THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

2006-2009

CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary ......................................................... 2
2. Review of 2003 – 06 ......................................................... 3
3. Vision 2006 – 09 ............................................................ 4
4. Context ........................................................................ 5
5. a. Development and Implementation of the Strategy ................. 6
   b. Review and Evaluation .................................................. 6

6. PART 1
   Strategic Objectives – institutional context and specific objectives .... 7

7. PART 2
   Implementation Plan – targets, timescales and responsibilities .......... 13

Annex 1 – TQEF-funded initiatives for individual and departmental support of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy
1. Executive summary

The LTA Strategy is intended to engage all those involved in learning, teaching and assessment at the University of Kent, including students, academic staff, graduate teaching assistants, administrative and support staff.

The strategic objectives articulate with the following themes and enabling activities of the Institutional Plan (2006 – 09) and draw together areas for enhancement in learning and teaching based on institutional and national priorities:

**THEMES**
- **T1** Provide higher education of excellent quality
- **T2** Provide an exceptional student learning experience
- **T5** Establish a strong international focus amongst staff and students
- **T7** Develop and maintain strong partnerships

**Enabling activities:**
- **E2** Providing appropriate and well-equipped teaching, learning and research and support space for staff and students
- **E8** Support staff to act professionally and confidently

The **Strategic Objectives** to achieve these aims are to:

(1) Provide accessible, flexible and diverse learning opportunities that develop student skills, attributes and knowledge which will enhance their employment prospects and engagement with lifelong learning (**T1, T2**)

(2) Enhance systems of student support and guidance that improve student engagement with their studies, ensure student progression and retention and respond effectively to student learning needs (**T2, E2**)

(3) Foster excellence in teaching, and promote the recognition and reward of teaching and learning support roles by enhancing the professional development opportunities for staff (**T1, E8**)

(4) Support continuous improvement in learning, teaching and assessment by reviewing formal quality assurance processes to promote strategic enhancement of the student learning experience (**T1, T2**)

(5) Maintain and develop opportunities for academic collaboration with HE and FE partners to support regional, national and international developments (**T5, T7**).
2. Review of 2003-06

The strategy builds upon the previous Learning and Teaching Strategy (2002-05)\(^1\) and its 5 main objectives and related achievements and recognised strengths:

A. To maintain our position as the intellectual, research-led environment for academic study in Kent, in a wide area of subjects, by ensuring that all students have a high quality learning experience.

*Established strategy to support widening participation and promote inclusivity*
*Good student retention, progression and achievement rates*
*Excellent employability record*
*High student satisfaction with learning experience (ie internal and national student surveys – ie ISS and NSS)*
*Effective development and integration of learning support systems (eg CMSDS)*

B. To provide a wide portfolio programmes that are both current and relevant, informed by good academic practice, research-led and responsive to stakeholder needs (eg employers).

*Wide-ranging portfolio of programmes to promote inter-disciplinarity and multi-campus provision*
*Increased vocational provision (supported through CVL\(^2\) and CWaL\(^3\) initiatives)*
*Integration of enterprise/entrepreneurial activities within existing subject areas*
*Curriculum innovation and expansion through developments at Medway (including distance learning CPD opportunities)*

C. To continue to work with our HE and FE partners to develop curricula and progression routes appropriate for the University’s regional, national and international developments in response to changing student demands, which will equip students for employment and lifelong learning.

*Growth in student numbers*
*Successful regional partnerships with FE Colleges (Associate Colleges) and other HEIs in South East region*
*Strategic development of HE on the Medway campus (‘Universities at Medway’ project)*
*Development of work-related learning and enterprise through Kent and Medway Lifelong Learning Network*
*Expansion of programmes at the University at Kent in Brussels*
*Launch of the first Franco-British HEI – University of the Transmanche*

D. To reflect on provision through the formal quality assurance processes and to promote assurance-led enhancement of the student learning experience by developing and disseminating good pedagogical practice.

