

New model highlights importance of core academic value in Universities

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Credit: City University London

In the higher education sector where there are multiple and competing objectives and often division between academics and professional services, a new model by academics at City University London and Regent's University London offers a novel and innovative way to understand the complexities of the sector and gives insight into how they can be better managed.

Published in *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, the model shows how all university staff – from the VC to the apprentice gardener – can make significant contributions when their individual objectives are aligned to the 'core academic value' of the organisation.

The authors show that a 360-degree presentation of organisational

functions – including all university staff and the wider circle of the [academic community](#) – highlights the need for a greater and more transparent consideration of the contribution of all university activities to create 'core academic value', which must be the main mission of all universities.

Defining core academic value as the intellectual wealth created by all of a university's output, the academic wheel splits the university into four sections – namely academics, students, professionals and administrators. As a result the model provides a way to conceptualise the relationships between different professional groups within the university, presented in the context of the wider circle of the external world in which universities operate.

Philip Corr, Professor of Psychology at City University London and co-author of the paper, said:

"Focus on the central mission of the university – however defined by the specific academic values of each university – requires strategies to be put in place to align the perspectives, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of all university staff. The successful implementation of what we might call 'alignment goals' should be expected to have significant impacts on this desired outcome. As university organisational life is truly complex, often with competing objectives (e.g. teaching vs. research), this focus is an effective means to foster a common spirit towards a single goal: core academic value, in which everyone can stake a claim of unique and valued contribution.

"We developed the academic wheel as a way of thinking about core academic value. The hub of core academic value is surrounded by satellite academic values such as teaching and learning, research and impact, and enterprise and engagement. These are the specific factors that comprise the general factor of 'core academic value'. It should be

noted that these three satellite values may, and indeed will, vary between universities; and the size of the general factor of core academic value will differ too, reflecting the effectiveness of the organisation to harness its resources to achieve its specific academic values. What is also important to emphasise is that to ensure core academic value universities must be 'academic led', but this does not mean necessarily led exclusively by academics."

More information: Margaret R. Wilson et al. Managing 'academic value': the 360-degree perspective, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/13603108.2016.1181117](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2016.1181117)

Provided by City University London

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