

ROOTED IN  
**BIRMINGHAM**  
REACHING BEYOND



**BCU 2030**  
and beyond

Shaping our ambitious future



# INTRODUCTION

Universities shape lives. For almost two centuries, Birmingham City University has shaped thousands of lives. We have helped redefine a city, influenced a region, and impacted further afield. From our roots in the Birmingham Government School of Design, we have forged a formidable history.

In rapidly changing times, the demands on higher education are multiplying. The world needs universities to respond quickly to meet society’s needs; through education, research, creativity, innovation and enterprise. More than ever, universities are required to adapt their mission to reflect the needs of their communities.

Birmingham and the region have much to be proud of; yet there remains much that can be improved. Our mission is to remain central to, and a catalyst for, this improvement.

Over the past twelve months, our University engaged in a thorough review of our strategy, re-examining our vision, mission, and plans against the background of significant volatility in higher education. We were struck by the enthusiasm across the University to ask, and answer, fundamental questions about our institution, our impact, and the way we work: there is a real will to make a difference. This strategy is the result.

It has three strategic pillars at its core. It builds on existing institutional strengths and the needs of our communities. It articulates how we will be

outstanding at what we seek to do. It charts a clear path forward, enabling us to make the tough choices which big and complex organisations often find difficult. It is a strategy for the development of a truly great anchor institution – one that is unafraid to take risks to make a difference; physically and educationally at the heart of its city and region; attracting students from a diverse range of backgrounds; and guided by talented staff. Most importantly, it will position us to play our part in fulfilling the potential that we see around us. Be it in the **talent** we produce, the **knowledge** we create or the **prosperity** we fuel.

**Professor David Mba**  
Vice Chancellor

**Anita Bhalla**  
Chair of the Board of Governors





# VISION AND MISSION

## VISION

To be an  
exemplar anchor  
institution.

## MISSION

To create and share  
knowledge for a better  
and more inclusive  
society.

# THREE PILLARS

## DEVELOP TALENT FOR TOMORROW

We will equip and  
empower tomorrow's  
workforce with  
a personalised,  
collaborative  
education focused on  
innovation, inclusion  
and industry  
excellence.

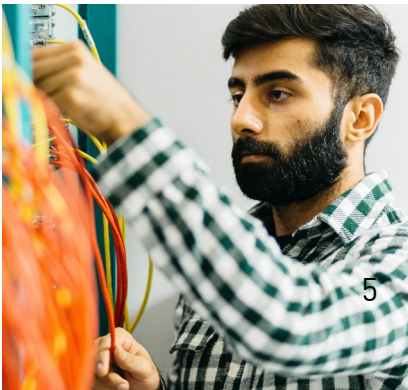


## CREATE KNOWLEDGE FOR GOOD

We will be driven by  
our people, supported  
by culture, and enabled  
by our environment.

## POWER PROSPERITY

We will be recognised  
for driving major  
change in industry and  
communities through  
our programmes and  
projects.





# OUR VISION

To be an exemplar anchor institution. A forward-thinking university known for its technical, creative, and professional excellence; and for promoting fairness and innovation in education. A university that equips its students with skills for their careers; and creates knowledge and research that supports communities and economies to innovate and thrive.

# OUR MISSION

To create and share knowledge for a better and more inclusive society. Our mission articulates our shared purpose to:

- Change lives with inspiring, accessible, and inclusive teaching.
- Lead the way in promoting social mobility and community development in our region.
- Become the top university in the Midlands for boosting regional growth, innovation, and skills.
- Deliver outstanding research to solve problems and effect societal change.

Our 2030 and Beyond Strategy provides continuity in our objective of providing a high-quality, inclusive, and empowering practice-based education that meets the skills required of the future workforce. It maintains our belief that, through education, individuals are empowered to grow and advance in society. It recognises the need for a continued focus on innovation, transformation, and sustainable investment to deliver high-quality teaching, learning, research and enterprise engagement to meet ever-changing societal needs. Above all, it reflects our ambition to make a difference; differentiated as a university rising to real-world challenges by:

- Being recognised for outstanding teaching and offering programmes which provide students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to be successful.

- Becoming the largest provider of skilled graduates in the region.
- Engaging with our city and region, linking both to the world beyond - known for our professionalism and the quality of our services.
- Ensuring that our student body remains diverse and inclusive - empowering all students to take charge of their learning journey and future beyond university.
- Embracing our role as a civic and anchor institution, responding to local opportunities and addressing specific challenges within our communities.

