

The Single Silo University

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Creating a single priority: The university strategic plan

The University of Salford has always played a significant role in the development of the local community through its economic contribution and social impact. It has worked closely with industry and public sectors through enterprise and research since at least the launch of the Enterprise in Higher Education initiative in 1987. There has also been ongoing recognition of the need to maximise national and international business partnering. Until 2016, this partnering activity was largely departmentalised within the University level research administration services. This meant that partnerships generated by academics with external organisation were largely managed as a reporting exercise rather than being actively planned, encouraged or managed. While there was some recognition of partnering activity in the plans of each academic school the result of this organisational treatment of partnering was a tendency was to see this work occur in isolation and as a separate silo of activity removed from other research or teaching and learning. Some academics were regarded in a colloquial sense as being ‘good’ at partnering without clear explanation or comparison against recognisable benchmarks. With the University’s 2016–2021 strategic plan, a series of “Industrial Collaboration Zones” were formed that made business partnering the sole strategic institutional priority. In practice, the plan created four focus points for collaboration that cut across existing organisational structures and divisions and actively worked to reach out and engage external partners. In the lead up to the development of this plan, the University had been in a process of continuously evolving its internal structures from a multi-layered hierarchy of faculties that were composed of many small and managerially independent schools to the current configuration of four large academic schools representing health and society, arts and media, science and engineering and business. Within these schools is an solely internal structure of departments that vary in size from ten to 50 academics of broadly connected disciplinary interests. This final configuration was itself triggered by the University’s 2016-2021 strategy and, in part, recognising the often confusing structures that confronted potential students and businesses wanting to engage with the University.

The rationale for taking this approach was well-evidenced from an economic and policy point of view. The association of higher education with ‘employability’

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and the need for UK universities to support the recognised skills gap were all emerging agendas at the point of the strategy's formulation. Collaborative external partnerships make a significant contribution to most UK universities. The University's new strategic vision reiterated this understanding with a clear statement regarding its expectation regarding the use and value of partnerships (University of Salford, 2016a). At the level of organisational culture and situation, the University's choice of direction also reflected an opportunity to differentiate itself from institutions located nearby. The strategy also gave a voice to a prevalent internal perception that there was always something 'different' about the institution that was often 'lost' with external audiences. Despite the merits of the strategic direction, at the same time the strategic vision raised a series of questions that required operational actions to be successfully realised (Table 1).

Table 1: The university vision statement and the questions that it raises

Strategic vision	"By pioneering <i>exceptional industry partnership</i> [1] we will <i>lead the way in real world experiences</i> [2] <i>preparing students for life</i> [3]."
Desired operational actions	• Create, foster, and maintain partnerships • Create or access real world experiences • Aligning delivery with partners and students' expectations and needs
Questions	• What is an exceptional industry partnership? • What defines an exceptional industry partnership? • How can exceptional industry partnerships be measured? • What does a real-world experience look like? • What are the benefits to the student and the partner?

This strategic vision statement could be interpreted broadly and in varying contexts by different parts of university. And this variety of interpretation did invariably occur. The academic contexts created by different disciplines, the variability of forms that partnering activities can take and the highly distributed nature of professional responsibilities in universities are all a major challenge to creating an effective partnering ecosystem within universities.

The popularity of matrix management lines also presents a clear challenge to ensuring that operational requirements and departments can align and work together with a shared purpose to achieve the intent of the strategic plan. Many universities have evolved matrix forms of management with an associate dean taking a lead around a portfolio such as research or engagement while heads of department (or similar) are directly responsible for managing people. The strategy and its priority did not set out to restructure this existing matrix. Instead, as a mechanism to gain grassroots support the university team tasked with operationalising the strategy sought out colleagues who regularly engaged external organisations but did not already have formal roles (such as Associate Dean) to become thought leaders. This was done without any systematic assessment of the

individual colleagues but rather achieved through referrals from multiple trusted colleagues so that the thought leaders were ‘generally regarded as good’. The result of this loose process was to identify individuals scattered across the schools, located within the existing matrix of management, with a brief to be daring and to win hearts and minds. The University undertook an external recruitment process to discover portfolio leads who were given a role that was a mix of being disruptor, change agent and aspirational role model. In some cases, internal applicants – from among thought leaders – were recruited to this wider role that was detached from the traditional management structure. Portfolio leaders did have priorities and these were largely shaped by the external environment and strategies that deliver results in the context of one or other “excellence framework.” In contrast to the role of portfolio leader, the existing role of departmental head is more commonly focused on immediate operational needs and, in the worst situations, their activities concentrate on reactively “keeping the wheels on.” It was often in the space of departmental management and the existing challenges of delivering existing services effectively and efficiently where the most resistance to the new strategy emerged. As a result of this tension there was a genuine need for a collective preparedness that committed to the overall institutional strategy as a mechanism for change. This preparedness coupled closely with a need for high levels of trust in that university leadership to enable a strategy that could be regarded, by some, as not directly related to their own portfolio of concerns.

