

Sent: 02 April 2019 11:50
To: Haf Merrifield
Cc: Andrew Long
Subject: Comments on strategy

Hello Haf and Andy

Here are a few comments from me on the strategy. Andy I know you wanted comments on all questions but I'm struggling with that - probably because I don't know enough about the university, so I have confined my comments to where I have an opinion !

Under the mission questions. I would like to propose we think of ourselves as the university for employers. We already have a strong reputation in this field, our city and geography won't be anything that will appeal of itself i.e. we are not London or Oxbridge, and the East Midlands generally suffers in terms of profile. It would also allow us to continue to offer a broad range of degrees and research and would link with the development of HS2 in Toton

On people culture and organisation - I really like the core principles and values and the 4 statements - they still have meaning. On the unlock potential and EDI - I'd like us to have a think about how (and this links to the civic section) we can take positive action (not discrimination as the law does not allow this) to recruit students identified as having potential from Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. We could do this with Nottingham Trent, and link to the apprentice levy or otherwise. Clearly the devil is in the detail here and this would need more work and thought. There may be something already happening, but we should look for individuals with potential and maybe sponsorship through local employers. I don't think the staff group will ever be reflective of the City - but we should take some positive actions

Pressure on capacity for staff and student mental health and well being is not going to reduce. Finally the positive messages about 1 in 4 people have lack of mental health at some point in their lives is becoming a more acceptable message with parity of esteem with physical health. Are we adaptive enough to meet the current and future growth for services in the university. Do we want to prioritise this in our culture message or is it more about getting the basics right in terms of communication. I'm not really clear on what the issues are here so staff and student feedback will be really helpful

On the student section - I've already commented on mental health (some sections naturally cover more than one issue). I'd like to ask if we should ensure every undergraduate degree has a workplace internship/placement (not sure what the right word is) this does not have to be a year out or relevant to the subject being studied. It would be about learning how to be in the work environment and resilience. We could also offer CPD to employers with some academic credits to individuals that may then mean they take up further opportunities with us - links to the point about the university for employers

Sporting facilities will always appeal to students - do we link enough with Loughborough to focus on the 'east midlands as an area for sport'

Our international geography is where I feel out of my depth! However I would be interested to learn about universities that have been successful in distance learning and widening participation through flexible degree programmes and what makes such approaches work. I don't think we need another campus - but maybe another relationship if the results of the strategy suggest for us to achieve our aims i.e. it might be helpful for us to 'twin/buddy' with another institution

On our civic role I would repeat the suggestion above. Potential really matters but the current funding system (as Martin Lewis says) is not about all the loan but the affordability to live, I know for many students

moving away from home is part of the experience but if we could ensure students from Nottingham had access to all facilities that would help (we probably already do - but I don't know) I think we should do the work jointly with Nottingham Trent

I won't answer the research questions as we did those on our table and others are better placed than me, I would say that having a reputation for high quality research will continue to matter for recruitment

On finances - it is interesting about the perceptions about waste - they will be important to explore as it is always the simple (but difficult as usually cultural) things that rile staff. Does UEB know what are the one or two things to really address for staff are ?

Final comment - understandable there is little in the strategy about governance and the relationship with regulators and ministers. I could say a lot here but won't as better said than written but it is really important tactically and strategically to develop effective relationships with all regulators, even if it feels testing currently. There is much we have to do in house and I'd hope to be able to support that. The other thing to consider is management capacity to actually deliver the strategy. Fewer priorities delivered is better than too many with a scattergun approach. This would also allow for flexibility in day/month/year things that pop up out of the woodwork

I'm aware this is very high level and therefore probably not that helpful but I wanted to make sure as a council member I did comment