Our **three strategic pillars** are fundamental to our success, defining our specific approach and the integrated actions we need to:

- Develop talent for tomorrow
- Create knowledge for good
- Power prosperity

Realising these will also depend on our professionalism and commitment right across the institution to build a great university through our **four core enablers**:

- People and Culture
- Infrastructure
- Size and Shape
- Environmental Sustainability





# OUR PLACE

Birmingham is a great place to live, work, and study. Our city has one of the youngest populations in Europe; with under-25s accounting for nearly 40% of our population (2021 Census data). Birmingham has cemented its status as a plural city where no ethnic group has a majority, making the city and the wider West Midlands one of the most diverse regions in the country.

Birmingham has a youthful spirit and relentless drive. The city and region are home to a vibrant arts scene, a pioneering culture and digital sector, and a thriving hub for business start-ups. The area remains a champion of innovation since its days as leader of the industrial revolution. Now it's at the heart of a green revolution and the creation of thousands of new jobs in digital innovation. Our region is already leading work on several new technologies in the UK as the test site of autonomous vehicles and 5G.

The HS2 Birmingham Curzon Street Station will link Birmingham more closely with London, with its entrance leading directly into our City Centre Campus. A generational renewal that will attract firms, industries and clusters to our locality; the city and West Midlands region remaining one of the fastest transforming in the world.





# OUR UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1843 as the Birmingham Government School of Design, BCU has built on its strong legacy in practice-led education. Our heritage is represented by our award-winning School of Jewellery (established in 1890) and School of Art; our modernity can be seen in the Alexander Stadium and the purpose-built Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Our transformation of the Eastside of Birmingham demonstrates how BCU continues to align with the needs of the city and region around us. Nowhere is this truer than with STEAMhouse, where we have resurrected a Victorian cycle factory and transformed it into a space for collaboration between innovators, entrepreneurs, and students.

We influence outside of the region too. Our international partnerships and collaborations attract students from across the world, representing more than 100 countries and nearly one in five BCU students.

Each year we help more than 30,000 students achieve their ambitions. BCU has a strong history of delivering high quality and respected qualifications that service a whole range of key professions; delivering on the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, through our training of nurses and allied health professionals, and the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) health sciences and care training plan. We support WMCA's ambitions to enable

local residents into key roles in the region. Equally, as local data identifies one in four vacancies in the region are classed as 'hard to fill' - particularly in roles that require advanced and/or higher skills - we recognise that BCU will need to continue to grow to meet that demand.

Our diversity as a university reflects that of our city with around half of our students originating from the most deprived neighbourhoods of Birmingham (IMD Quintile 1); more than a quarter (32%) eligible for Free School Meals; and a significant proportion being the first in family to attend university and commuting from home (64%). Black, Asian and minority ethnic students constitute more than half of our

student population (61%), overrepresented compared to the city itself (50%).

Our students are the future of our city: its engineers; and its health care professionals; its accountants and lawyers; its teachers and its artists. We are Birmingham to our core.



# DEVELOPING THE TALENT FOR TOMORROW

**We will equip and empower tomorrow’s workforce with a personalised, collaborative education focused on innovation, inclusion and industry excellence.**

Our students will be confident, creative, resilient, and responsible – prepared for whatever they decide to do in an ever-changing global landscape. This is what shapes our teaching and underpins BCU’s commitment to tailoring educational experiences to meet our students’ individual needs. We will foster a collaborative environment where students, academics and industry partners co-create.

Our focus on multidisciplinary STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) approaches keeps our curriculum at the forefront of innovation. Inclusion ensures every student feels valued and supported, creating a diverse learning community that enriches the educational experience. Industry excellence connects students with real workplace demands, providing applied learning that enhances employability. This approach makes the BCU experience distinctive by blending personalised education with collaborative innovation; empowering graduates to lead and excel in their respective fields.



*We are proud that our students are equipped with the confidence to excel wherever their ambition takes them.*

*Pictured: Zainab, MSc User Experience Design*

## OUR KEY PRIORITIES:

**Develop graduates who have the ability and confidence to excel wherever their ambition takes them.** Our goal is for students to become world-ready citizens with a focus on employability, lifelong learning, and practical experience integrated into the curriculum.

**Offer an inspiring and inclusive learning environment with excellent teaching.** We will provide a consistent, high-quality, innovative and applied curriculum to ensure our students thrive.

**Develop practice-based courses which match the skills required of the future workforce.** We are committed to providing students with an edge in a rapidly changing world, becoming the largest provider of skilled graduates in the region.

**Be nationally recognised as the model for STEAM attributes.** Our students will be ready to challenge norms and tackle complex future issues through interdisciplinary approaches.



