

PEOPLE

2025 —

STRATEGY

2027

NORWICH  
UNIVERSITY  
OF THE ARTS

→ Andi Sapey  
2024





# INTRODUCTION

The People Strategy creates an agenda and leads into a series of projects to match the aims and ambitions of the University and deliver transformational change in an environment and sector that is fast-moving, exciting, and sometimes challenging and uncomfortable. It sets out the processes and approaches that will be applied across the employee lifecycle and aligns with the University Strategy and sub-strategies. It looks to the future, building on our current context and values.

The People Strategy was informed by a University-wide engagement exercise facilitated by external consultants in 2024. There has been significant change in the sector and the University since this exercise, encompassing some of the more challenging issues that we face, which has also shaped our approach. The People Strategy covers all who work at the University and, to be impactful, it needs to be endorsed, owned, and implemented by everyone in our distinctive community, each playing their role in our change journey.



To place the People Strategy in context, it is helpful to understand our current landscape.

The Higher Education (HE) sector has experienced evolutionary change over a period of some 30 years, however this feels insufficient to deal with the unprecedented challenges that it now faces. These challenges include a long-term funding shortfall, an overall reduction in student numbers and difficulties in attraction and retention for some types of work.

Alongside the worst cost of living crisis in decades, there has been an increase in the number of students and colleagues seeking support for their mental health and wellbeing. Aligned with ongoing developments in digital technology, and the rapid growth of artificial intelligence functionality, the sector is facing a period of fundamental change and transformation in its academic and professional service delivery models and business processes, underpinned by the need to work smarter and deliver efficiencies.

# CONTEXT

Much of our operational infrastructure originates from a time when we were a smaller institution. Our established systems and processes were sufficient in this context, supporting a culture of centralised decision-making which realised financial and operational stability over a sustained period. To support the ambitions and strategy of the University, our systems and ways of working now require greater functionality and nuance to deliver the efficient and forward-looking operations and development that we require.