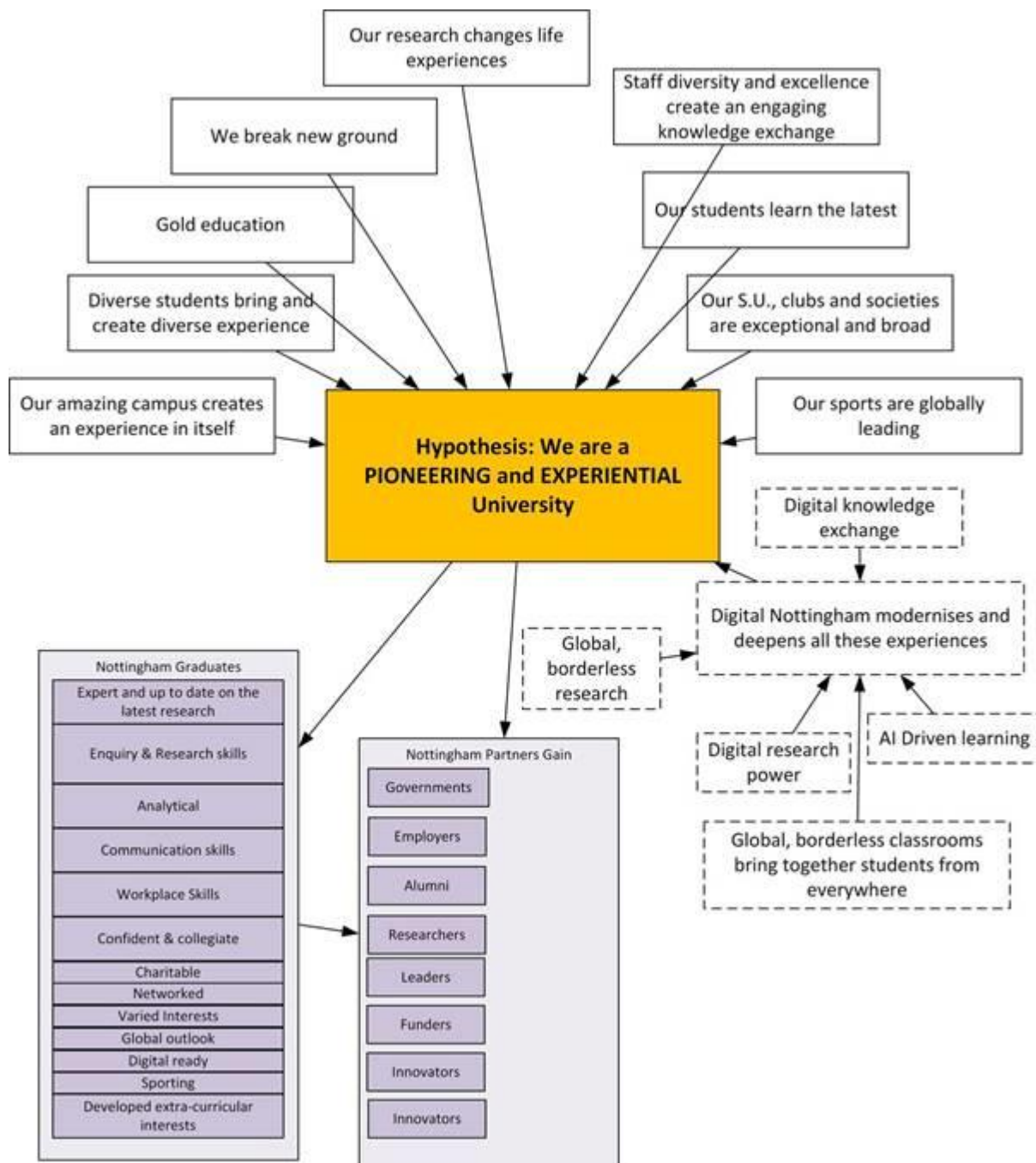
best wishes

To: Andrew Long; Haf Merrifield
Subject: Strategy Green Paper

Dear Professor Long and Haf

I hope you are well. I am looking forward to the strategy meeting today. I mentioned earlier this week an idea of having a North Star for the strategy – something to guide your decisions around strategy by. I think one of those North Stars would be our vision of what a University of Nottingham student is – the way they are different and what virtues we help them gain in their time with us. I hope a picture is worth a few words so I've pasted one below.

To briefly explain this diagram, it shows: The things we do (white) > what we are (gold) > the people we shape and our outcomes (purple). Dotted lines are things we aren't doing consistently so where some strategy statements might focus.



I hope this makes some sort of sense and is an acceptable way of sharing an idea. I haven't put it on the green paper site because I'm not sure this lines up with what you are try to get to on that site and I don't want to randomly disrupt your process.

Kind regards

Sent: 21 March 2019 18:30
To: Shearer West; Andrew Long
Subject: Vision 2020

Dear Shearer,

Firstly, I deeply admire your open commitment to the university's global community. In the face of pressures, you've demonstrated a warm welcome to our international community.