Internal resistance to this single silo strategy inevitably did occur and was evident from the first formal announcements of the strategy. The forms of resistance represented a broad arc ranging from claims that this represented “business as usual” for some groups of colleagues (so there was no need to change) through to the argument that the strategy diverted focus from teaching and learning activities with an implication that the purpose and focus of the strategy was incorrect. A key tension for many staff was the strategy’s focus on business partnering and its emphasis on being the single priority for the entire institution. Having such a singularity of purpose in the statement was a significant change and challenge for many on a conceptual level as it was about the specifics of the strategy. A focus on business partnering was also challenging for many others who questioned the relevance to their own practice, their discipline or the assumed direction of travel that their own academic department was pursuing. All of these critiques reflected an organisation that was uncomfortable with strategic planning, long-term commitment to a single plan and reflected a challenge to the flourishing small-scale “kitchen table” activities that were flourishing and leading in multiple different priorities across all academic departments. As a result of these pushbacks from staff there was significant internal engagement work undertaken throughout the first year of the strategy to acclimatise its purpose and benefits across the university community. As forums for discussion the critical unpacking of the vision (Table 1) was rehearsed through each staff meeting. The need for well-designed parameters to measure partnerships in a consistent way across different forms and disciplines also soon became very evident as a result of these meetings.

Theorising partnering

Genuinely understanding and theorising partnering became a core aspect of the strategy's development. As the strategy became embedded within the organisational culture, the internal understanding of partnerships proved to be highly variable. This variability was revealed with the presentation from different departments of their "good" partnerships. The effect of this sharing was a showcase of partnerships that went from little more than one-to-one email exchanges though to the much rarer form that incorporated complex multiple streams of activities that extended across teaching and research. Creating an institution-wide baseline for an exceptional partnership required its own stream of research in order to disseminate a shared comparable understanding of 'good' as well as setting out a series of achievable aspirational activities that could enhance existing partnerships.

There is a direct positive correlation between university activities and overall prosperity in the economy. Creating and applying new knowledge is a primary factor in driving economic growth. Universities are one of the key incubation sites for the creation and application of new knowledge. This is particularly true in areas of domain knowledge where research and development time as well as money is scarce in other organisations. The sense among some academics that Salford's strategy was a continuation of their current practice was clustered in specific disciplines (and consequently departments) for this reason.

Partnering opportunities enable commercial organisations to leverage universities as growth partners, to bring continuous improvement to the business and to advance their sustainability at local, regional and national levels. Salford's ongoing success, comparative to its size, in many of its departments with the government-funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme gave substance to the internal sense among colleagues of an organisational difference that was often understated publicly.

The need for collaboration between industry, academia, and government has been further emphasised with growing demand for the introduction of sustainable practices in products such as cars and house construction as well as within the urban environment. Equally, universities need to grow their industry connections to offer students experiences that let them implement theoretical knowledge to solve real industry problems before they enter employment. The model of the Triple Helix is the most commonly utilised work to understand these interlinking needs between universities and other organisations. However, previous theoretical positions invariably do little to define what a good partnership looks like in form and instead focus on the position that partnerships themselves are good and should be part of all university ecosystems. Knowledge of this legacy of academic literature associated with the strategy was concentrated within business academics. This created a situation in which some business academics were resistant to the purpose of the strategy because they 'knew' the literature (and were critical of the work on an intellectual level) while other academics regarded partnership as a more organic process (or simply one driven by their personal networking) and were resistant to more systematic and institution-level interventions.

Theories of relationship management drill further into notions of what makes a good partnership and have evolved to consider a wide range of working environments including universities. Relationship management's focus upon the activities that establish, develop, and maintain successful relational exchanges presents a fruitful level of thinking to define an institution's own quality baseline. Moreover recently, the significance of relationships over and above transactional exchanges has become increasingly important in all types of organisations and relationship management considers how customers can produce and co-produce ongoing value in contrast to individual or discrete transactions. This emphasis implies the need for longer-term and high-quality relationships in practice. Because previous institutional practice had often focused on the reporting of partnerships that had generated by academics the significant difference between transactional contacts and more embedded relationships had been left poorly acknowledged. For some academics having any type of contact that could be labelled as a partnership was regarded as positive. Depending on practice within schools and departments, claiming the existence of partnership may even have produced a small allocation of workload without deeper scrutiny of what activities were occurring or the opportunities that may have been left unrealised when the linkage remained as one academic to one individual in the partner.

