



Royal
Agricultural
University



Our Strategy 2023-2028

Growing Futures Since 1845

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Foreword by the Chair of Governors



**Dame Fiona Reynolds,
Chair of Governors**

Photo credit: Marcus Ginns

Huge improvements in our scores in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the National Student Survey (NSS) – both the product of much hard work over recent years – have given the Governing Council of the RAU cause for much optimism about the future.

It has been a year of change and investment and, while we still have much to do, our foundations are strong and our ambitions are clear. Our unique contribution to shaping the future of sustainable food production, farming, land management and rural enterprises has never been more important. The membership of the Council changed significantly and with a group of impressive new appointments we can look forward to greater stability in future.

Along with the welcome improvement in the externally assessed REF and NSS, we made important progress this year towards becoming more financially sustainable. We held a thorough review of our teaching needs and resources, enabling us to continue to improve and focus our teaching and research, and we have developed an exciting vision for an Innovation Village on our site. This will provide the foundation for a multiplicity of partnerships with like-minded research organisations and businesses, local bodies and people. We are hugely encouraged by the support we have already received from central Government, Business West, Gloucestershire County Council, Cotswold District Council and many others.

The RAU has a long history of innovation and creativity in the land-based sector and, over many decades as the RAC, we forged terrific networks across Britain and the world. Our global footprint is expanding again, with new developments in China and Uzbekistan in particular, and now we are well established as a University we are keen to promote our vision and ideas locally, nationally and globally. The opportunity is there to engage and reinvigorate our loyal alumni network post COVID19 and we have confidence that today's students are well equipped to contribute to a wide range of global challenges. The future needs the RAU and the RAU is more than ready to play our part.

Introduction by the Vice-Chancellor



**Prof. Peter McCaffery,
Vice Chancellor**

The RAU is as relevant today as it has been throughout our 178 year history. Our purpose bears testament to the foresight of our founders as we aim to equip a new generation to meet the most pressing challenges that face us in the world today – climate change, food security, sustainable land use, biodiversity loss, heritage management and so on.

We are a 'university without walls', science-based and practice-centred. With more than half of our research adjudged 'world-leading and international in quality', we are the leading specialist university in England. One of only six universities (and the only specialist provider) recognised as a National Centre of Excellence by the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. Our Farm491 is also the UK's leading agri-technology incubator and accelerator.

We are the leading supplier of rural chartered surveyors in the UK and our Rural Estate Land Management has been rated one of the top business schools in Europe, with 165 of our alumni in Director roles in major firms.

In the National Student Survey (2022) we were ranked the top university in the UK for being a 'Learning Community', fourth for overall student satisfaction across English Universities, and top 10 for both Academic Support and Organisation and Management, outperforming all 24 universities of the Russell Group.

This document sets out our ambitions for the next five years and our strategy to achieve them. We aim to be world-leading in our field and a recognised solution-provider for Government, commercial, and voluntary bodies with regard to sustainable agriculture, food security, land management and rural living. We want to be a University of Advanced Scholarship – celebrating scholarship in all its forms; teaching, discovery, application and integration. Our campus will be a global centre for sustainable farming and land management that befits our reputation.

This requires a 'can-do' culture, where staff feel genuinely empowered and accountable for achievement and where our students, staff, alumni and external stakeholders are proud to be associated with the University.

Our purpose & mission

Core purpose

Our founding purpose dating from 1845 – to care for the land – is more relevant and vital than ever. All depends on it. Climate resilience, nature recovery, food security, clean water, health, wellbeing and thriving communities all rely on how we treat the land.

Our mission

Our mission as educators is to equip a new generation to address such global challenges and to thrive through change, at this time of transition, uncertainty and turbulence in agriculture.

Care for the land, however, extends beyond farming and land management - for sound decisions across much of business, policy and society needs to be rooted in an understanding of the land.

To this end we collaborate in championing agricultural education and research, leading and supporting initiatives to develop a coherent, sector-wide approach.

We are distinctive as a 'university without walls', committed to practical research, innovation and learning, with strengths in enterprise and land management.

To equip a new generation to address global challenge



Our vision

Our vision is **to be the UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management**, enabling communities locally, nationally and across the world to thrive in harmony with nature.

Our pursuit of this vision over the next five years will:

- » Enhance our profile as an internationally significant beacon for innovative farming, land and estate management.
- » Connect the RAU's domestic networks with an expanding global network of leading agricultural universities positioned on every continent.

This approach:

- » Extends our impact and engagement with global challenges.
- » Builds on our international reputation, brand, and successes.
- » Helps provide the 'RAU Graduate' with access to a diversity of education and opportunities on a global scale.