# CREATING KNOWLEDGE FOR GOOD

**We will be driven by our people, supported by culture, and enabled by our environment.**

Discovering, sharing, and applying new knowledge to benefit our students, region, and the world will remain core to our mission as an anchor institution. We believe that the best knowledge is created in an environment that helps our people grow, work together, and excel. To achieve this, we are committed to nurturing a supportive research culture and enabling researchers from underrepresented groups to succeed.

Our research will be focused on the needs of industry and our city, generating new discoveries. Sharing these findings with students, our city, partners, and the global community will drive meaningful and lasting change. We are committed to producing knowledge that benefits culture, industry, society, and the environment, while also enhancing our teaching.

*Our research community is committed to creating and sharing knowledge that solves real-world problems.*

*Pictured: Professor Imran Awan, Professor of Criminology*

## OUR KEY PRIORITIES:

**Produce high quality original research with global importance.** By collaborating with partners, we will shape and focus research to tackle real-world problems and make a positive impact on people's lives.

**Work with partners and communities to conduct impactful research that solves problems and drives societal change.** Our goal is to support economic growth, improve education and health, and enhance quality of life in our region. We are dedicated to research that benefits and involves our local communities in Birmingham.

**Discover, share and use new knowledge to benefit our students, region, and societies globally.** Our research will have a meaningful impact and be recognised locally and globally. We will enrich students' learning, help them conduct relevant research, and work with our partnerships in public and private corporations, SMEs, NHS, charities and other higher education institutes to put findings into practice.



# POWERING PROSPERITY

**We will be recognised for driving major change in industry and communities through our programmes and projects.**

Our place at the heart of the city and region, and our international connections, are fundamental to what we do. Powering Prosperity means transforming people, places, and businesses. We will accelerate the opportunities for our staff, students, and communities to start businesses that create jobs and promote inclusive growth. Our city and regional work will focus on collaboration and innovative projects that link BCU to the local economy; and working with Skills England, we will address local skills gaps and work to boost regional prosperity.

Our ambition is to be a beacon for what a university can do with business and its community. We will cultivate an environment for prosperity in Birmingham and beyond. As an exemplar anchor institution, we will be the creative and constructive partner bringing together communities, civic leaders, and industry to achieve shared goals and advance the region.



*Our community ambassadors bring us closer to what matters to our communities.*

*Pictured l-r: Javid Kika; Keith Fraser; Shabana Qureshi; Safaraz Ali; Naeem Qureshi*

## OUR KEY PRIORITIES:

**Be our region's leading academic partner for sustainable and inclusive growth in public, private and voluntary organisations.** We will establish ourselves as a university partner of choice for industry, the public sector, community leaders and civic stakeholders; ensuring clarity of offer and clear routes for engagement.

**Drive innovation within our region and beyond through the provision of STEAM approaches, technical know-how, and guidance to support open innovation with businesses and entrepreneurs.** To achieve this, we will:

- Leverage our STEAMhouse multidisciplinary business collective to tackle challenges and bridge regional gaps through creative and STEM-focused solutions.
- Utilise our award-winning, purpose-built STEAM complex in central Birmingham that offers business support services, including co-working spaces; advanced production and prototyping facilities; a digital hub connecting users with future technologies like AR (augmented reality), VR (virtual reality), 5G testbeds and trials.

**Co-create regional prosperity focused on health and well-being.** By working in partnership, we will address socio-economic needs through specialised academic support and resources to improve health outcomes and boost productivity in our region.



## SET UP TO SUCCEED

The successful delivery of Strategy 2030 and Beyond is dependent on having the right foundations in place within BCU. In order to be 'set up to succeed', we have developed the following core enablers to ensure we can manage resource effectively to realise our strategic ambitions.

# PEOPLE AND CULTURE

**We will be the Inclusive Higher Education Employer of choice in the region that attracts, empowers, engages and retains the best people, reflecting the diversity of our city.**

The delivery of the BCU 2030 and Beyond vision can only be realised through our people. Our commitment to people and culture see us create social value; improve the mobility of the people of Birmingham and the wider region; and inspire the next generation of students to access higher education, bringing further benefits to their communities. We contribute to our city's and region's shared prosperity as an employer of choice, where people can develop and thrive in their careers, and as the largest supplier of high quality and career-ready graduates.

BCU will act as an anchor employer in providing rewarding jobs and delivering social mobility through career pathways and development.

We will improve the way we recruit, retain and motivate our people, further enhancing the diversity of our workforce.

## OUR KEY PRIORITIES:

**Recruit and retain high performing people for the future.** Our ambitions will only be realised through our highly-skilled people and an attractive employment offer.