*Positive outcome in QAA Institutional Audit regarding quality and standards of provision*
*Improved dissemination of good practice through internal networks (eg Quality Management and Enhancement network)*

\(^1\) http://www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/strategy/index.html
\(^2\) Centre for Vocational Learning
\(^3\) Centre for Work and Learning
Sector wide good practice of UELT in supporting the enhancement of learning and teaching

E. To support, recognise and reward good and excellent performance within professional teaching and support roles and to reflect this University structures for career development.

   Record of teaching innovation (eg award of four National Teaching Fellowships)
   Established accredited professional development programmes supporting staff teaching in HE (ie PCGHE/ATAP)
   Supported the continuing professional development of teaching and support staff though a wide variety of staff development activities
   Increased recognition for excellence in learning and teaching

3. Vision for 2006 – 09

At Kent, we strive for excellence in everything that we do, by fostering both staff and students’ potential to ensure high achievement in both teaching and research activities at the University. The strategic planning of learning and teaching activities at the University of Kent has resulted in an increase in both internal and external recognition for educational efforts by individual staff at Kent, as well as the University as a whole (summarised above in section 2, A-E). Such positive developments and excellent results in learning and teaching give us reason to be proud of Kent’s progress, not least because it represents the considerable contributions made by the students and staff (academic and administrative) across the University. The underpinning aims of this strategy are therefore to promote the continuous improvement of the student learning experience and to provide professional development and recognition for all staff who contribute to the teaching, learning and assessment process. In particular, the strategic objectives aim to increase the scope for research-led innovation and creativity that will create both an exceptional and unique student learning experience at Kent.

Kent is committed to providing an environment that supports the intellectual, social and personal development of all students (taught and research) by effectively responding to the changing student population and developments in HE provision (see section 4 below). To support this, the LTA Strategy focuses on enhancing the student learning experience by improving assessment and feedback mechanisms, as well as encouraging curriculum innovation that is research-led. The latter will cultivate international perspectives, incorporate opportunities for work-based learning and expand the acquisition of transferable skills, with an emphasis on increasing the integration of technology (especially ICT and multimedia). In turn, this will facilitate the development of flexible models of teaching and learning (where delivery varies in place, time and mode of study) which will underpin the further expansion of the multiversity approach to education and support of the widening participation agenda. In order to expand the range of student experience, students themselves will be increasingly involved in reflecting on their own learning (PDP), supporting others in learning (introduction of peer mentoring for academic, as well as personal, support), undertaking cultural and social opportunities (eg through volunteering schemes, taking language tuition or engaging with overseas and work placement activities). The emphasis will be on improving the learning environment to promote student-

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4 through development of promotion criteria
5 Faculty Learning and Teaching prizes – since 2003
6 Barbara Morris support prize – since 2004
centred learning and engagement that will not only improve student retention and achievement rates, but effectively equip graduates for future employment.

Kent is seeking to enhance its educational provision by separating the academic aspects of its learning provision (ie learning and teaching process) from the more administrative functions that underpin this process (especially the quality management procedures). By increasingly professionalising the role of academic and administrative staff at the University, the former will be enabled to concentrate on their core academic roles: learning, teaching and academic support combined with research and enterprise, whilst the latter will be encouraged to provide a highly effective administration and support service for students (eg course management and quality assurance; pastoral support and skills development). For all staff involved in teaching (full-time academic as well as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and sessional staff), there will be increased opportunities to engage with the PGCHE and ATAP programmes. These programmes, as well as those supporting the continuing professional development (CPD) of staff, will be mapped against the HEA Professional Teaching Standards Framework to provide a platform for the increased recognition and reward of teaching. Likewise the growing roles of administrative staff (eg departmental and Faculty Officers, admission officers) needs to be supported through targeted staff development sessions aimed at increasing the close linkage between central and departmental administrative functions and evolving a clear career structure for such staff. The CPD of all staff will be articulated closely with the mechanisms for career progression to support preparation for the appraisal process, to substantiate measures of peer esteem (required for promotion) and to secure external reward and recognition (eg funding or accreditation for learning and teaching activities). Equally, the University will provide funds and prizes to support the enhancement of learning and teaching activities though the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (HEFCE).

