting to complete a placement year and a 136% increase in students being able to undertake international work experience opportunities. While some of these increases may be the result of reduced engagement the previous year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of students now undertaking a placement has more than doubled over the last four years.

Some of our new initiatives introduced during 2021/22 include:

- Internships to support businesses to meet the SDGs
- Short-term work experience opportunities in business development at SMEs in County Durham
- An innovative work experience programme for autistic students
- Support for students to obtain global internships
- A pilot to support University departments to recruit students into short or part-time internship roles
- More online and interactive careers information and tools
- A job search platform aimed at international students looking to find employment in the UK after graduating
- Opening the Hazan Venture Lab, a co-working space for aspiring entrepreneurs.



Case study Research-led Education

In October 2021, almost 100 of our Biosciences undergraduate students joined forces with some of our leading academics and colleagues from Northumbria and Liverpool Universities. They identified two defence systems that protect bacteria from viruses in ground-breaking research and which could have further uses for mapping changes in human DNA.

After collecting and isolating bacteriophages (viruses that infect bacteria) from the River Wear, college ponds and other Durham waterways, students tested them against E.coli bacteria to check the strength of the E.coli defence systems in providing protection against the viruses.

They discovered two defence systems that worked in tandem to form a protective response. One system in particular (called BrxU) allowed the E.coli to protect itself from bacteriophages that had chemically altered their DNA.

The researchers identified BrxU as having strong potential as a useful biotechnological tool, since the DNA changes in the bacteriophages that prompted this response can also be found in human DNA. BrxU could therefore be investigated further to map changes in human DNA, providing insights into ageing or diseases, like cancer.