Crucially, it recognises the synergy between our international presence, and the quality and impact generated through our Cirencester campus. Our international partnerships can power the university's development but, in turn, the campus must be a fitting hub to translate dialogue in to real world impact.

Our reach in this sense, depends on the quality of our teaching, research and engagement, and our credibility as a sustainable provider.



To be the UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management



Our values

As a University we have chosen five values to underpin our learning community

These are the values which we will all work by and for which we want the RAU to be known. We are:

Collaborative

We believe in the power of working together. We are stronger as a community of practice - inspiring each other, identifying shared goals, and providing reciprocal support leads to greater success.

We lead by example and work flexibly and collaboratively to share the passion about the University's ambition to improve, sharing our skills, knowledge, and insights with each other to achieve best practice.

We are effective and supportive team players, promoting a culture of constructive two-way communication, where feedback is used to shape what we do both internally and externally.

Open-Minded

We are receptive to new ideas and we value the diversity of experiences and skills. We are committed to listening to everyone across the RAU community.

We are curious and willing to learn new things, consider alternative approaches to problem-solving and we collaborate to gain new perspectives.

We seek insights from those with different experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds to improve our own work and contribute to our community and wider society.

Resourceful

We adopt creative approaches to achieve our goals while setting higher standards, promoting professionalism and sustainability.

We are creative and encourage continuous improvement. We utilise each other's skills across departments to achieve our goals and we acknowledge the contribution of others to our work.

We promote and support our commitment to sustainability and being socially responsible, accountable for the impacts of our decisions through transparent and ethical behaviour.

Responsible

Individually and collectively we take accountability for our actions working with integrity to achieve the highest ethical standards.

We understand that individually, and collectively, we are accountable for our actions and we work to ensure that the University achieves its strategic aims.

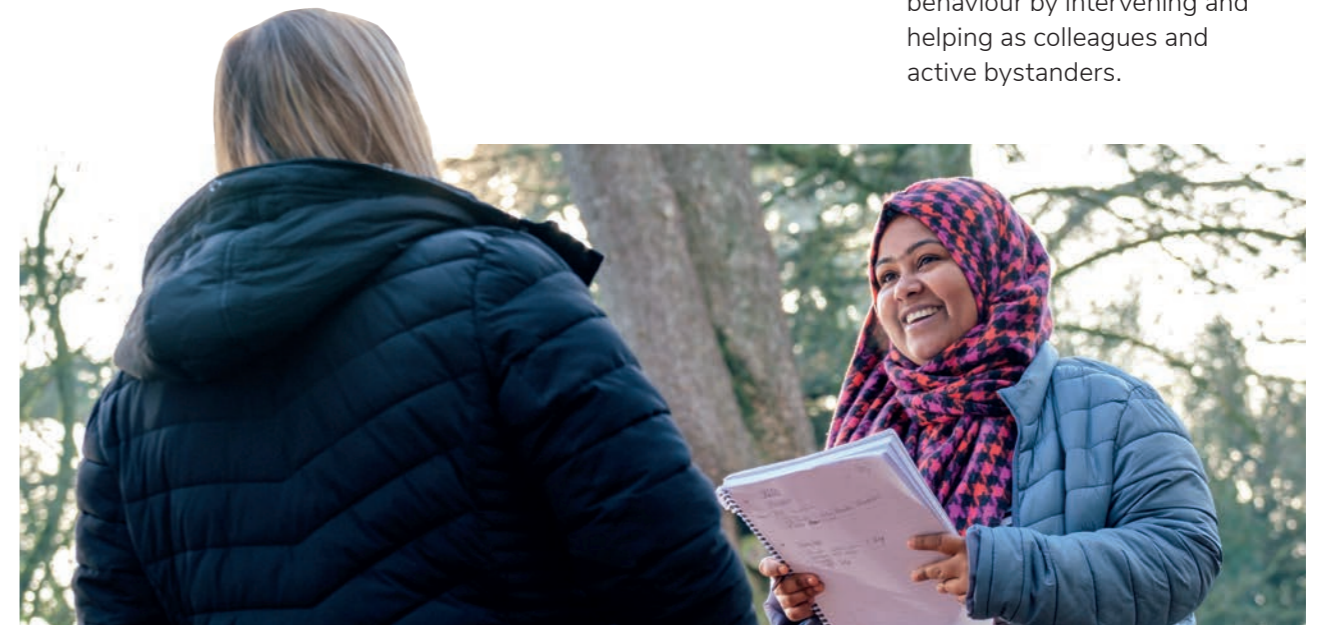
We are proactively engaged in, and proud of, working for the University, and strive for excellence in all we do in order to achieve the best ethical outcomes for our students and the University community.