Moreover, by reviewing its mechanisms for quality assurance, Kent will seek to develop appropriate levels of regulation and accountability that will secure and enhance the quality and standards of its educational provision, but reduce the bureaucratic burden on staff.

4. Context

This University of Kent Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy (2006 – 09) reflects the University’s mission and values and is aligned with the key themes in the Institutional Plan (2006-09)\(^7\) and other key institutional strategies\(^8\). It has been formulated within the context of the ongoing changes in the Higher Education sector including:

- Expansion of HE and diversification of the student body
- Introduction of tuition fees and changing student expectations
- Dissemination of teaching quality information in the public domain\(^9\)
- Development of vocational learning curriculum/flexible learning culture

\(^7\) Inspire and support students to achieve their full potential; Create new ideas and exploit them; Enhance our international profile; Be an intellectual and cultural focus for Kent and Medway


\(^9\) eg TQI site - Qualitative (e.g. summaries of external examiner reports, Periodic Programme Reviews, National Student Survey (NSS) and quantitative information (eg HESA data) – under review to June 2007
Globalisation/internationalisation of education
Promotion of lifelong learning agenda (for both staff and students)
Innovation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
Integration of employment and skills to maximise economic growth
Promotion of local, regional, national and international partnerships and developments
Professionalisation of the teaching role
Harmonisation of quality assurance processes across EU (Bologna process)

and further aligns with the national strategic priorities of HEFCE (ie supporting widening participation and fair access, enhancing excellence in learning, teaching and research, and in partnerships), the Quality Assurance Agency (ie building on effective management processes to enhance the quality of educational provision) and the Higher Education Academy (ie support and recognition for teaching).

The LTA Strategy (2006 – 09) is presented in two parts:

**Part 1** articulates the strategic objectives concerning Learning, Teaching and Assessment (mapped against themes in the Institutional Plan – see section 1).

**Part 2** provides a more detailed implementation plan with fuller descriptions of each objective, specific targets, timescales and those with operational responsibilities for effecting action. It also provides a framework to monitor implementation of the strategy, and to provide evidence for the achievement of targets (identified through key performance indicators) and assessing their impact.

### 5. Process

#### 5a. Development and Implementation of the Strategy

A draft LTA Strategy was prepared by the Head of UELT, in consultation with members of the Academic Strategy Group (including the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Deans, representatives from Associate Colleges, members of the Academic Division (APS, QA&V) and students). The University’s Learning and Teaching Board, which is responsible for implementing and monitoring this strategy, sought feedback from departments, Faculties and partner institutions, to produce the final version of this strategy. The identification of key strategic objectives and targets within the strategy serves to promote a shared understanding of the priorities for learning, teaching and assessment at all levels within the institution (ie individual, departmental, Faculty and institutional levels). The articulation of the detailed implementation plan (**Part 2**) with defined targets and operational responsibilities seeks to ensure that the objectives of this strategy are achieved within an appropriate timescale.

#### 5b. Review and Evaluation

The LTA Strategy will be reviewed annually by the University’s Learning and Teaching Board which reports to the University’s Senate, and will be updated and expected to evolve to reflect progress and any changes as a result of experience or internal/external developments.

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10 Leitch Review of Skills ‘Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills’ DfES, Dec., 2006

11 APS – Admissions and Partnership Services; QA&V – Office for Quality Assurance and Validation
PART 1

6. Strategic Objectives

6.1 Provide accessible, flexible and diverse learning opportunities that develop student skills, attributes and knowledge which will enhance their employment prospects and engagement with lifelong learning

Institutional context

Kent has always seen as part of its identity, the ability to provide a high quality student learning experience. The University is committed to providing a wide range of educational programmes, which support the academic, social, as well as personal development of all of its students. The range of HE provision must not only attract students and provide an excellent quality of education, but inspire students to develop skills for lifelong learning and employability.\(^\text{12}\)

As Kent is now a University with several campuses and an increasingly diverse student population, another challenge is to promote comparability of student learning experience. In order to provide this, there is a need for greater flexibility in the provision of learning and teaching to accommodate a range of students and programmes, different modes of study and delivery and the variety of learning resources. Detailed analysis of the National Student Survey has indicated that there is scope for improvement, particularly in Assessment and Feedback and Personal Development. Strategic enhancement in these areas will be supported by the University’s Assessment Framework\(^\text{13}\), and by promoting forms of personal and professional development that will prepare graduates effectively for the rapidly changing employment market. e-learning remains an area that is still under development at Kent. There is now a pressing need to implement an e-learning strategy, that will support the increasing demand for, and engagement, with webCT and other learning technologies, and more widely, support flexible learning initiatives and the widening participation agenda.