There are three identifiable approaches to relationship management. The Nordic School concerns itself with the interaction between consumers and marketing functions and uses descriptions such as "buyer-seller interaction", "interactive marketing" or "customer relationship" to reflect the focus. The second, Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group (IMP), approach is based on interaction and networking approaches to business relationships and emphasises a view where transactions are not seen as isolated occurrences but as part of a set of continuous ongoing engagements. Finally, the Anglo-Australian school places value on the integrating concepts of quality management, service marketing, and customer relationship economics.

The complex challenges associated with business-university partnering is conveyed at the intersections of these three schools of thought. As a result, the influence of all three schools of relationship management is evident in the ways that universities generally undertake their partnering. The size mismatch between universities and the businesses they are endeavouring to partner with, especially SMEs, can unwittingly move the relationship towards becoming a series of one-to-many B2C transactions - and all the issues that this implies. To be successful the partnering needs to be long term and continuous, even if it fluctuates in its intensity significantly during the partnership. This makes the relationship more B2B in form and more accurately reflecting the way the partnership should be viewed. The contrast of these two models also reveals the conceptual tension between having a partnership with the university as a single entity and the contrast with day-to-day reality where interactions are conducted on an individual level.

Examination of the practical experience of partnering between businesses and the University revealed a pivotal quality for all of the successful relationships which was the importance of balanced reciprocation. The existing partnerships revealed that those most easily quantified as successful brought benefits to both parties of similar value even if the form of that value differed. Relationship

management also acknowledges the role of trust, commitment, and satisfaction as being key to developing a successful sustainable organisational relationship. In the University of Salford, these attributes had to be achievable internally first given the need for departments as well as staff and students to work together before external relationships could be maintained successfully. The blend of relationship management perspectives used in universities and the complex internal/external interaction reflects the complex three-way partnering relationship that exists at an operational level between academics, students, and businesses. In the complex partnering relationship it was often evident that personally managed partnerships were often made simpler by dropping, or reducing, the student input and opportunities. These short-term simplifications also evidenced a consequent longer-term diminishment of the value of the overall partnership. For the businesses, access to students (and potential graduate employees) was almost always part of the reciprocal benefit.

Beyond the challenges of creating an internal environment of trust and commitment came a further complexity that related more clearly to the student experience of partnership. With students coming from a range of backgrounds and different countries a further factor for successful business relationship development can be seen in the need for cultural affinity, diversity, and experience. The need for this understanding becomes a more significant in international contexts precisely because of their increased psychic distance.

The partnering challenge is even more complex with at least thirteen recognisable variables for partnering success: commitment, cooperation, interdependence, comparison level of the alternative, non-retrievable investments, summative constructs, social bonds, trust, mutual goals, performance satisfaction, adaptation, shared technology, and structural bonds. Even with the definition of this wider set of key variables there remains a need to recognise that any set of variables related to partnering are contextual and modified by the specific situation. Examining specific examples of partnerships within the University made it clear that not all the variables needed to be fully present in a positive sense to be considered successful. Even with the variables defined there are multiple patterns of success and no “one size fits all” partnership model. The challenge for the strategy and its objectives was that portfolio leaders regularly reported this need for sensitivity to context. However, as a change programme the need for context was sometimes applied as a mask to justify legacy partnerships that offered scant evidence for success through any combination of the thirteen variables. It was also evident from these variables identified that there were indicative patterns more relevant to universities and for gaining the type of benefits that universities were seeking from their partnerships. In a higher education context, the value of business partnership comes from generating innovative classroom practice, gaining access to primary research data and income generation opportunities. The portfolio leaders, as a set of eyes that were generally more independent and detached from the institutional legacy were particularly conscious of these variables and their own performance objectives were shaped by these beneficial activities. Being new, or at least new to the role, also enabled the portfolio leaders to re-evaluate the benefits of existing partnerships without the fog of unsubstantiated claims and with a mechanism for an assessment that could be justified. This undertaking was not

solely a case of removing poor partnerships. With the thirteen variables and acknowledge the contextually different weighting of each provided leaders with a way to make constructive and supportive suggestions for improving existing partnerships and make them more valuable. Identifying the variables for successful partnership also defines behaviours that are valuable within a university environment more generally. One indirect outcome of the strategy has been the development of ten Salford Behaviours that are now incorporated into staff development activities, the management development programme and workshops that define the vision of the schools, the departments, and the courses. These behaviours are expressed with a single word. The influence of the strategy is particularly evident with behaviours such as ‘connecting’, ‘co-creating’, ‘enabling’, ‘inspiring’ and ‘learning’. This development has continued to develop the institution’s collective and shared awareness of itself not only in relation to partnership with businesses and industry collaboration but more widely with all knowledge exchange activities (in the widest possible meaning of this term). This develop is a justification, in itself, for adopting a single silo university strategy but the set of variables also reveal the ways that theorisations of relationship management and partnering are the most well-defined forms of knowledge exchange practice.