I've read with keen interest your planning for the new strategy. Whilst I understand that much work has gone into the planning, my question to you is: where is the student in the midst of this planning? Updates from the Campus News website have constantly focused on 'staff' consultations, with students expected to contribute via yet another survey. Where is the student consultation?

The story that I, as a student, have been telling myself, is that the University Of Nottingham does not truly care about the opinions of its students. As an international student, the story that I have been telling myself is that I am simply a 'cash cow' for the University. Recent racist incidents at the University have reinforced the story that international students do not belong here, and are here only because they pay more money. Are students too transient, for their opinions to matter in your strategy?

I hope my contributions here add a different worldview to your discussions. I would urge you to engage students in a consultation/ town hall, rather than expecting them to fill up another online form to solicit their views.

It is vital that we start with the 'why'. This is our vision. Why does the University of Nottingham even exist? What would be lost if it disappeared tomorrow?

The strategy is our 'how'.

I can see your vision as:

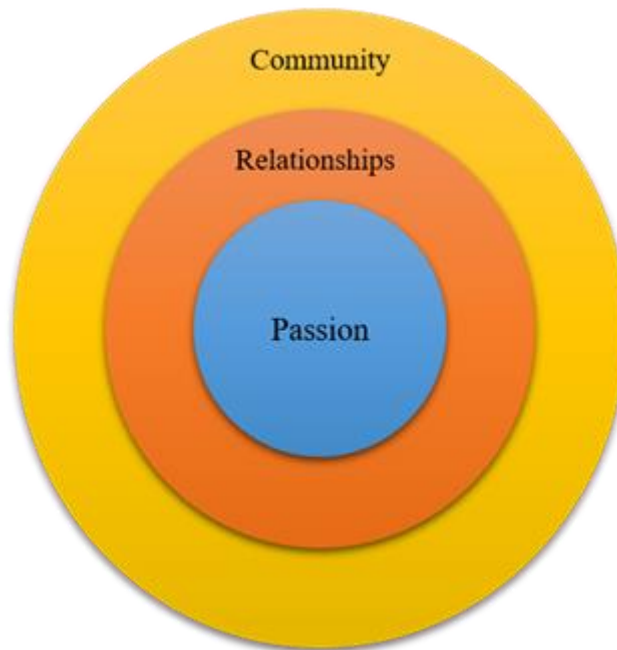
"To deliver the very best teaching to our students and to transform lives around the globe through our world-leading research."

Your mission is:

"We are a pioneering university. A place that inspires world-leading teaching, research and scholarship. A place that transforms lives and shapes the future."

Vision 2020 Strategy

Building passion, relationship, and community



We build passion within students.

We unlock the dormant potential of our students. We give them the keys to help them to discover their fullest potential. We know we have succeeded when students laugh and have fun as they study. They do not stare at the clock. Light bulbs go off in their head. They go 'aha!' They are excited by what they learn. They discover. They build.

We build passion within.

We build relationships between people.

*We build deep relationships between our people. In our fractured world, we proactively break bubbles that form. We facilitate dialogue, debate, and engagement across bubbles, and not merely within. We see success when people are embraced, regardless of colour, gender, or difference. We see strength in difference. When people walk into the University of Nottingham, they feel the warm embrace that allows them to sink in, relax, and know – I am welcomed. Not despite of their difference. But **because** of their difference.*

We build relationships between.

We build community without borders.

We build community without borders. We see the need in our world. We share our knowledge with our local community and our global world. We are not a 'privileged' bubble within Nottingham. We break the barriers that form between us and the local community. Between us and the world. As the world withdraws its drawbridges, we extend a hand. We succeed when we see students reaching out to others who are different. They confront the needs of our world, stand up, and say 'Enough!' Our students engage, challenge, and change our world. Our students spread aspiration, share dignity, and build community.

We build passion within students. We build relationships between people. We build community without borders.

This is the University of Nottingham. Here yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

I hope the above adds a different veneer to your discussion.

Yours sincerely,

General

Format

The proposed short statement accompanied by plans is an excellent approach. Too many university strategies are over-ambitious statements of principles which lack clear priorities defining where action will be taken.