→ Denisa Ilie  
2023

→ James Palmer  
2025

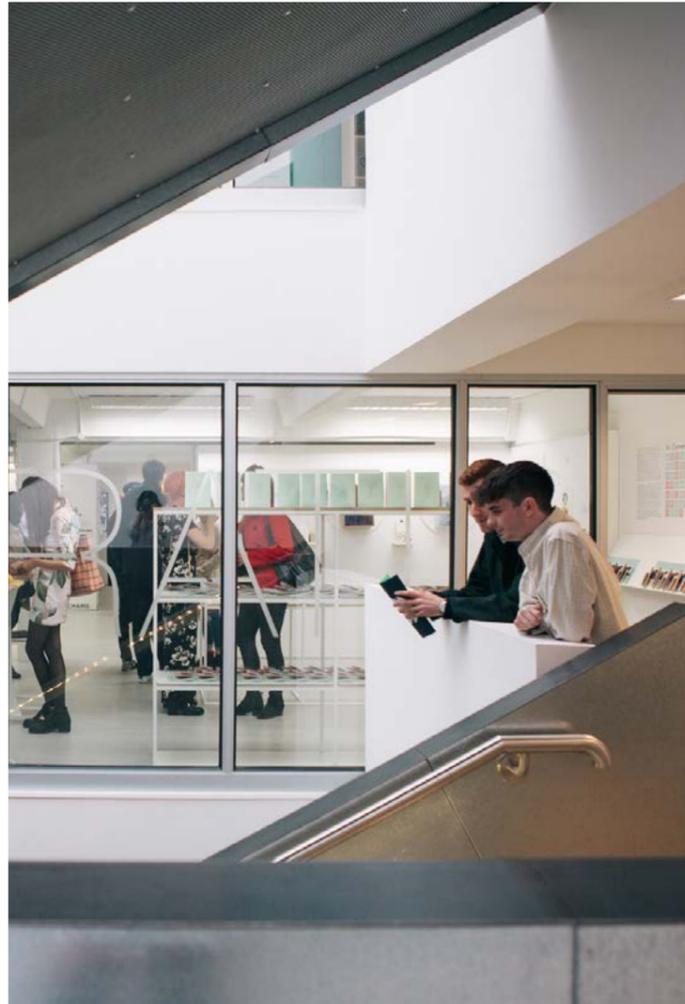


Through our collective work in the University, we seek to facilitate positive economic, environmental, and social change in Norwich and the wider region through strong links with the creative industries, civic bodies, and wider collaborations. Being in the heart of Norwich offers a wealth of culture and partners to inspire our distinctive approach to creative learning, practice-based research, and knowledge exchange. As we expand our portfolio beyond the creative arts, we will develop our approach and extend our distinctive experience to our new subject areas.

We believe that creative learning, practice, and research are vital in addressing global challenges such as climate change, sustainability, and biodiversity reduction. The world is ever-changing, fast paced, and challenging, and our ambitions place us at the heart of the debate as to how creative education can interpret our current landscape and influence the future.

Our internationalisation agenda is broadening our portfolio and student base and will be a catalyst for driving diversity and change. As we welcome more international colleagues and students, our diversity will develop and bring fresh perspectives and opportunities along the way. We will need to embrace and value our increasing diversity and the wider perspectives, creativity, innovative partnerships, and projects it will provide.

Some notable progress has been made. We have reshaped our organisational structures; new and dynamic enabling strategies are being implemented; and we have enhanced the size and scope of our research function. We are in the process of renewing several key digital systems and are exploring how we might best utilise artificial intelligence with a view to driving continuous improvement, smarter ways of working and greater efficiency.



→ Joanna Millington  
2016

→ Andi Sapey  
2025

The People Strategy is built on three aims which reflect the context in which we operate:

- To create a culture and community that embraces creative education and practice, values diversity, and is embedded in Norwich
- To enable our colleagues to grow and develop professionally and personally in a safe and supportive environment within the confines of our size and resources
- To play a part in shaping the future of the University, engaging with transformation and change for our colleagues, systems, and ways of working to deliver our future success

These aims are developed across three themes to be delivered over two or more years through activities set out in an accompanying Plan. Progress will be reviewed against a small number of Key Performance Indicators.

The timeframe is relatively short compared with the scale of the task and we anticipate that there will be a further stage of strategic development and operational delivery once the University Strategy is refreshed in 2027.

In view of this shorter timeframe and the continued need to address some core colleague-related principles and practices across this period, this strategy has more of an inward focus. Our People Strategy for 2027 onwards is likely to build on this and look more explicitly outwards, recognising our growing national and international institutional stature.



The University values were refreshed in 2023 alongside our brand and are set out in full below. They underpin all our activities to equip our community with the creativity, confidence, and resilience to look at the world differently. They are reflected in the aims, themes and deliverables of the People Strategy.

→ Andi Sapey  
2024



# VALUES

## RADICAL MINDSET

We support our community to challenge conventional thinking. By asking questions and pushing boundaries, we unlock new realms of creativity, sustainability, and innovation.

## MUTUAL RESPECT

Diversity in all its forms is at the heart of the creative process. By respecting, listening, and learning from different perspectives, we respond to create a more resilient and equitable community.

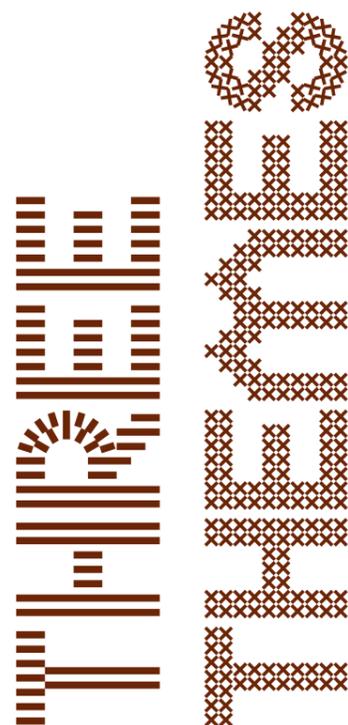
## JOYFUL INVENTION

We celebrate the experience of joy and energy in the creative process. We are enterprising and take inspiration from established and emerging technologies and partnerships.