The value of knowledge exchange

Although university and industry activities are interlinked it is difficult to directly evidence the total value of commercial knowledge exchange. However, some clear indicators of the financial value generated shows the scale of its impact within the economy. In 2014–2015 more than £836 million in research grants and contracts from the EU were provided to UK universities amounting to 14.2 percent of the UK’s research income. The creation of economic value is also shown in the claim that the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) generates £9.70 to the economy from every £1 invested. The outcome from InnovateUK funded partnerships can return up to £35 back to the economy for every pound invested. Universities are crucial to the evolution of national industry and economy, as they have the flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities and provide rapid responses to new needs that emerge from industry challenges. There are some indications that there is increasing recognition of the benefits that university partnering can bring with a continuously increasing number of knowledge exchange activities between UK universities and public, private, and third sector organisations.

Notwithstanding the acknowledged contextual and situational nature of partnering the university strategy still needed to understand impact in ways that could be measured and compared. Irrespective of the form of measurement, business to business relationships are understood within a current dominant logic of a service-centred economy that positions service provision as fundamental to sustainable economic exchange. At the core of this logic is the importance of collaborations and partnerships above the supply and sale of goods or products. Despite the differences between universities and traditional commercial organisations this key point is central to any measurement.

With the service-centric perspective and the need to understand the University’s partnerships in a comparative and consistent manner the need to

measure became evident. Utilising the thirteen variables of successful partnering became the basis for this activity. Data was captured from twenty existing partnerships based around the thirteen variables and tentative bandings were defined (with acknowledgement of the relatively small sample being used). Using visualisations of the data and to create an iterative process this work was shared back with the academic leading each partnership to understand the value of the bandings and better insight as to the value and meaning of the variables within each partnership. A key learning from these iterations was that bandings were sometimes overly nuanced and within some partnerships specific variables were more often binary choices. Key contextual differences were also identified through this process specifically the noticeable differences between SMEs and larger enterprises in terms of the values that created success and the more granular differences between sectors which was hampered by small sample sizes and an institutional bias to partnerships in a relatively small range of sectors.

As knowledge is of central importance and value to universities consideration of “absorptive capacity” is also relevant in the consideration of partnership success and impact. This perspective aligns closely with dominant service-centred logic where value is based on the application and exchange of knowledge and skills rather than assumed to be embedded within tangible resources or goods. People exchange knowledge and skills to acquire the benefit of specialised competencies or services. In universities this is expressed as a need to create reciprocal relationships that are able to mutually create and exchange knowledge. The formation of these types of partnerships are then best able to respond to an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous external environment. Unpicking the theorisation of what constitutes a “good” partnership in a knowledge organisation - including a university - produces a key learning from the single silo strategy. Knowledge exchange defines all the key activities of a university and the matrix of associate dean portfolios generally resolve to represent specific forms of knowledge exchange activity. This is a challenging statement for many individuals within a university. When we took our observations to key stakeholders within the university who were charged with the management of teaching and learning, creating international partnerships with other universities as well as research there was a very mixed response. These areas of the University’s operations sat outside the academic school structure where most attention had been applied in the operationalisation of the strategy. These functions were embedded within the University’s professional services structures that had in some cases less willing to recognise the value or purpose of the strategy within their own current practice or purpose. In effect, a siloed response to the strategy had been developed in these departments that suited existing internal needs and structures and represented less disruptive or radical responses than were made possible by the strategy. There was general acknowledgement that in principle the conclusion was correct, but individuals and groups effectively acted as gatekeepers for maintaining practice with a lighter touch acknowledgement of the purpose of the strategy. When pushed on how the management of their own functions within the university might change considering a knowledge exchange perspective the reaction was often less positive. It became very clear that the ambition of the strategy would need to evolve further to elicit change more broadly. The legacy of information systems and of work roles

largely defined around functions that would be directly challenged by altered perspectives was too much of a management challenge with too little prospect of additional benefit to be justified of the risk. With the conclusion of the five-year strategy in 2021 there is now evidence of organisational change within the University that now does reflect the knowledge exchange perspective. This has included the promotion of the ten Salford Behaviours, the formulation of an Innovation Strategy to replace separate engagement and research strategies and the ongoing re-organisation of many professional service departments. All of these actions reflect a conscious movement towards a service-centred business logic across the University. Reflecting the experience during the period of the strategy, this has met resistance from some parts of the University. The overall programme of change now underway in the University has been influenced by the outcomes of the 2016-2021 strategy as well as the national introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework and Knowledge Exchange Framework and more recent changes in the higher education and Office for Student policy with the proposed Proceed metric.

