

CASE STUDY: MANAGING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AT UWTSD

The University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) is a UK higher education institution with campuses across Wales and England, including Carmarthen, Lampeter, Swansea, Cardiff, London, and Birmingham. The University occupies a distinctive position within the sector due to its strong commitment to widening participation, applied learning, and civic engagement. Its mission is closely aligned with regional economic development and social inclusion, reflecting both its historical foundations and contemporary policy priorities within Wales and the wider UK. As a multi-campus and partially federated institution, UWTSD delivers a diverse portfolio of undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional programmes spanning creative, vocational, and academic disciplines.

In recent years, UWTSD has performed strongly in several key areas. Student recruitment has remained relatively stable compared with many institutions in the UK higher education sector, supported by growth in practice-based courses, professionally orientated programmes, and postgraduate provision. The University has developed a reputation for student-centred teaching, strong academic and pastoral support, and close connections with employers and local communities. Emphasis on employability, flexible delivery, and real-world learning has enabled UWTSD to maintain a clear identity within an increasingly competitive and market-driven sector.

As part of its widening participation strategy, UWTSD has expanded its presence beyond traditional regional locations. The London campus, developed to improve access to higher education for students from under-represented backgrounds, operates under the University's Institute of Inner-City Learning. Building on this model, UWTSD established a campus at Quay Place in Birmingham in 2018, followed by an additional location in Sparkhill in 2020. Both Birmingham campuses also sit within the Institute of Inner-City Learning and were designed to extend educational opportunities to learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in large urban centres. In recent years, enrolments at both the Birmingham and London campuses have increased, reflecting demand for accessible, flexible, and career-focused higher education provision.

Despite these positive developments, UWTSD continues to operate within a challenging external environment that has acted as a significant trigger for organisational change. UK higher education has experienced sustained financial pressure arising from capped tuition fees, rising costs associated with staff pay and pensions and increased operational spending. These pressures have been compounded by intense competition for students, particularly in metropolitan areas where multiple providers offer similar programmes. Regulatory scrutiny has also intensified, with increased emphasis on student outcomes, financial sustainability, and institutional accountability.

Changes in the international policy environment have further contributed to uncertainty, particularly in relation to student recruitment. While enrolments at the Birmingham and London campuses have grown, there is concern within the institution about the potential impact of immigration policies on future recruitment. Restrictions and uncertainty surrounding immigration arrangements pose risks to the enrolment of students from the European Union and from wider international markets. These students represent an important

component of the University's diverse learning communities, particularly within inner-city campuses, and contribute both financially and culturally to the institution. The possibility of reduced international and EU student numbers therefore presents a strategic risk, requiring careful monitoring and contingency planning.

Alongside these external pressures, internal factors have reinforced the need for organisational change. UWTSD's multi-campus structure, shaped by historical mergers and expansion into new regions, has created organisational complexity. Differences in systems, processes, and operational practices across campuses have sometimes limited efficiency and challenged consistency. Managing growth in urban centres such as Birmingham and London has also required additional investment in staffing, infrastructure, and student support services, placing further demands on resources.

Financial sustainability has emerged as a central internal concern. Although some areas of provision have grown, others have become increasingly difficult to maintain in a constrained funding environment. Senior management has recognised the importance of ensuring that academic portfolios remain viable and aligned with market demand, while also supporting the University's social mission. This has involved reviewing programmes, support structures, and organisational processes to ensure that resources are deployed effectively across all campuses.

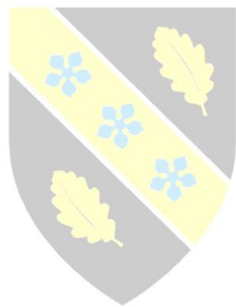
In response, UWTSD's senior management has adopted a planned and strategic approach to managing change. Institutional reviews have focused on academic provision, governance arrangements, and operational efficiency, with the aim of strengthening long-term sustainability while preserving the University's core values. Communication and engagement have formed an important part of this process, with management seeking to explain the rationale for change in the context of wider sector pressures. While uncertainty has inevitably arisen, the University has emphasised its continued commitment to widening participation, student support, and civic responsibility.

Digital transformation has also played a significant role in the University's approach to change. Building on developments accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, UWTSD has continued to invest in digital infrastructure and flexible learning approaches, particularly within its inner-city campuses. These developments are intended to support flexible access to learning, respond to student expectations, and enhance operational efficiency. However, they have also required staff to adapt to new technologies and ways of working, adding another layer to the change process.

Seminar Case Questions

1. Why might a university that has been performing relatively well still need to undergo organisational change? Refer to the case of UWTSD to support your answer.
2. How have external factors within the UK higher education environment contributed to the need for change at UWTSD?
3. In what ways has UWTSD's expansion into London and Birmingham supported its widening participation agenda, and what new challenges has this expansion created?

4. To what extent do immigration policies pose a risk to the sustainability of UWTSD's inner-city campuses, and how might these risks affect future strategic decision-making?
5. How might organisational complexity across multiple campuses influence the effectiveness of change initiatives within UWTSD?
6. What tensions can be identified between UWTSD's social mission and the need for financial sustainability?
7. What role does communication appear to play in how change is being managed at UWTSD?
8. What questions should senior management be asking when planning further change in an uncertain external environment?



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