**Develop a collaborative, values based, safe and positive culture in which leaders empower our people to perform at their best to support our students.** We will embark on a culture development programme to define our current culture before putting in place actions to develop the attributes to support our mission. Underpinning this, we will put in place an institution-wide leadership development programme, focused on supporting and empowering our colleagues.

**Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do.** To include a suite of initiatives, including positive action, to improve the diversity of the organisation at all levels and to eradicate pay gaps.

**Deliver career and other development opportunities for our staff and students.** Supporting our staff to reach their potential

is a key tenet of our employment offer. We will provide clarity of career pathways and provide development opportunities to enable our people to take the next step in their career. Further, we recognise our role as an employer of graduates, and we will build on our established 'Grow Your Own' programme to provide high quality employment opportunities to our graduates.

**Create a positive and purposeful environment that fosters wellbeing.** The wellbeing of our people is a key strategic priority and we will introduce an enhanced wellbeing offer that enables our people to be their best and achieve their potential. We recognise the importance of value-led and purpose-driven leadership and will foster an environment in which people managers and leaders take an active role in supporting their colleagues' wellbeing.



# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**We will build a sustainable future for our communities by using education, research, and responsible practices to develop environmentally conscious graduates.**

We are experiencing a climate and ecological crisis. Addressing this impending disaster is essential not only to protect the environment but to ensure a stable, healthy and equitable world for future generations.

BCU has already delivered a range of initiatives to reduce our environmental impacts such as achieving a 45% reduction in our scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions from 2005-06 levels, but there is more to be done. With Birmingham's industrial heritage and our vision to be an exemplar anchor institution, we will support the green revolution locally and regionally, reducing our impacts and equipping our students with the skills to tackle future sustainability challenges.

## OUR KEY PRIORITIES:

**Reduce BCU's adverse environmental impact** by continuing to implement existing and new initiatives to reduce our environmental impacts, through our net zero targets, a sustainable travel plan, and improving the biodiversity of our sites.

**Embed UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 in everything we do, fostering engagement across our community.** We will support the global vision and goals through our campus operations, our role in the community, curriculum delivery, and the research we conduct.

**Support an environmentally sustainable future for the region** by working with partners, community groups, charities, businesses and many more within the region. A key focus will be on maximising biodiversity across our campuses, enhancing the natural resources that we have to offer.



# INFRASTRUCTURE

**We will provide outstanding facilities, digitally enhanced delivery, and financially-sustainable operations.**

Continued investment in our physical and digital infrastructure will help us provide an outstanding teaching, research and working environment, inspiring and enabling our communities to achieve their very best. Using technology, we will streamline processes, support collaboration, reduce waste, and ensure better financial stability, all while enhancing the experience for students and staff.

## OUR KEY PRIORITIES:

**Adopt a strategic approach to the long-term development of our campus,** anticipating both current and future approaches to teaching, learning and research, building flexibility and agility into our designs.

**Seek opportunities to enable technology to drive innovation and efficiency** in teaching, learning, research, and operations; through an ambitious programme of digital transformation.

**Make sure our core systems are well integrated** to provide streamlined workflows and provide high-quality data that empowers business decision-making.

**Invest to improve data quality and transparency,** to optimise the design of our student information system, and in key applications that enhance the student experience.

**Prioritise security, resilience and business continuity across our systems and environments,** learning from sector best practice, responding to new challenges and threats, making sure we are always compliant with the Cyber Essentials framework.

**Balance investment in our infrastructure to deliver on strategic priorities while controlling costs to assure our long-term financial sustainability,** partnering with the business to deliver a suite of commercial analyses and processes to support strategic decision-making.





# SIZE AND SHAPE

**We will create demand at home and overseas through a diversified, relevant and appealing portfolio which responds to student preferences, partner and industry needs.**

Our future students expect a diverse and flexible academic portfolio which reflects our brand proposition, giving BCU the widest appeal within our chosen markets and disciplines. Our academic offer will give students the choice that best suits them in terms of delivery modes, programme types, and location of study, using data to adjust our approach based on market demand.



## OUR KEY PRIORITIES:

**Provide an ongoing, comprehensive plan for all our programmes, ensuring a balanced range of subjects and types.** We will adapt to new opportunities to enhance and diversify our offer.

**Selectively expand our apprenticeship offer to meet industry and student needs,** focusing on scalable programmes that are financially sustainable.

**Expand our network of local and regional academic partners** to better reach students aged 18 and over, focusing on smooth transfers and clear agreements.

**Diversify our global footprint through strong overseas partnerships** which are regularly evaluated for quality and impact. Our international engagement and recruitment will be focused on high priority markets through a centralised international strategy and insight system.



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