Working with partners requires the mutual agreement to share benefits and mitigate risks. Individual enterprises increasingly no longer work as independent entities but through collaborative networks and clusters. The advantage of this type of working is in direct contrast to a persistent perspective in higher education environments where some academics cast themselves in the role of being an independent contractor reactively responding to requests for work activity from management as and when required. This attitude, combined with the increasing casualisation of the workforce through the use of adjunct faculty makes pro-active collaborative working more difficult to successfully achieve. A networking philosophy encourages collaborative working to achieve mutually beneficial goals where the parties become partners but it is problematic for individual academics who resist the transparency (and opportunities) of sharing culture. We encountered this directly with the evaluation of partnerships in the university as some partnership “owners” actively resisted our enquiries as they were particularly concerned about someone “stealing” “their” partnership. This was the cultural change that the strategy needed to engender when transactional modes of thinking are transformed into collaborative models. It should be stressed that the change in thinking required was often more about internal perspectives of the different departments than the external partners. Bringing about this change in organisational thinking has, in turn, produced an evolution in relationship management perspectives. Moving away from dominant individualistic concepts such as competitive advantage in favour of social and communal terms like collaborative advantage echoes both the individual as well as theoretical transformation that has had to occur. The partner is seen as the co-producer and an active participant in the relational exchange as well as a co-creator of value. The small value produced in a short-term exchange transaction becomes secondary to long-term value co-creation that is the product of collaborations across multiple stakeholders. Although commercial organisations increasingly recognise the central benefits of a knowledge based approach to partnering there is a clear lag in recognising the value of applying this perspective to university practice.

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Thinking regarding value creation and knowledge exchange primarily comes from observation of traditional “for-profit” commercial organisations found in existing literature. However, increased scrutiny of UK universities through the “excellence frameworks”, their wider social and economic impact, internal funding challenges, and their pronounced role as knowledge producers the conclusions of this wider body of literature increasingly works for universities too. The “knowledge economy” through the creation and application of knowledge is a primary factor in driving economic growth. This knowledge economy is driven by industry, academia, and the government working together in response to market demands for skilled labour and innovation.

Parameters for a successful partnership

With an understanding of the significance of partnerships and taking the viewpoint that long-term knowledge exchange orientated collaborations produce greater value than transactional relationships leads to the need to determine the factors that enable university-business partnerships to be considered as successful.

Earlier literature identified many factors for successful business partnering. Some classifications are shaped negatively around concepts such as time restraints, lack of unity, communication difficulties or poor management. Others present the success factors in a more positive frame highlighting the value of trust, communications, diversity, and a culture of learning. Although the approaches vary, there is general agreement that the responsibility for managing business relationships rests with both parties. The variety of views in the literature were represented within the University by different attitudes towards partnerships and their overall value. The most enthusiastic saw the value of partnerships in everything they did with opportunities across the entire spectrum of university activities. Some colleagues regarded a partnership as a lower order priority than classroom activities or even a barrier to getting on with ‘real’ research. More worrying some colleagues lacked any opinion and were willing to let others collaborate while they repeated already well-rehearsed routines in their work practice. These latter positions are present irrespective of the clear value that partnering brings to classroom and research.

However, some of the frustrations expressed by less enthusiastic colleagues may have had some justification from the available evidence. Examination of the many claimed institutional partnerships often revealed a lack of any real management in the relationship process. Making maintaining the relationship problematic at the very least. Without clear reciprocal management in many of the University’s partnerships other factors could also be identified as falling short of optimal. A main factor for long-term success is the definition of goals that set out complementary and clear objectives for the partnership. Goals assist in framing the collaboration’s value as a whole and the responsibilities of each partner. Having agreed purpose brings alignment between the mission and vision of both partners. Other operational factors enable a reciprocal alignment but most important is the level of project management that brings coordination of the relationship while also enabling flexibility for both parties. The value of shared goals, coordination, and shared understanding of the relationship are central to all strong partnerships.

The presence of trust is crucial in the early development phases of a relationship. The importance of this in university-industry partnerships is pivotal to long-term success and setting expectations. The formal project plan and the collaborative creation of the application documents used in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships is one example of how to build trust early, set expectations for both parties clearly and build a working relationship quickly. Higher levels of commitment — put into a relationship early on by each partner — assumes a long-term and sustainable situation. Mutually sharing the expectations of both partners early on and in a transparent way also helped to remove any doubt as to why everyone is involved.