'One university, three campuses'

This vision would truly differentiate Nottingham as an international university. However the underlying language and many assumptions in the document are UK-centric rather than reflecting truly global thinking. The strategy needs to distinguish:

1. The global strategy of a university which is based on the UK education system
2. How this is implemented in campuses in the UK, Malaysia and China

'One university, three campuses' requires a mindset change which is not yet reflected in the document. The new strategy is a great opportunity to set this direction. Otherwise the University will remain one which is distinctive in terms of its geographical reach but not truly international/ global in outlook across all campuses.

Mission

While the *Vision* and *Mission* remain relevant, they do not express what is distinctive about the University and provide direction about where we should go. For example, many universities in the top 500 in the world might have very similar vision and mission statements.

Some key questions to be addressed explicitly include:

- *How international do we want to be in teaching and research?* – through international campuses, partnerships/ student exchange, research collaboration (institutional and individual) and distance learning
- *How international do we want to be in our mindset and organisation?* – is it a priority for our students and staff to globally aware and competent to work in an inter-dependent world? Is it important for students and staff to be able to understand different perspectives and be effective beyond their home country environment? [This is a target in *GS2020* but the reality is very uneven across the university and across three campuses. For example we have parallel student recruitment operations especially in China rather than a global approach.]
- *How integral should knowledge exchange be?* – today in many parts of the University, the focus is more on academic research (and teaching) than on applied research and knowledge

transfer/ commercialisation of technology and ideas. If making knowledge exchange an integral part of the whole University is a major strategic objective, this will need to be a major area for attention. Alternatively knowledge exchange could be seen as a largely separate activity in parallel to a more traditional 'academic' core. This could be clarified.

- *Do we want to concentrate on academic disciplines or to be distinctively good at working in an inter-disciplinary way?* – the more that knowledge exchange and impact are valued, the more important it is to be more inter-disciplinary. This could be both within groupings of related subjects (e.g. in faculties) and across diverse disciplines. This implies recognising that neither the natural nor the social world organises itself around academic subject areas: it crosses boundaries all the time.
- *Is sustainability and social responsibility integral to the strategy?* – this question has been raised by the 'SERG (NUBS) Response' and is an important issue that does not have sufficient prominence. This covers the aims of our education (e.g. do we want graduates to be socially responsible?), the nature and focus of research, and extra-curricular activity.

On the question of **rankings**, we should be explicit that we focus on our mission and excellence in achieving it rather than being driven by rankings. We want our excellence to be recognised in rankings, as these are partial views of what we do. Above all as the paper implies, the University wants to be recognised through **positive lifelong impact for our students** (in a broader sense than their work careers) and **positive social and economic impact at local/ national/ global levels**.

People, culture and organisation

In relation to diversity, the document reflects a UK-centric view of these issues and is not related sufficiently to the University's mission. It is true that the "University's staff population is very different from that of our student population and from that of the local community in relation to characteristics including gender, ethnicity and disability" (page 11). In part there should be substantial differences because of the University's mission; in other areas there has to be a focus on change to enhance equality, diversity and inclusion. For example, gender equality and inclusiveness can be progressed further in all campuses.

In China a different staff population from students and the local community is absolutely deliberate as we want our staff (academic and non-academic) to be substantially different, for example being:

- much more ethnically diverse than in the local area
- much more international in outlook
- often multi-lingual in English and a local language (not exclusively Chinese)
- of higher educational level.

For example, we do not want to have 85%+ mainland Chinese staff in China to reflect the composition of the student body. Students attend UNNC *because* its staff are more international and diverse than the student body and the local population. Hence the strategy should be on how greater diversity than in the local community helps us achieve our mission.

A particular priority in China should be to provide better support for with those with **disabilities**, even though the University is already good compared with many local institutions.

In summary, this area of the strategy could be revised so that it is driven by the University's mission and recognises the context of all campuses.

Student life

Mental health should be a priority of the University – the current draft says nothing concrete about the University's strategy in this vital area. This could be addressed to be clear about the University's view of its responsibilities (and where it cannot be responsible). This could include:

- using information proactively to identify students in difficulty and trigger support
- offering high quality support that is confidential (other than in circumstances of high risk to the student or others)
- including mental health considerations when designing degree programmes (e.g. assessment regimes and timings)
- the extent to which adjustments should be made for students with mental health issues and how flexible the University should be in making these adjustments

However we do need to recognise that ultimately students (at least those over 18) are adults for whom the University cannot be totally responsible. There are further issues in relation to parents'/ wider expectations of the University's role in this area. In particular these differ across campuses, with for example parents in China often expecting information and involvement in University processes which would be seen as inappropriate in the UK.