Inclusive

We acknowledge the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and are committed to maintaining an environment that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences.

We are committed to a safe, welcoming, and inclusive community where diversity is valued, accepted, and celebrated.

We challenge inequality and have a sense of professional responsibility for creating a culture which encourages representation of different perspectives and demonstrates respect. We support each other to speak out about inappropriate behaviour by intervening and helping as colleagues and active bystanders.





Our goals & measures of success

We will pursue our vision by focusing on three outcomes which run through all that we do

Quality

A global reputation for excellence and leadership across our teaching, research and engagement.

- » All our programmes are market leaders
- » Our graduates are prized by employers
- » Our staff develop into recognised leaders within their disciplines
- » Professional bodies seek our expertise and help

Reach

A growing, diverse and inclusive community of students and partners in the UK and internationally.

- » Increase in student applications to study in the UK
- » Attracting more students from under-represented groups
- » Growth in transnational education
- » Growing partnerships with like-minded organisations

Sustainability

A showcase for sustainable and resilient management, through our land and estate, our finances, and our culture.

- » Physical transformation of our estate
- » Generating sufficient revenues to reinvest
- » Material progress towards achieving net zero
- » Our staff enjoy working here

Quality

A global reputation for excellence and leadership across our teaching, research and engagement

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
Our staff develop into recognised leaders within their disciplines	75% of our research is judged at 3* or 4*	75% of research outputs are world-leading
Our graduates are prized by employers	Year-on-year increase in number of students in graduate employment	Exceed national benchmarks
Our students prize learning with us	Exceed our national benchmark (NSS) & 90% of academic staff are Fellows of the HE Academy	Achieve TEF 2027 Gold Award
Professional bodies seek our expertise and help	Year-on-year increased size and volume of research & KE contracts	Additional research awards and increased knowledge exchange income

Key actions

- » Sharply focus programme portfolio in light of market demand, differentiation, and employer and student needs.
- » Strengthen enabling partnerships with Students' Union, and key employers and professional bodies.
- » Upgrade laboratories, and the on-campus and online learning facilities.
- » Gain Research Degree Awarding Powers.
- » Prioritise academic recruitment and CPD to develop key strengths in sustainable land management, rural enterprise and innovation, and user-centred research.
- » Enhance professional support structures for research and KE.



Reach

A growing, diverse and inclusive community of students and partners in the UK and internationally

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
Growing partnerships with like-minded organisations	Year-on-year growth in partnership income surplus	HEI Partnership with a premier agricultural university on every continent
Growth in transnational students	6,000 total student headcount by 2028	Increased diverse student body
Attracting more students from under-represented groups	Exceed OfS benchmarks in Access and Participation	Exceed our university peer group
Increase in UK student enrolments	4% year-on-year increase in UK student enrolments	Additional University income from UK students

Key actions

- » Embed a student-centred ethos from the moment of first contact.
- » Increase outreach and marketing to engage new audiences.
- » Enhance existing teaching partnerships in China and Uzbekistan.
- » Actively explore new international teaching partnerships across continents, developing the opportunities offered by our 'Royal Agricultural' identity and longstanding expertise.
- » Invest in academic and administrative infrastructure capacity required for growth.
- » Capitalise upon the Innovation Village to generate new multi-sector partnerships.
- » Facilitate greater opportunities for international exchanges amongst staff and students.



Sustainability

A showcase for sustainable & resilient management, through our land & estate, finances, & culture

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
Physical and digital transformation of the estate	Year-on year reduction in the number 'red' risk items for digital and the estate	Commitment to cyber essentials and £130m investment in the estate
Our staff enjoy working here	75% of staff recommend working here	Reduced staff turnover
Grow and diversify income to reinvest	10% EBITDA	Reinvesting sufficient surplus to maintain estate
A sector leader for sustainability and achieving net zero	Exceed our University peer group in the global THE Environmental Sustainability rankings	Recognised as a sustainability leader among our University peer group

Key actions

- » Implement a coherent, long-term plan for optimizing our full estate, for academic, commercial and community gain.
- » Actively prospect for outside investment in our campus, including the planned Innovation Village.
- » Ensure our own farm, land and estate management is demonstrably world-leading and innovative, showcasing sustainability, resilience and heritage.
- » Develop a clear path to net zero within a transparent and sector-leading sustainability plan.
- » Engage, hear and empower our staff.
- » Ensure the UN sustainable development goals are embedded across our curriculum and learning platforms.