However, with knowledge of the importance of trust in a partnership, efforts to capture the parameters for successful partnerships constantly showed the process to be derailed by the complex internal organisational environment. In effect, the University's various departments were found on a number of occasions to be in an almost competitive relationship with one another for the attentions of the same partner. This made the University's purpose and expectations opaque and had a negative impact on trust. In some cases, this resulted in the business partner retreating to contact solely with the original academic or, in the worst case, withdrawing completely. Qualities such as trust and commitment were often absent between departments within the university, and this could increasingly be identified as a major impediment to successful (external) partnering. Upon investigation the root cause for this damaging situation often came back to the lack of clear internal reciprocating relationships and a lack of trust founded in a shared organisational vision — a legacy of the organisational culture that was prevalent prior to the 2016-2021 strategy. The concern this recognition raised was fundamental. If parts of the institution could not cooperate on partnering activities, then the likelihood that research or teaching based collaboration could ever eventuate would also be unlikely. Realising that the parameters for partnership success were also measures for internal permeability and cooperation returned to the persistent observation that all the core services of the University were forms of knowledge exchange.

Much of the previous research regarding business relations focus on identifying quantitative factors however more qualitative factors now also receive attention in the conscious movement away from transactional perspectives. Geographic location, the political climate, and social context are also viable considerations. Irrespective of which factors are prioritised there is a clear interconnectedness between each identified success factor. For example, outstanding communication, good coordination, and multiple connections between parties are all components present in an atmosphere of general success. It is also as important to have agreements that evidence the formality of the relationship. All these factors build trust and confidence in the relationship and enable further planning of future actions. As they have overlapping interrelationships, success factors cannot be understood separately but rather as a set of elements that in combination have a bearing on the success of a business relationship. In this way the many parameters for shaping a partnership are better considered as contributing to specific patterns for success. There is not a single right approach, and contextual sensitivity ensures that attempting to identify this type of framework would never be realistic. However,

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it is possible that the identified parameters can be combined in multiple different ways to produce a successful partnership.

The existing literature reinforces the need to combine the success factors into patterns that can produce success that is sensitive to locational and situational context (Table 2). It was this set parameters that became the basis for evaluating and comparing existing and emerging partnerships that we used within the University. These parameters could be scored within quantitative bands and visually graphed in a manner similar to the format used to report KEF outcomes. To ensure alignment each parameter was also consider in relation to the most relevant excellence framework, an indication of the quality that the parameter brought to the partnership. Figure 1 indicates the scoring for the first parameter 'Real World Experience'.

Table 2: "Parameter" and "Real World Experience"

Excellence Framework	Teaching
Qualities	Demonstrability
Criteria	Real world experience (internships, exchanges & work placements)
Core (C) and Leading (L) University Indicators	% Work placements (L)
Low (1)	Students are unaware of the relationship with the organisation. No student involvement in the collaboration.
Medium - Low (2)	Generally students are unaware of the relationship with the partner. Few and sporadic student involvements (<=1 student p.a.).
Medium (3)	Awareness of the partnership among students on specifically related programmes. A small number of students are involved (<3 students p.a.).
Medium - High (4)	Students within a few programmes or a School are generally informed about the partnership. A number (<8 students p.a.) of students are involved.
High (5)	There is a university-wide awareness among students of the partnership and the potential opportunities. Many students are regularly involved with the partnership (<15 students p.a.).
Exceptional (6)	Students University-wide are fully aware of the collaboration and there is a clear route to easily become involved. There is some possibility to be hired or receive an academic award from the partner. Many students are regularly involved (>=15 students p.a.).

The visual representation also enabled visual comparison of the changes in the partnership over time. The academic evidence for the value of each parameter (Table 2) was an important aspect of the work as the intention was to convince academics that all their partnerships could be captured and measured in this consistent way. This graphical representation also allowed for direct comparisons to be made across multiple partnerships. An example of a sports technology beacon partnership (Figure 1) indicates the variables being used and how the banded scoring was represented ranging from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). Figure 1 also

outlines in summary the other twelve parameters that were used alongside ‘Real World Experience’ each had a similar rubric for assessment (Table 2).

