



University of  
Chester

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2022





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## INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CHANCELLOR

This year, I'm very pleased (and relieved!) that I don't need to rally everyone's spirits as a result of another year of activity dampened by the pandemic – isn't it wonderful that 2021/2022 allowed us to start having different conversations again, and in-person!

That said, as a university community we recognise that we are about to welcome 2022/23's new undergraduates from the cohort of young people who were most affected by the disruption and constraints of the past couple of years. We have given a lot of thought to how we can support these young people and help to create the opportunities and conditions for them to excel during their time with us, and beyond.

Facilitating connections and partnerships beyond our University is key, and is something that has flourished over the past year. This year's *Review* highlights just some of those relationships, and the benefits they have realised for our Citizen Students.

On that note, I'd like to share with you my own Citizen Student moment: this year **I invited three of our students to join me at Clarence House** as I recorded an episode of the **Commonwealth Poetry Podcast**, which I host every fortnight with my daughter Aphra. We are exploring the 56 countries of the Commonwealth in turn, discovering each country through its traditions of poetry and song. On this occasion we were meeting Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall (an honorary graduate of the University of Chester and now the Queen Consort) and Dame Joanna Lumley (another honorary Chester graduate), and our students were able to gain experience of the podcasting producing and editing process and to see behind the scenes of the recording.

I'll leave you to enjoy our *Annual Review* for 2021/2022 and, as always, my sincere thanks go to all of our students, staff and stakeholders, for making our very special University what it is.

**Dr Gyles Brandreth**



**Part of our local communities and want to keep up to date? Sign up to our CommUNlty Connected newsletter**

## Welcome to the University of Chester's *Annual Review* for the 2021/2022 academic year.

I joined the University at the beginning of 2020 – just before the world went into lockdown – and so for me, this feels like the first year that we've fully been able to put into practise our Citizen Student Strategy, getting out into our local communities and meeting in person with our businesses and stakeholders.

There is a real sense of momentum across our University this year, and I see our students and staff tailoring their work to tackle important issues about which they are passionate. For example, how to make our local places (and the wider world) fairer and more inclusive, whilst responding to the climate emergency and rising to the challenge of providing our economy and people with the skills, knowledge and technologies they need for our rapidly changing world.

The positive impacts of these efforts are reflected in our institutional achievements. The last two years have seen the publication of two key indicators of the impact and success of universities' activities. The Research Excellence Framework (known as the REF) and Knowledge Exchange Framework (the KEF) scrutinise and evaluate the impact and success of our work. While we have had some excellent outcomes, we are also clear where we want to go next – something that our Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, **Paul Bissell, explores** in this year's *Review*.

Our strategic plans continue to gain pace: **delivery of skills tailored to the local area** has begun at our new **University Centre Warrington**; we continue to develop our Health, Social Care and Medical portfolio across our sites; our Business School has taken in a record number of international students, and the global COP26 climate event has galvanised our **sustainability efforts**. Please do explore this year's *Review* to find out more about these exciting developments.

One thing is clear from our work over the last year: our engagement with organisations, communities and individuals beyond our university is crucial to our success. As you will read, hear and see throughout this year's *Review*, it is two-way engagement with others that enables us to co-create opportunities for our students and graduates, and that empowers us to effect change, both locally and much wider.

Don't just take my word for it – please do **visit our website** and hear direct from our students and partners. Whether you're reading this as an existing or prospective member of our community, we look forward to welcoming you to Chester or one of our University Centres soon – please do **get involved**.

***Professor Eunice Simmons***

# WELCOME FROM OUR VICE-CHANCELLOR



“There is a real sense of momentum across our University this year, and I see our students and staff tailoring their work to tackle important issues about which they are passionate.”

**Wherever you're currently studying**, if we've inspired you, **please request a prospectus or get in touch**.





# OUR YEAR IN HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from 2021/22 include examples of our students, staff and partners leading the way in their fields – whether this is on a local or wider scale. Our University community’s research and knowledge exchange activity has also been celebrated this year – **please go to our website** to hear our PVC for Research and Innovation, Paul Bissell, in conversation with two of our postgraduate students about these exciting developments and ambitious plans for the future.