RAU in 2028

The UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management

Quality

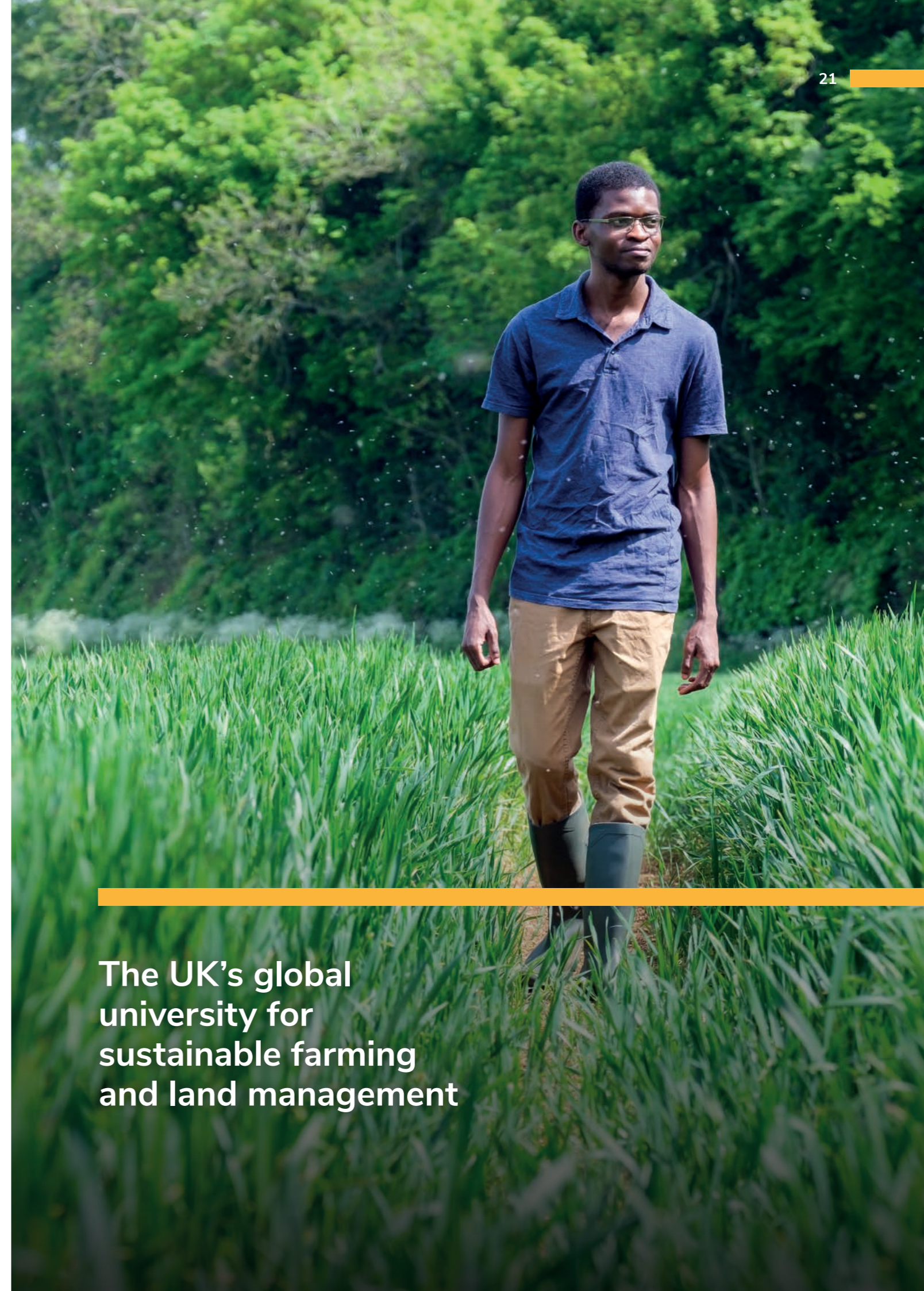
- » All our undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programmes are of the highest possible quality and standards and recognised as market leaders, regional winners or community developers.
- » Our students are valued and recognised by employers as new professionals: 'The RAU Graduate'.
- » We are a University with Research Degree-Awarding Powers (RDAP).
- » We are a University of Advanced Scholarship where all academic staff are competent in all four scholarships (teaching, discovery, application and integration) and excel in at least one of them.
- » Our research in agricultural sciences and land management is of international excellence and has a global reputation for making a practical difference on the ground.