As a University, we should look much more at **integrating academic and non-academic student support**, engaging academic and professional staff as well as students in this. One of the highest priorities for our students should be **personal and career development**. This should integrate what today are separated into academic and non-academic areas, for example:

- changing how we teach to show relevance in life/ work rather than just being academic knowledge
- organisational relationships with employers that cross-academic and non-academic areas (e.g. input into the syllabus, opportunities for students such as live projects and internships, and knowledge exchange such as executive education/ CPD)

Students accumulating knowledge during their time at the University is not the only priority. Within a few years of graduation and certainly within the lifetime of a student, specific knowledge will have been updated so rapidly that what is taught at the University is out-of-date. More important will be the **ability to learn individually and collaboratively** as well as the **ability to make sound judgements using both evidence and emotional intelligence**.

Our international geography

Student mobility and international experience is important if we really want to equip our students to be globally competent. In this context, the previous goal of “30% of our undergraduate students should spend time abroad as part of their programmes” is hardly ambitious. UK students in particular are losing opportunities that will advance boost their learning and advance their future careers. The University needs to promote internal mobility much more by encouraging students to take part as well as removing internal barriers (which limit inward student exchange to the UK) and others in the minds/ non-academic lives of students (e.g. they will lose good accommodation). There needs to be measurement of success in this area across all campuses with meaningful consequences for success/ failure at School/ programme level.

Internationally the University too often acts as three separate campuses, for example partnerships and postgraduate recruitment which are inherently global. The default in such areas should be global working, not separate or even competitive working.

Our civic role

This section is UK-centric and does not address the role of international campuses or give a strategic perspective on them.

In Ningbo, the University is the premier higher education institution in the city and no.2 in a province that has the same population as England. It seeks to contribute to the development of the city and to the province in ways which are consistent with the University's purpose. The scale (and speed) of this 'civic role' is potentially on a different scale from that in Nottingham, though being an international rather than local university. For example, Ningbo's population is close to that of London and larger than any continental European city. Another indicator of scale is that Ningbo is one the world's top three ports (#1 in cargo and #3 in containers).

The 'civic role' more challenging in Malaysia as Kuala Lumpur has many more good quality universities than either Nottingham or Ningbo. Also the campus location in Malaysia is outside Kuala Lumpur city in Semenyih.

The 'civic role' in UK and international campuses can be defined more clearly in a way that integrates international campuses rather than being UK-centric. An initial suggestion is to include the following six principles:

- Generate employment and income in the city/ region
- Attract high quality professionals to the city/ region
- Produce graduates many of whom stay in the city/ region
- Enrich the cultural life and diversity of the city/ region
- Contribute actively to city/ region policy making
- Act as a catalyst for economic development through knowledge exchange

Teaching and Learning

In general, Nottingham's **teaching and learning** is relatively traditional, making relatively low use of technology (e.g. blended learning, flipped classroom) and distance learning (including leveraging our three campuses).

The strength of the academic faculty across three campuses can be exploited much more. Short term faculty exchange should be promoted as well as teaching modules across campuses, e.g. for specialised options (both in block mode and through virtual technologies). The University should consider making global appointments of staff who work across campuses as an integral part of their role.

Innovation in teaching and learning is critical to this. Processes for programme design, approval and ongoing quality assurance need to be much more agile and flexible. In particular, this should also include blended learning/ flipped classroom approaches. At the same time, decisions on new programmes need to be more market-driven and quality assurance more effective to ensure teaching and learning quality. This is best achieved by clearer responsibilities and better awareness of UK and international quality requirements.

While a focus on full-time students is appropriate given the University's strengths, it needs to develop more systematic **lifelong learning** – especially for its alumni. This will need to be part-time and more flexible, e.g. through the use of technology/ distance learning. The University should consider new approaches such as competency-based programmes (a trend in the US) and work-based learning which recognise learning from a variety of sources rather than traditional approaches.

If the University is to grow **CPD/ executive education**, then this requires organisation that is customer-focused with close relationships with external organisations. This needs to be combined with clear motivation from Schools/ Faculties where the balance of research versus knowledge exchange is a key strategic decision. Expansion will require more specialist professional staff in business development, programme design and client management as well as 'professors of practice' and adjunct faculty. A key benefit of CPD/ executive education is to enable academic faculty to understand and keep up to date with the challenges of the external world which can provide input into research, great examples for teaching and understanding of where our students go after graduation.