Specific objectives

6.1.1 Provide a wide portfolio of programmes that are research-led and based upon academic excellence and creativity, to offer distinctive and innovative programmes of study.

6.1.2 Promote assessment practice that enhances student learning by developing transparent assessment criteria for the achievement of learning outcomes, with appropriate workloads and scheduling to permit timely and effective feedback.

6.1.3 Develop enterprise and employability skills\(^\text{14}\) in the curriculum by using subject-specific Student Employability Profiles\(^\text{15}\) to inform learning outcomes and assessment regimes.

\(^\text{12}\)Leitch Review of Skills – “HEIs (should) make available relevant, flexible and responsive provision that meets the high skills needs of employers and their staff”

\(^\text{13}\)The Assessment Framework provides the principles that should underpin assessment practice at the University that will minimise variability, and enhance, the student experience of assessment. It seeks to inform and support, but not define, academic creativity and innovation in assessment practice.

\(^\text{14}\)eg communication and organisational skills, time management, taking initiative and decisions, risk assessment, independent- and team-work

\(^\text{15}\)Student Employability Profiles – Guide for Academic and Support Staff have been compiled by the HEA and its subject centres to specify the work-related skills/competencies that can be developed through the study of a particular subject and which can be used to inform curriculum design and the development of employability skills see: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/profiles.htm
6.1.4 Develop an e-learning strategy to enhance the range of pedagogic uses of e-learning by staff and students\(^\text{16}\) and to support the delivery of blended and flexible learning.

6.1.5 Deliver flexible learning programmes to enable ‘anywhere/anytime’\(^\text{17}\) delivery and assessment in response to learner and employer requirements.

6.1.6 Provide opportunities for work based learning\(^\text{18}\), increased employer engagement in the development and delivery of programmes\(^\text{19}\) and continuing professional development and training\(^\text{20}\) to improve employability for a wide range of students.

6.1.7 Provide opportunities for the development of cultural and social awareness through participation in activities within and outside the University.\(^\text{21}\)

6.2 Enhance systems of student support and guidance that improve student engagement with their studies, ensure student progression and retention and respond effectively to student learning needs

**Institutional context**

Kent has well developed support systems for students to support their learning at departmental, as well as institutional level, but there is variability in the levels of support available or taken up by students. The development of a coordinated programme of workshops for all Kent students\(^\text{22}\), which includes IT training, library skills, study skills and other sources of advice, is a step in the right direction, but not all students are engaged with this. It is important that the personal academic support system (PASS) works effectively and that additional support is provided at key periods, especially to enhance the first year experience at Kent in order to promote student engagement and retention in their studies. Equally, there is ongoing need to further develop the postgraduate training programme in support of the Roberts skills agenda.\(^\text{23}\)

**Specific objectives**

6.2.1 Improve the Personal Academic Support System (PASS) to support student needs in a way that is appropriate to individual programmes and provides effective integration between departmental and central services.\(^\text{24}\)

6.2.2 Enhance the support provided at key periods (e.g. induction, examination) to support student engagement and retention rates.

6.2.3 Develop online support materials for students studying off-campus and at partner colleges\(^\text{25}\).

6.2.4 Offer guidance to help students understand and reflect upon their own particular approach to learning to plan for their own personal and career progression.