Reach

- » We attract a larger student body drawn from a wider range of sources [UG, PG, Trans-National Education (TNE), CPD et al.] at home and overseas (6,000 TNE).
- » We have a diverse student body that exceeds our external (Office for Students) benchmark.
- » We are a recognised peer in a network of premier agricultural universities on every continent across the globe – the UK's Global Agriculture University – a university on which 'the sun never sets'.
- » Our students, staff and external stakeholders are all proud to be associated with the RAU.

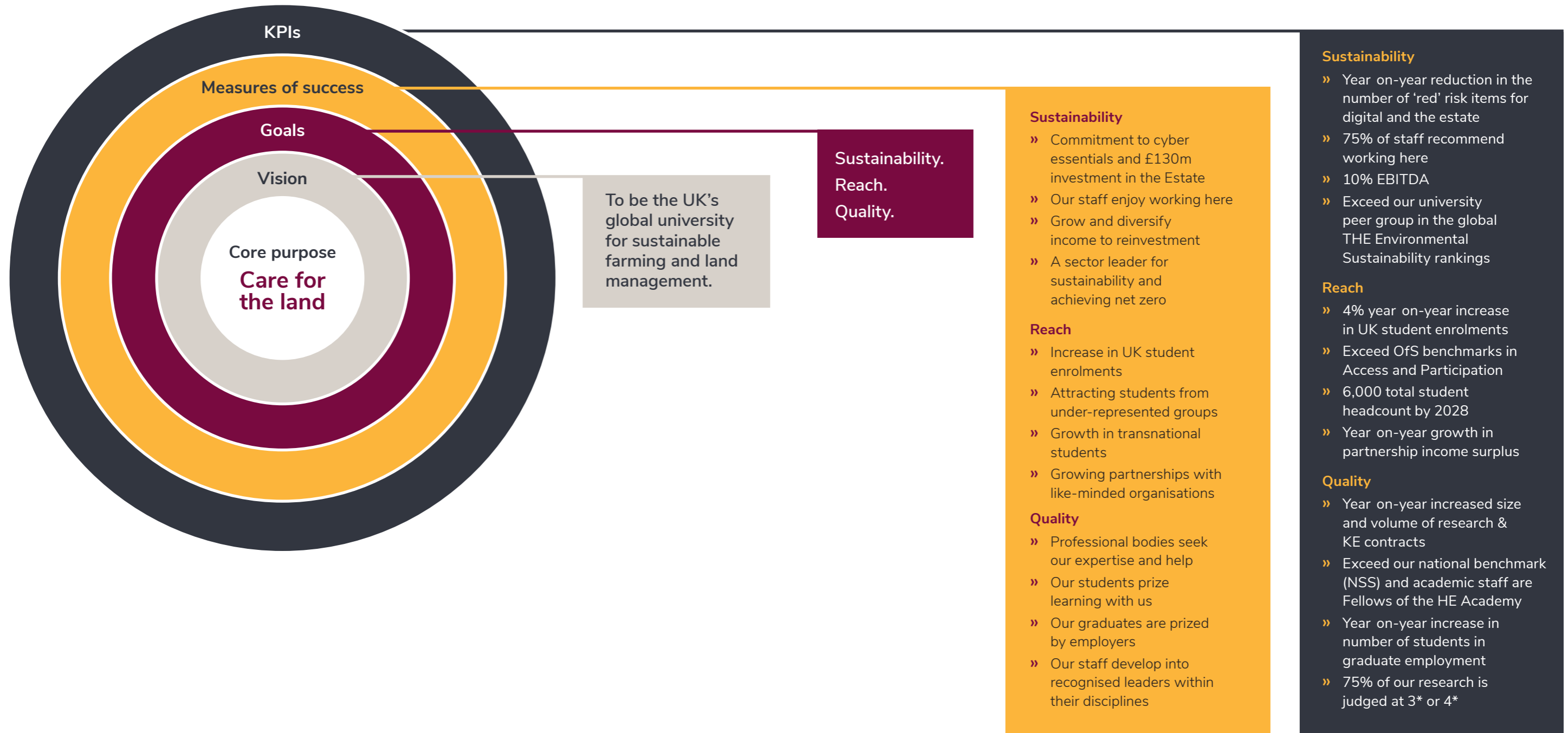
Sustainability

- » We have a year-round campus operation that optimises our full estate with executive education, lifelong learning opportunities and a flourishing Summer School.
- » Our Innovation Village is a nascent global centre supporting industry, food producers, farmers and landowners in developing new innovative practices while protecting land health and building resilience in rural communities.
- » Our farm, land and estate management are demonstrably world-leading and innovative, showcasing sustainability, resilience and heritage.
- » We are on a clear path to net zero carbon emissions within a transparent and sector-leading sustainability plan.



The UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management

Our five-year strategy: overview



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