Widening participation is even more challenging in UNM and UNNC than in the UK. Outside the UK all but a few UG and PGT students pay fees at the time of study (as opposed to the income-contingent repayment for most UK students). A fund-raising priority should be scholarships to enable poorer students to study at UNNC and UNM. At UNNC, this position is reversed for doctoral students. There are relatively high numbers of PGR scholarships that cover full fees and living costs. This means that in practice the main widening participation impact of UNNC is at PGR level.

In teaching and learning, the employability and wider social contribution of students should be integrated much more into curricular and extra-curricular activity. For students who go on to employment, the University should ensure alignment of graduate characteristics into all its programmes. These could include:

- International outlook
- Entrepreneurial/ innovative mindset
- Critical thinking and the ability to analyse real problems, not just 'textbook' ones

Research and knowledge exchange (RKE)

The language of the document is again at times UK-centric, for example it talks of "five faculties" which refers only to the UK. In international campuses, this organization is different.

Across campuses, a key question is how much the University looks to global or local measures of success. My suggestion would be to prioritise a global approach across campuses which is then mapped to local differences. This means being proactive in promoting the international nature of the University in the UK, Malaysia and China.

Another question is whether all campuses and subject areas should be broadly similar in research-intensity. While this should be the case, it is a particular challenge in Malaysia given financial constraints on recruiting international faculty and funding research.

The document misses the potential advantage of the University in obtaining internationally oriented funding through using international campuses, for example funding calls that look for UK and developing world cooperation. The University should be able to outperform more loosely linked cross-border cooperation between separate universities.

On blue sky versus problem oriented research, this can be expected to differ between schools/ research areas. Theoretical and/ or practical impact needs to be emphasised rather than just publication in academic journals.

Financial health

The different financial models of the campuses can be made more explicit. For example in China, financial health is based on undergraduate student fees with other areas such as PGT at best breakeven. There is also a substantial net income from China to the University in the UK as 10% of fees are paid to the UK.

Currently in China, internal arrangements for commercial income such as executive education/ CPD often do not benefit schools/ faculties. There needs to be clarity as suggested above on whether generating commercial income is part of the responsibility of schools/ faculties or largely separate.

In China, the one step with greatest impact would be raising fees. Currently PGT students pay the same as UG for 50% more teaching with smaller groups, hence higher costs. UG fees are not regularly adjusted which should be the case.

Benchmarking with other foreign JV universities has shown that while the Ningbo government is supportive, the level of its support falls well short of other cities, especially Shenzhen.

Donations should be part of the strategy for development in areas which cannot be afforded operationally, provided they are financially sustainable.

Our Infrastructure

A major gap in the communications infrastructure is cross-campus facilities for teaching and internal communication. Another key issue is the challenge of information censorship in China. Resolving these will include two key elements:

- investing in high-quality cross-campus links ranging from one-to-one discussions to larger scale teaching
- creating direct links to UK library and information sources from China

Expansion of UNNC is possible on the current site by maybe 20% with student accommodation being the biggest constraint. The current capacity is a policy decision by the Joint Venture Board. Further expansion would require another facility.

On 4 May 2019, at 07:40

Hi

A couple more things that came to mind for input to the strategy after the staff meeting. The second one is not very well articulated yet, but I hope it makes sense.

Cheers,

Better, i.e. more varied and affordable food options for staff and students on campus. (In this context, also see below - that the food for staff and students should make profit is short sighted and a focus on well-being here would have benefits at a variety of levels, from health to motivation and thus outputs)

A culture change in respect to the internal management strategy, where internal support, i.e. non-teaching/research departments (e.g. IS, catering, estates, marketing,...) would stop acting as autonomous business units (with their own balance sheet, aim to make a profit and thus lengthy and often inefficient decision making processes towards supporting other parts of the business) and start being managed towards the central aim of supporting core teaching/research departments.

I.e. as Feynman's famous story goes - when he asked a cleaner at NASA what he was doing here - he said "I am helping to put a man on the moon". When we ask a university electrician who is in our building to change a lightbulb, the response is: "For that you will need to submit a separate works request."...