● **Two of our students won a national art competition**, with their work being exhibited across the UK.



● In the build up to COP26 our partner college, Reaseheath, hosted the **Cheshire Net Zero Carbon Conference** in collaboration with Cheshire East Council and Sustainable Nantwich.



## AUGUST

## SEPTEMBER

## OCTOBER

## NOVEMBER



● In partnership with Wrexham Museum, **we invited the public to an open archaeological dig**, uncovering the remains of the first ever Roman villa to be discovered in North-East Wales.



● We signed a **partnership agreement** with Cheshire West and Chester Council – a public commitment to achieving shared goals to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of the local population.

- **Building** Social Capital
- **Holistic** Student Experience
- **Lifelong** Learning



● **We hosted a Northern Powerhouse Partnership event**, bringing together MPs and local leaders to discuss the challenges faced by businesses and the support needed to recover from COVID.



**DECEMBER**



● **The University hosted business-minded students from schools and colleges** across Cheshire and Warrington, celebrating the area's Young Enterprise Company Finals.

**APRIL**



**JANUARY**

● **We launched a free, online resource** aimed at supporting healthcare and clinical staff to deliver optimal care to the armed forces community.



**MAY**

● The Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) - a national exercise assessing the quality and impact of academic research since 2014 - was **published**, highlighting that 51% of our research activity is judged to be 'internationally excellent' or 'world-leading'.

● Chester was named one of the **top 10 creative places in the UK**, in a review of the country's arts scene, start-up culture, digital creativity and entrepreneurialism.

**FEBRUARY**



● Students, staff and charities joined together in person for the first time in three years to celebrate our **student volunteers**.

**JUNE**



**MARCH**

● The University was recognised as an **academic partner of the Chartered Institute of Information Security**, in acknowledgment of the quality of its **Cyber Security** programmes.



**JULY**

● Our work to support students' career aspirations and promote equality, diversity and inclusion was highlighted nationally as **leading the way in higher education**.

Got a University of Chester story you'd like to share with us? **Click here and let us know.**



# BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL



Employer networks are vital for ensuring students and graduates are aware of and have access to high-quality employment, but building social capital also opens doors for collaborative research, funding opportunities and student-led projects.

Member of our alumni community and want to connect with our students?

[Contact alumni@chester.ac.uk](mailto:Contact_alumni@chester.ac.uk)



## Research capital

Creating inclusive opportunities for all students to engage in research is a priority; supporting our students to challenge and change the world around them. Successes this year include **Chemistry** student **Harriet Jones**, whose research during her work placement with the Science and Technology Facilities Council will feed into a national project to help improve indoor air quality in homes and at work. **Mechanical Engineering** student **Filip Lagodziuk** developed his social capital through his work as part of a research team that has developed a new process aimed at reducing manufacturing costs.

Research also helps to facilitate links between students and their local communities, and this year we introduced a **community newsletter** to better connect with our local communities and share our work. Examples of student-led research designed to engage with and benefit communities included that conducted by **Early Childhood Studies** student **Rhyannon Dynes**, whose work was published by the **Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network** as part of a showcase of exemplary student work. Rhyannon adopted a creative, child-centred research approach to explore gender stereotypes. **Applied Psychology** graduate, **Rebecca Plimmer**, utilised her social capital to make an impact in her local community while studying at our University Centre Shrewsbury. In partnership with local partners, including West Mercia Police, Rebecca conducted a community research project and delivered a workshop focused on developing police officers' skills for coping with stress.



## Preparing for the future

With so many unprecedented changes affecting our environment, economy and society, it's been more important than ever to prepare our students to be flexible and responsive. This year we piloted our **Graduate Peer Mentoring** scheme, which invited our graduates give back to those just beginning their journeys; supporting mentees during their transition out of University and into their graduate careers, all whilst gaining beneficial experience for themselves. Our Careers and Employability Team partnered with the **Bright Network** to offer the **Internship Experience UK**, which gave students and graduates access to a free, three-day virtual programme tailored to their chosen industry.