\(^{16}\) Including Blended Learning and Assessment (CAA)

\(^{17}\) Varying in mode (i.e. p/t, f/t study), place (i.e. campus, home, workplace) and time (i.e. 24/7 accessibility)

\(^{18}\) e.g. work placements, learning at work (WBL), simulated work experience

\(^{19}\) through CWaL initiatives

\(^{20}\) Including short courses and CPD

\(^{21}\) e.g. student representation scheme; volunteering programmes in the community; international visits and exchanges

\(^{22}\) Student Learning Development Programme

\(^{23}\) Transferable Skills Training programme at KENT - see http://www.kent.ac.uk/research-training/

\(^{24}\) eg Disability Support Unit, English Language Unit, Careers Advisory Service, Counselling

\(^{25}\) Virtual Centre for Academic Practice (TQEF-funded – see Annex 1)
development by integrating Personal Development Planning in the curriculum.

6.2.5 Enhance transferable skills training for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers to enrich the research environment.

6.2.6 Develop learning spaces suitable for multi-purpose activities, to support the varying demands of learning, teaching and assessment adopted by different discipline areas and in response to staff and student feedback.

6.3 Foster excellence in teaching, and promote the recognition and reward of teaching and learning support roles by enhancing the professional development opportunities for staff

Institutional context

The University is committed to the initial and ongoing professional development of staff as a route to ensuring the quality of the student learning experience through a process of continuous evaluation, reflection and development. Hence Kent will continue to support the development of professional teaching standards throughout the University teaching population. Existing activity includes the provision of a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE - a programme for staff new to teaching, including preparation for research roles), the Associate Teacher Accreditation Programme (ATAP - for part time teaching staff), an ongoing topical staff development programme (for all teaching and support staff), as well as central funding for learning and teaching related staff development outside the University of Kent.

The accredited PGCHE and ATAP programmes are now fully subscribed and have undergone a curriculum review in 2006 and already map onto the first and second levels of the National Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. Although further CPD opportunities exist for experienced staff through central and departmental staff development programmes, there is a need to develop more individualised forms of professional development which will combine the full spectrum of academic activities (ie research, learning and teaching, administration, enterprise, management etc). Kent will develop a system for professional development of experienced academic staff mapped onto the HEA advanced practitioner level (Level 3), that could result in a ‘Teaching Profile’ to inform internal appraisal and promotion process and ideally, lead to accreditation by the HEA or other professional bodies. Equally, professional development activities need to be tailored to specific staff roles in support of learning and teaching and to respond more proactively to disciplinary requests. Additionally, developmental funding will be made available to support departmental engagement with the objectives in this LTA Strategy or for pedagogical research (through TQEF funding – see Annex 1) that may lead to awards in recognition of excellence in learning and teaching and dissemination to the wider academic community.

26 to include the development of e-portfolios (eg PebblePAD)
27 in response to QAA Audit of Postgraduate Research Programmes (2006)
28 including annual monitoring reports (AMRs); internal and national student surveys (ISS,NSS)
29 Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (HEA 2006)
30 ‘Teaching Profile’ ie reflective portfolio of L&T activities (including external examining, peer observation and mentoring, PGCHE/ATAP or CPD delivery/uptake etc.) as well as pedagogic research eg DoLTs; internal and external examiners; academic administrators (eg departmental, Faculty and admission officers)
31 ie Teaching Sabbaticals, Challenge Fund and Enhancement Fund – see Annex 1 for full details
Specific objectives

6.3.1 Continue to provide and develop high quality programmes to prepare new teachers and support staff for their changing roles in higher education.  
6.3.2 Promote research-led teaching by encouraging research on academic practice and integrating disciplinary research practice into teaching. 
6.3.3 Improve opportunities for continuing professional development of experienced staff, in line with the Professional Standards Framework (HEA), to enhance the quality of their teaching and opportunities for career progression. 
6.3.4 Engage with national professional bodies for educational and staff development to learn from, and contribute to emerging pedagogical practice. 
6.3.5 Provide support for leadership, management and administrative roles through staff development programmes to foster and disseminate good practice. 
6.3.6 Recognise and reward high quality teaching and support through the University appraisal and promotion processes and the achievement of both institutional and national awards. 
6.3.7 Support departmental and institutional initiatives to enhance the quality of teaching and the student learning experience. 