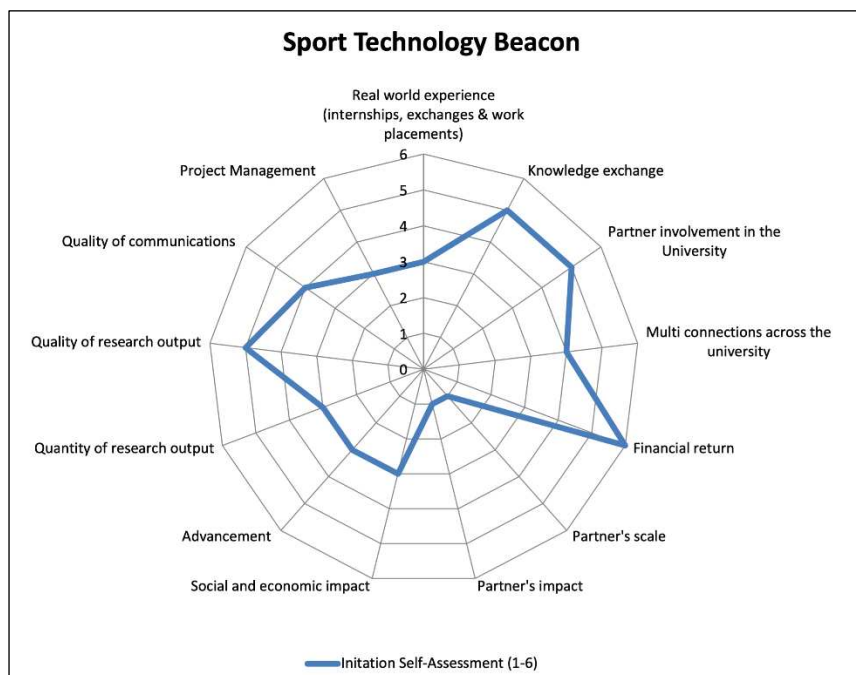


Figure 1: Sport technology partnership visualisation

A key outcome from sharing these parameters for success with existing partnership leads in the University was that more ambitious activities were planned by the partnerships based on the parameters and the evaluation criteria listed for each. In other words, ambitious partnership leads used the table of parameters as a type of “shopping list” of potential new activities to explore with their partners. In some rarer examples, the academic leading a partnership used the literature cited by the sources used in the evaluation parameters (Table 3) as a form of further reading to better understand the value of the parameter and the benefits to their own partnership. The issue of a partner’s scale (Figure 1) in relation to the thinking expressed in the previous literature became a source of ongoing debated for some colleagues. This parameter was seen as biasing focus towards partnering with multi-national corporations over SMEs or startups. Increasingly the debate evolved the parameter itself to become consideration for a partner’s presence (both physically and digitally). This viewpoint better aligns with locational context and consideration – where high levels of presence might be important in a civic or regional context – and also captures the understanding that a startup can obtain very high levels of presence if their offering was disruptive or challenging established sector leaders. This evolution also aligned more comfortably with the thinking defined in the previous literature relating to communication and environmental characteristics.

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Table 3: Success parameters for business partnering based on existing literature

Parameter	Description
Goal setting	Common, complementary and clear objectives set across partnerships. Goals established from the beginning of the collaboration that clarify the importance of the relationship as well as the potential benefits and risks that each party is taking (e.g., Jacobson & Ok Choi, 2008).
Coordination	Excellent coordination brings flexibility and adaptability (e.g., Palmer <i>et al.</i> , 2005).
Nature of the relationship	Coherence of intention and motive surrounding the partnership leads to a clear relationship between parties. Learning from the collaboration must be available to both partners (e.g., Durr 2014).
Sustainability	The level of engagement within the relationship and the commitment to sustain it assumes that the relationship has a future, bringing value and benefits for both parties (e.g., Williamson <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Communication	The quality and process of information exchange between the partners adds value to the relationship. Data sharing, open, and frequent communication through formal and informal links are important (e.g., Williamson <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Real evidence	Early establishment of methods that measure both qualitative and quantitative partnership impact (e.g. Ulrichsen & O'Sullivan, 2015).
(Inter)dependence	Awareness that both parties are strong individually but benefit from the value created by the partnership making both more successful. An understanding by the partners that complementary skills produce the greatest impact (e.g. Benson, 2016).
Environmental characteristics	Contextual circumstances affect the success of a relationship including geographic location, social context, political climate, or government policy (e.g., Williamson <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Trust	Reliability implies mutual respect and understanding of those in the partnership (e.g., Williamson <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Multiple connections	Having a broad range of connections between partners links the organisations at many different levels and through multiple layers of decision-making. This requires a multidisciplinary approach and promotes cross-disciplinary projects (e.g., Edmondson <i>et al.</i> , 2012).
Formal agreement	Formal evidence of the relationship with documents outlining approach and policy (e.g., Benson, 2016).