Our final-year **Chester Business School** students benefited from a **panel of retail experts** – including representatives from John Lewis, Waitrose and Amazon – who explored retail's post-pandemic future, how to reduce retail waste and the importance of sourcing goods locally. Students also **heard from a former hostage negotiator**, who shared what he's learned about communication and performing under pressure. In May, **ten student entrepreneurs** from across a range of academic disciplines **headed to Almeria in Spain** after **winning places** on the Santander Universities UK Venture Adventure, where they undertook a series of challenges to test and develop their business ideas.

## Student-led social capital

Our students have been great ambassadors for our values this year. Second-year student, **Graham Herschel**, was shortlisted for the prestigious LawWorks and Attorney General's Student Pro Bono award in recognition of his work on the student-led **Chester Community Law Project** (CCLP), which provides local communities with guidance on a variety of legal topics. Final-year **Nursing** student, **Melissa Young**, was named the 'Student Nurse of the Year: Adult' at the *Student Nursing Times* Awards 2022, in recognition of the leadership she demonstrated during her placement, during which she implemented change while keeping the patient experience at the centre of everything.

Our **Fashion and Design** students and graduates also thrived in their professional environment, seizing the opportunity to participate in **Northern Fashion Week** with clothes and accessories from the **six designers' collections being showcased** across a range of categories, including Sustainable Catwalk, Inclusivity and British Emerging Designer.

## CASE STUDY

Internships lead to new research and enterprise:



**Click here** to see social capital in action! Three of our students now work with one of our tenant businesses, developing a new research engineering business.



Think your organisation could benefit from working with us? **Contact** **businessgrowth@chester.ac.uk**



# HOLISTIC STUDENT EXPERIENCE



Teaching and research are important, but they aren't the only ways to create opportunities for our students. The way we support them, the volunteering and other activities in which they engage, and the stakeholders they encounter from beyond the University are all crucial in preparing them for whatever happens next.

Want to **get involved**? Whether you're a student looking to volunteer or an external organisation wanting to work with our volunteers, please contact our Volunteering Team to get started [volunteering@chester.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@chester.ac.uk)

## Meaningful communication

Our students, graduates and alumni are all important within our network, but we recognise that those different stages of life require different things from us. Over the past year we've established new, tailored communication channels specific to our graduates and alumni, and our **Careers and Employability** offer now extends to graduates, not just current students, with a specialist member of staff on hand to offer support for post-university employment challenges.

One of the best ways to ensure we're communicating effectively with and meeting the needs of our students, graduates and alumni is to let them organise their own support and events! This year's Postgraduate Research Symposium was organised by three of our postgraduate students, reflecting our commitment to embedding research throughout our curriculum. Beyond the curriculum, postgraduate student **Ninar Elkak was voted our Coach of the Year** for her work with our basketball team, which achieved its highest ever position in the BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) league.

## Evolving our support

In order for our students and graduates to seize opportunities and commit to self-development, we need to make sure the right support network is in place in the background. This year support teams across the University worked with our Outreach Team and national mentoring charity, **Brightside**, to deliver the 'Get Connected' mentoring project, which supported new students from Widening Participation backgrounds with their transition to university. This work received second place in the What Uni Student Choice Awards, so congratulations to everyone involved!



We continue to listen to and learn from our students as they tell us how they want this support to look. Helped by funding from the national Safer Streets scheme, this year we focused on **increasing awareness and education** in response to key safety concerns. This included a student safety app and an **innovative training model** to ensure we have First Responders able to support students across our sites. We also delivered a series of behaviour change workshops for students, exploring skills and approaches for them to employ beyond university. Issues covered included boundaries and communication, inclusion and belonging, and consent culture.

Following the work reported in previous *Reviews* in relation to our commitment to race and interfaith equality, we were so pleased to receive encouraging feedback from the University's Islamic Society, who told us that, "we have been able to bring together many people of different faiths and backgrounds,... create a safe space,... and much more. All of this would not have been possible without the great help of the Chaplaincy Team; it has helped us achieve so much more".