6.4 Support continuous improvement in learning, teaching and assessment by reviewing formal quality assurance processes to promote strategic enhancement of the student learning experience 

Institutional context

Whilst there is confidence in the quality and standards of educational provision at Kent, the previous QAA audit (2004) noted that there is an ongoing need to ensure adherence to external QAA academic infrastructure and to address internal variability in the application of quality assurance procedures that impact on the student learning experience (including assessment – see 6.1 above). In reviewing our quality management processes to address this, there is an additional need to address the tension between accountability and bureaucracy, by developing more risk-driven approaches to quality assurance that will place the focus on enhancement of provision. Equally there is a need to develop our internal code of practice to accommodate developments in flexible and work-based learning. The expansion of our collaborative provision to European and international partners provides increasing impetus to consider the implications of the Bologna declaration for the mutual recognition of quality processes and credit recognition and transfer for awards. All such developments should reflect best practice in the HE sector and ongoing evaluation and dissemination of successful collaborative practice.
Specific objectives

6.4.1 Use clear, rigorous and effective quality management systems to ensure that quality and standards are consistent with local\(^{45}\) and national\(^{46}\) expectations through a process of critical self-evaluation and review.

6.4.2 Streamline quality management processes to ensure appropriate levels of accountability (and to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy) that will promote the identification (and dissemination) of good practice and provide routes to systematically enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.\(^{47}\)

6.4.3 Develop procedures to enhance the articulation between vocational and academic programmes and support the development of credit recognition and transfer to support both flexible and work-based learning (WBL) initiatives.\(^{48}\)

6.4.4 Develop the international dimension of internal quality assurance processes to support the portfolio of programmes and further internationalisation of the curriculum\(^{49}\).

6.5 Maintain and develop opportunities for academic collaboration with HE and FE partners to support regional, national and international developments

Institutional context

The University has successfully developed and enhanced partnerships with other HEIs over the past few years, as part of its widening participation strategy. This has resulted in programme innovation and development and has been supported by the increasing engagement of academic staff and students in the expansion of the University to a multi-site HEI\(^{50}\). There is a need to develop opportunities for adult education and work-based learning though the accreditation for prior learning (APEL) and credit recognition of flexible professional development degrees. Further, in order to realise our ambition to internationalise, the University plans to develop a strong global dimension in the learning experience of all students by providing opportunities and resources that both address, and promote, the cultural diversity of students (ie internationalisation of the curriculum). In addition, there will be opportunities to enhance the international dimension of staff development and expand language tuition, as well as promote student mobility\(^{51}\) and transferability of qualifications between existing European and international partners\(^{52}\).

Specific objectives

6.5.1 Explore further opportunities for collaborative provision between local and regional providers of HE programmes, as well as international partners.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{45}\) University’s Codes of Practice for Taught and Research programmes

\(^{46}\) Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

\(^{47}\) Reporting on student progress/achievement and responding to feedback

\(^{48}\) including APECL and credit transfer procedures

\(^{49}\) in line with the Bologna declaration and the development of ‘European Guidelines and Standards for Quality Assurance’

\(^{50}\) Canterbury, Medway, Tonbridge, Wye, Brussels, Transmanche

\(^{51}\) eg Exchange visits or short courses, Erasmus programmes, summer schools

\(^{52}\) Credit for, or certification of, international experience; development of the Diploma Supplement and PDP

\(^{53}\) University of Kent at Brussels; University of the Transmanche
6.5.2 Provide articulated progression routes into and through HE by strengthening the FE/HE interface, which will enable the development and integration of vocational and academic programmes of study.

6.5.3 Enhance links with employers, professional bodies and employer-linked organisations\(^{54}\) to develop academic expertise and excellence in work and learning that will contribute to regional and national developments.\(^{55}\)

6.5.4 Explore ways in which local communities may increase their participation in higher education.\(^{56}\)

6.5.5 Promote internationalisation of the student learning experience by enhancing partnerships, promoting curriculum development, providing language tuition and opportunities for exchange.\(^{57}\)

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\(^{54}\) eg Learning Skills Councils, SEEDA, Adult Education Services, NHSU

\(^{55}\) eg Kent and Medway Lifelong Learning Network

\(^{56}\) through the School(s) and Partner College(s) Liaison network – see WP strategy

\(^{57}\) International Strategy