## SELF DETERMINATION

We strive to create a culture where everyone has the confidence and agency to find their voice and determine their creative and professional potential.

The People Strategy will be delivered across three themes to support our aims and to develop a distinct experience for our colleagues, students, and partners.



→ Andi Sapey  
2024

# 1

## Building our culture and community

We will foster a community and culture that embraces our ambitions, creative education and practice, values diversity, and grows and flourishes over time.

Our community will be well-connected and come together in a variety of ways to challenge, collaborate, share knowledge, and co-create. We will extend our collaborations and partnerships, regionally and beyond, developing a vibrant hub that is embedded in Norwich with local people and our alumni actively engaged in life at the University.

We will continue to develop a culture where people can be themselves without fear of prejudice or discrimination and the University is a safe and tolerant place to work and study. Mutual respect and appreciation of difference will be championed and seen to enrich our creativity and community. Colleagues will be enabled to reach out and learn about new perspectives and horizons and there will be scope for respectful debate in relation to different viewpoints.

We will be welcoming and attract a diverse range of talented people locally, nationally, and globally, to work with us across our expanding range of disciplines, with policies and processes to support their needs.

Our community will be integrated and colleagues respected for their contribution. The value of their different roles and disciplines will be recognised and understood. Achievements will be celebrated and our approach to reward and recognition will be fair and transparent.



→ Denisa Ilie  
2024

## 2

### Enabling our colleagues

We will nurture a strong culture of learning and development to enable colleagues to develop and grow professionally and personally within the confines of our size and resources.

Learning and development will be facilitated and enabled through a variety of methods and opportunities. Clear and transparent criteria and processes will be established for accessing these. We will focus our formal interventions primarily on our cultural growth and developing our colleagues in their current roles. We will encourage colleagues to take personal ownership of their development through self-directed learning, with access to learning methods which will include support for personal growth and preparation for career development.

We will consider opportunities for career development in our organisational design and will clarify the criteria and arrangements for career progression. The scope for advancement will align with our size and shape and, whilst there are many notable examples of advancement within the University, it may sometimes necessitate a move to another organisation. Some colleagues who have made this move have later returned to the University, bringing with them fresh experiences and skills.

Our working environment will be safe and supportive, and we will be cognisant of the balance between personal and professional lives. We will be considerate of health, wellbeing, and the scope for flexibility in our approach and will take meaningful action to improve our provision.

## 3

### Shaping together

We will engage with our colleagues and students, their representatives, and, where appropriate, our external partners in shaping and delivering the University's plans, with feedback and clarity as to their scope. Building on the conversation that is already underway, we will foster a culture of listening and dialogue.

The challenges that we face - as a university, a sector and globally - are significant. We each have a role in delivering change and improvements to address these. We will ensure that our colleagues know what is expected of them and are empowered to implement effective and sustainable change.

As our services are transformed, for example through digitisation and the implementation of new systems, we will implement ways of working that are modern, easy-to-use, more efficient and improve our user experience.

We will enable our community to respond to global issues individually and collectively through our creative learning, research, collaborations, and partnerships, for example utilising the leadership and direction set by our research institutes to support and enhance our approach to sustainability.

Our leaders and managers will be equipped to role model the University's culture and values and support colleagues in the delivery of its change agenda.

# KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

We will review the progress of the People Strategy against the following measures which will be base lined in the first year and targets set for subsequent years.

- Increase in colleague satisfaction
- Increase in colleague engagement
- Increase in our culture of learning and development  
*The above will be based on responses to colleague surveys*
- Increase in the University's diversity ratios and reduction in its statutory diversity gaps
- Reduction in colleague turnover in the first year of employment with the University



↑ Denisa Ilie  
2024

→ Andi Sapey  
2022