## Students and public engagement

Our *Annual Review* wouldn't be complete without a celebration of just some of the ways in which our students have reached out beyond the University, leading activities that have delivered benefits within their communities and beyond.

Following advice from our technical AV team, students designed and created a **series of educational videos for local schoolchildren**. Aside from the benefits for our local schools, this was also an important digital skills development opportunity for our students. Also aligning their voluntary work with work-based skills, final-year **Social Work** students at Warrington got involved in Amnesty International UK's Week of Action, **raising awareness of the Human Rights Act and collecting donations for Warrington Foodbank**.

Doing a great job of representing the University in the local community, our **History and Archaeology** students led **two public events** in Chester this year, guiding local people of all ages to interact with historical artefacts and the stories behind them. In Shrewsbury, three of our **Events and Festivals Management** students **designed a cake trail around the town**, raising money for a cancer charity in the process.

# CASE STUDY

## Whatuni Student Bursaries:



[Click here](#) to find out how digital scholarships – funded as a result of our success at last year's Whatuni Student Choice Awards – benefited five of our students.



Think you can't afford university, or that it isn't for you? [Click here](#) and see if we can change your mind.



# LIFELONG LEARNING



What do we mean by 'lifelong learning'? We've been giving that a lot of thought this year. It's very much about delivering accessible learning opportunities for people at different ages and stages of life, but it's also about our university and its learning community being responsive and open to change.

Thinking about coming back to study after a break but not sure it's for you? Make sure you've got **all the info here.**



## New learning opportunities

Who our students are, what their goals look like, and what they need in order to achieve those goals, continues to evolve. In response, this year, we evolved our teaching and learning offer and introduced some exciting new skills and learning opportunities. **In partnership with Unilever's Port Sunlight Research and Development Centre, we developed a new Degree Apprenticeship for chemical engineers,** meaning that our students can apply their learning in the workplace while achieving their degree. Also developed with employers, one of the first offers to be **delivered from our new hub in Warrington** town centre was the **Advanced Manager** suite of short courses, which are designed to support local managers and aspiring leaders. Our **partnership with the University of Law** enabled Future Lawyers **Scholarships for two Chester Law School graduates,** aimed at levelling up access to careers in Law for underrepresented groups.

Our Outreach Team was delighted to return to in-person delivery of activities this year. Their work culminated in the Taste of University residential event in July, at which we welcomed almost 100 Year 12 students for 4 days, so they could experience what student life is like at the University of Chester via subject taster sessions and sports and social activities. The team also worked with our **Digital on Tour** project (supported by the **Cheshire and Warrington Enterprise Partnership**) to take innovative digital technologies into local schools and community events, developing digital skills for our student teachers, local schoolchildren and their teachers.

## Different routes to achievement

Lifelong learning means being able to access skills and learning at different points throughout your life and career, meaning that our students come to us via many different routes. For **Kirstie Penny**, the route into higher education and a first-class **Medical Science** degree did not involve AS and A'Levels; for mature student **Andrea Vasarhelyi-Szilagyi**, a degree in **Event Management and International Tourism Management** involved a **Foundation Year** and studying in her second language! Health challenges meant that **Jade Smith** had to change careers, and a first-class degree in **Events and Festivals Management** at our Shrewsbury site led to work on the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee.

We're always keen to catch up and hear how our students continue their learning journeys. Featured in last year's *Annual Review*, **Physics** graduate **Georgia Tierney** has gone on to employment with a biotech AI company that specialises in life sciences and agricultural science, whilst also studying for her Master's. Sound artist **Kate Gater** achieved her **PhD** at Chester, and has since gone on to feature in a recent episode of the BBC's Countryfile – congrats!

## Pay it forward!

We are so proud to see our students taking the culture of lifelong learning with them beyond their university experience to benefit others. This year our **student volunteers worked with nine local schools**, providing extra assistance to children who may have experienced disruption to their learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also in support of schoolchildren and their parents, **Early Childhood Studies** student, **Georgia Kitchen**, worked with the Early Years and Family Support Team at Flintshire County Council to develop a new and creative way of researching their experiences during lockdown.