Lessons in excellence: Making institutional learning persist

A key learning during the period of the single strategic priority was the benefit of recasting all the activities of a university as one form or other of knowledge exchange. While the initial intention of the strategy was to focus on working with businesses, different interpretations and forms of partnerships regularly made a consistent level of partnership management and service difficult. In other words, the single silo strategy - and ambition - was better cast from the original vision statement (Table 1) as “By innovating multiple forms of knowledge exchange we will lead the way in real world experience preparing students for life.” This statement is particularly salient in the current UK HE sector where the tendency of government policy has been towards the generalisation of universities. There are few distinctive features that genuinely define UK universities individually and as a result there is a public reliance on the outcomes of national “excellence frameworks” to enable applicants to choose between institutions. The ambition of a single silo institution lends itself to differentiation in a way that is directly evident for potential students and businesses. This vision challenges ideas of ‘teaching only’ contracts, the presence of an ivory tower or the sometimes amorphous and tense role of the university within their own communities.

As the period of the strategic plan came to end, much of the ambition had been realised. The institution was confidently articulating its own presence and purpose. It is better structured to face different external audiences while also understanding that it does address multiple audiences. It knows its purpose in relation to bodies such as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in a way that would have been problematic prior to the strategy commencing. The benefits and change within the university can also be evidenced in more unexpected ways. The recognition of the parameters that shaped good partnerships as well as the underlying need for trust and commitment within the organisation has led to the definition of ten “Salford Behaviours” that are seen as attributes to be encourage in all staff. These behaviours are labelled as connecting, inspiring, learning, enabling, evolving, achieving, deciding, co-creating, aligning and daring. The behaviours figure heavily in the evolution of the academic performance review process into the more mature system of career conversations and have become central to the way the staff development activities are presented within the university. Recruitment practice in the University has also evolved around the identification of these behaviours. Many interviews for academic positions are now incorporating questions that probe the candidates’ own alignment with the sentiments (and interrelationships) expressed within these behaviours. Candidates are also more commonly asked about their partnering experience and their capabilities to work with external organisations. With the benefit of reflection and time, the institution-wide impact of the strategy is both expected and a necessary outcome. The greatest challenge was always people and prevailing organisational culture(s) within the institutions. Any process of change based around these two aspects of an organisational will take time and continue beyond the scope of a five-year strategic planning.

At the same time, new and significant partnerships were generated during the period of the strategy. The maturing partnership between the NHS Foundation Trust, the Salford City Council, Peel Holdings and the University has become a

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hallmark for other partnerships to follow. This multi-organisational partnership emerged at the end of the period of the strategy. This was partly the result of the strategy being in place at the University as well as the maturing interest that all the other organisations had come to have in the value and benefits of closer working relationships. The locational proximity makes the partnership appear obvious, but it is with the maturity and learning taken from the period of the strategy that is making it possible for the University to sustain its place and its role. This pivotal partnership is significant for the ways that it brings together the largest employers in the city in a manner that is heavily focused on a mutual desire to improve and learn as organisations as well as the recognised mutual benefits in promoting the city as a destination for entrepreneurs, innovators, and investors. The evidenced success of this partnership also creates a more visible focal point for other organisations outside the Salford region to initiate discussions with the University. This itself is a proof of success of the strategy as an increasing number of highly valuable partnership proposals are brought to the University. These developments would not be happening without the five-year strategy. As a result of the internal focus on this single silo of activity, academics across the University are now more confident to engage in innovative assessment practice that uses external business briefs as well as engaging businesses in a wider range of activities that extend beyond the commonly deployed one-off guest lecture.

The learning that developed during the period of the strategy still has opportunity to develop with academics all individually on different points in their own journey. Management and leadership are also maturing as Associate Deans (Academic) - whose responsibility is teaching and learning focused - learn new ways of engaging with their equivalents from the research and innovation as well as engagement and enterprise portfolios. For some associate deans and heads of departments taking the view that all activities are based in knowledge exchange has been enabling and given those individuals the space to re-imagine their own roles. For others, they still have distance to travel on this journey but the continued institutional encouragement upon industry collaboration and the regular articulation of the Salford Behaviours also provides a supportive and focused way to enable this journey.

This developments and improvements within the University have brought real change within the classroom. The focus of research endeavour and bidding has shifted, and businesses are now engaged with in a more timely and “commercially” appropriate way. However, there is a caveat to the positive internal and organisational change brought by the strategy. The results are yet to be seen within the “excellence frameworks” with the KEF outcomes for the University best described as a “mixed bag, the 2021 REF outcome still to be reported and the TEF results including the NSS in limbo as a result of COVID-19 circumstances. Early indications are that even after five years of the single silo university any markers of success within one or other of the “excellence frameworks” will be much slower to emerge.

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