Located in a city steeped in history, Oxford Brookes is one of the UK’s most prominent modern universities and has a global reputation for excellence in research and teaching, along with strong connections with business and industry. Its four faculties – Business, Health and Life Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences and Technology, Design and Environment – are committed to driving innovation in their respective fields by advancing their research portfolios and achieving demonstrable impacts. Devoted to preparing its graduates for fulfilling and consequential lives, the University is also seeking to forge links with other institutions, positively influence the wider community and create high-quality, sector-leading services for the future.

Founded by John Henry Brookes in 1865, Oxford Brookes began life in borrowed rooms of Oxford’s Taylorian Institution Library, subsequently becoming a technology school, then a college, a polytechnic and finally, in 1992, a university. Today, the research at the University endeavours to go beyond the boundaries of pure research, focusing on real-world applications and professional development. Excitingly, Oxford Brookes is currently gearing up to celebrate its 150th year in 2015, a milestone achievement in its longstanding history.

A progressive institution, Oxford Brookes University is building on its outstanding track record of high-quality research and teaching to advance its growing international reputation and make a positive impact on the local and national economy.

The University has a strong vocational legacy, and the world-class research conducted at Oxford Brookes today has a firm emphasis on making a real difference to the world. Notable examples include historical research that has contributed to shaping UK terrorism policy, collaborative studies that are helping to adapt homes to climate change and explorations into perceptions of homosexuality, which have driven change in attitudes and policies both in the UK and abroad: ‘It is not enough just to focus on activities and outputs that promote research impact, such as staging a conference or publishing a report; you must be able to provide evidence of impact itself,’ asserts Professor Anne-Marie Kilday, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences and Pro Vice-Chancellor for Impact. ‘By ensuring that our research makes the biggest possible impact on policy and practice, and improving how we measure and capture this, we are better able to support the case for using and investing in it.’

Oxford Brookes has been ranked within the top 10 for several years for intellectual property (IP). Reflective of the tangible impacts of its research, the University draws £1.8 million per year. Most of this money is derived from two innovative projects with global reach, both of which are in the area of diagnostics. The first project resulted in the production of antibodies that help in the detection of Down’s syndrome – and the IP was subsequently commercialised, representing over half of the University’s total income from IP. The other half comes from a second project, in which scientists produced an anti-mullerian hormone used for quantifying ovarian reserve in women. While this was initially used as a manual assay, it has now been fully automated and was brought to market by two major international diagnostics companies, Beckman Coulter and Roche. Annual sales of the Down’s syndrome test are about US $30 million. Cumulative sales to date are in excess of $100 million across all major global markets.
ADDRESSING HEALTHCARE CHALLENGES THROUGH COLLABORATION

Following an announcement in 2013 to advocate collaboration between Oxford’s NHS Trusts and academic institutions, Oxford Brookes, the University of Oxford, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust all joined forces in March 2014, marking the start of an important partnership. Jointly forming the Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network (AHSN), the four partners are contributing their respective strengths in world-class science, research, training and clinical practice to address present-day healthcare challenges. This strategic partnership represents a stunning opportunity for Oxford Brookes to engage in deeper and more effective collaboration with other world-leading institutions. It provides a platform for researchers and health professionals to work together in a coordinated way, enabling all of the partners to share their unique expertise and resources. Ultimately, the Network will pave the way for the rapid translation of scientific discoveries from the laboratory to the ward, profoundly impacting patients in Oxfordshire and the wider region by providing them with innovative new treatments and better care.

JOINED-UP RESEARCH

Based in the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment, the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD) was founded in 2004. Its primary purpose is to drive research on urban and natural environments, in turn advancing knowledge about sustainability. The OISD takes a multi-layered approach to exploring sustainability, taking into account social, economic, environmental and governance factors. There are eight separate research groups within the Institute, yet its emphasis on multidisciplinary strategies means that there are important synergies between them all.

In one exciting initiative launched in summer 2014, the OISD formed an ambitious and innovative partnership with Oxford Brookes’ BioRegional Development Group to launch a Living Lab in Bicester, one of the UK’s four ‘eco towns’. The project will see the construction of 393 high-performance homes, with plans for a further 6,400 homes by 2026. Further down the line, it is hoped that the Eco-Bicester Living Lab initiative will provide the town with evidence-based learning, facilitating its transformation into a truly exceptional place to live and work. Through its research, the OISD is aiming to identify solutions to sustainability – as tested and evaluated in Bicester – and eventually roll them out across the rest of the UK and throughout the world.

COLLABORATION IN THE CITY

Oxford Brookes prioritises collaboration with industry and businesses in the city and the wider Oxfordshire region. Local engagement is currently on the rise, with the growth of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) – that is, government-backed partnerships between local authorities and businesses – and with the University’s involvement in the Oxford AHSN. Additionally, Oxford Brookes is involved in a collaborative ‘smart city’ project for Oxford, which includes investigating and devising a transport plan for the city and deciding what an Oxford smart city would look like. The project is being conducted in partnership with various LEPs.

INVESTMENT IN INSPIRATION

Labelled the most significant project in the history of Oxford Brookes University, the recent construction of the John Henry Brookes building on the Headington Campus is transforming the experiences of students and staff alike. The remarkable building opened its doors for the first time on 24 February 2014 – and its contemporary design, along with its light and airy open spaces, heralds the future of higher education and represents a major attraction for prospective students. Designed by architects Design Engine, the building has won a prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Regional and National Award, taking the Building of the Year accolade. In addition, it is endowed with a range of innovative and sustainable features that have enabled it to achieve a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM) Excellent rating.

FORGING A BRIGHT FUTURE

Since achieving university status in 1992, Oxford Brookes has grown and flourished as an academic institution – and it is currently recognised as one of the UK’s top modern universities. Looking ahead, the University will build on its successes to date, providing its students with the best possible experiences and continuing to drive high-quality research and innovation within each of its four faculties. Moreover, the University is seeking to advance its current plans and projects for commercialisation, to develop strategic partnerships with business and industry and to become embedded within the innovation supply chain in Oxford.

“AS A FORMER POLYTECHNIC WITH A STRONG VOCATIONAL LEGACY, THE WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH CONDUCTED AT OXFORD BROOKES TODAY IS FOCUSED ON MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD”

Professor Alistair Fitt
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Oxford Brookes