**Fine Art** graduate and internationally acclaimed visual artist, **Estelle Woolley**, returned to the University this year as part of the nationwide AA2A (Artists Access to Art Colleges) scheme, which offers residencies for visual artists and designer-makers to develop their work and share their expertise with current students. This is just one example of our thriving alumni community – there's loads more to **[read on our website!](#)**

# CASE STUDY

## Work-based learning placements:



Partnerships with industry are crucial to meaningful lifelong learning; this year they've helped to generate skills, research and employment opportunities for our students – **[click here](#)** to hear more!



Have an alumni success story to share with us? **[Contact alumni@chester.ac.uk](mailto:Contact_alumni@chester.ac.uk)**



# TOWARDS NET ZERO

Attending COP26 in Glasgow this year inspired us to really consider the role that we play in relation to the climate and nature emergencies, and the ways in which we can do more.

## Student voices

When it comes to addressing the climate and nature emergencies, inviting a wide range of voices and contributions is essential, but often overlooked. In October our Sustainability Unit organised **Collaborating for Change**, a week of events bringing together students, staff and stakeholders to focus on developing and implementing ideas for realising a Net Zero world. On an even bigger scale, as part of the UNESCO Youth Summit – focused on the global commitment of young people and their potential to get involved in the fight against climate change – **two of our doctoral students helped organise and host a panel event**, looking at decarbonisation and exposing some common myths about hydrogen.



## Change through partnership

No single person or organisation alone can effect the urgent change required, and this year we've worked on making good use of our convening power as a university. Building our relationships with local partners and cementing our commitment to Net Zero, **we signed up to Cheshire West Voluntary Action's Green Pledges campaign**, while sharing expertise with the Shropshire business community via a series of **workshops free to contractors, property owners and people working in construction**, focused on making buildings

# CASE STUDY

Students as leaders:



Click here to hear about this year's **Green Expo**, where our students took up paid roles to work alongside young people and business leaders to address the climate and nature emergencies.

more energy efficient. We also **opened a Reduce, Reuse, Recycle shop**, enabling students, staff and local community members to bring their own containers to purchase dry goods and milk, plus make use of a clothing Swap and Drop facility.

Our students are our most powerful partners – as our Sustainability Manager, Tamara Hunt, recognised this year: "The biggest impact we can make to the Climate Emergency is through educating future leaders, educators and decision makers to understand the science of climate change and equip them with the knowledge and skills to act in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and set us on a path towards a more sustainable future."

Got an idea that could help contribute to our Net Zero target?

**[greenchester@chester.ac.uk](mailto:greenchester@chester.ac.uk)**

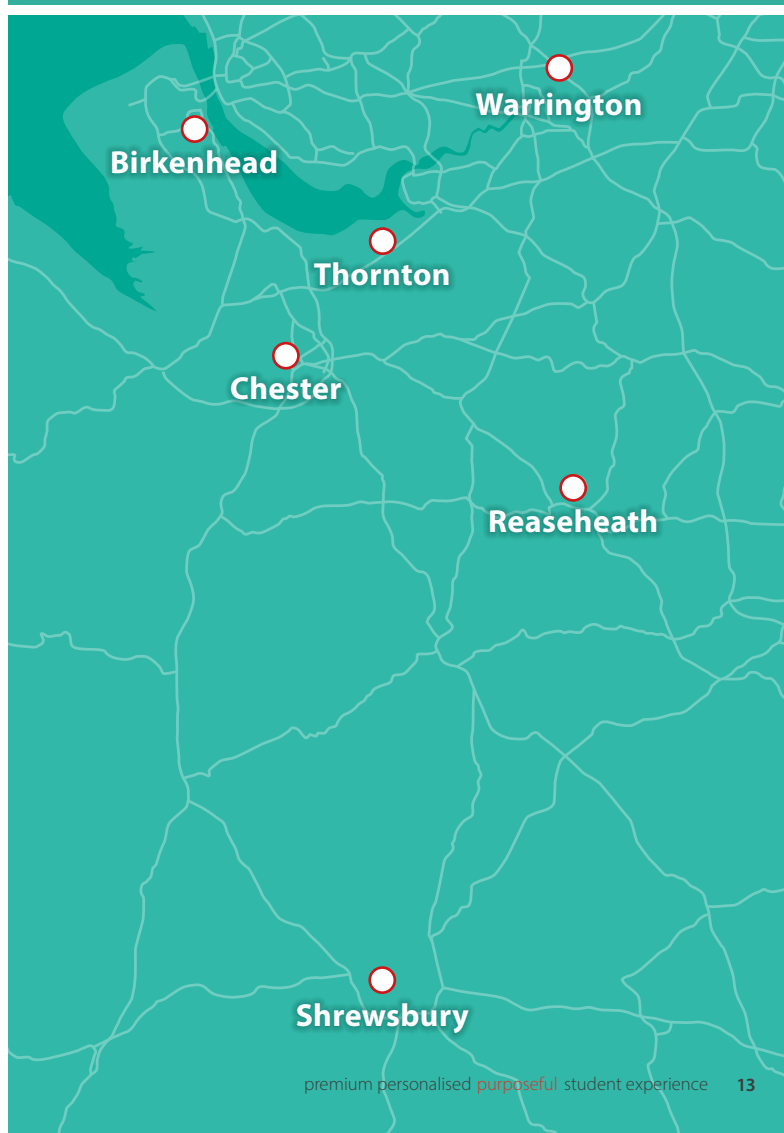
Follow our progress  
**[@greenuochester](https://www.instagram.com/greenuochester)** on Instagram.

# OUR UNIVERSITY

## 2021/22 key statistics:

- 8,620 undergraduates
- 5,705 postgraduates
- 2,950 additional students at our partner institutions
- 101,196 alumni
- Our students and staff completed more than 9,300 volunteering hours (53% of these were community-led, with external charities and organisations).
- Our Outreach Team attend 247 events in schools and colleges, delivering 60 online sessions and hosting 28 campus visits, working with schools and colleges across the North West, North Wales, Shropshire, Staffordshire and the West Midlands.
- 307 organisations from across 68 sectors and industries hosted 514 of our second-year students on their five-week Work-Based Learning placements.

Click [here](#) to view our **annual accounts**.



## WHERE ARE WE?



Chester



Warrington



Thornton



Birkenhead



Shrewsbury



Reaseheath

Find out more about [our locations](#).



# UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

University Council members are holders of public office; volunteers who play an active and important role in the development of our institution. Following the retirement of our President of University Council, Canon Dr Jeff Turnbull, at the end of this academic year, we asked **our new President – Meredydd David OBE** – to introduce himself and tell us about his priorities for the University.

Our thanks to the University Council Members who contributed to our 2021/22 achievements, with particular recognition of our outgoing President of Council, Canon Dr Jeff Turnbull, for all of his hard work and support over the years.

- Canon Dr Jeff Turnbull (President)
- Professor Eunice Simmons (Vice-Chancellor)
- The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Chester, Mark Tanner
- The Very Reverend Dr Tim Stratford
- Professor Helen O’Sullivan
- Mr Francis Ball
- Dr David Briggs
- Professor Charles Forsdick
- Mrs Jeannie France-Hayhurst
- Mr Nick Jenkins
- Dr Angela Seeney
- Mrs Sandra Verity
- Professor John Alcolado
- Mrs Cathy Bond
- Professor Steven Broomhead
- Mr Marcus Clinton
- Sir Neil Cossons
- Councillor Razia Daniels
- Dr Meredydd David (Deputy President)
- Ms Karen Howell
- Mrs Kate Nwosu Aaron-Efe
- Mr Jack Rankin (Student Union President, retired 30-06-2022)
- Ms Lauren Friel (Student Union President, appointed 01-07-2022)
- Mr Jonathan Moores (University Secretary)



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