



University of Aberdeen

**Outcome Agreement with the
Scottish Funding Council
2018/19**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is the University of Aberdeen Outcome Agreement for 2018/19; an annual update, which forms part of its three year Agreement published in 2017 (available [here](#)). The document is structured to align with the University's own Strategic Plan (2015-20), available [here](#), and it systematically addresses the areas of strategic importance identified by the Scottish Government for prioritisation and enhanced focus via the SFC guidance for 2018/19 to 2020/21 (SFC/GD/20/2017), under the ethos of intensification. These include widening access, articulation, gender and addressing skills shortages in the economy, among others. The document sets out what targets the University has in place against all key priority areas to help underpin delivery of collective targets at national level, in line with Government expectations. It then outlines, for each area, what steps are being taken by the institution, both strategically and operationally, to deliver on targets set.

Contents

FOREWORD FROM THE PRINCIPAL	4
INTRODUCTION	5
1. PEOPLE.....	6
1.1. WIDENING ACCESS (WA) AND ARTICULATION.....	6
1.2. GENDER AND ATHENA SWAN.....	10
1.3. ADDITIONAL AREAS OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE UNDER THE PEOPLE THEME	12
Equality and Diversity	12
Society and Culture.....	13
Governance	14
Staff Wellbeing.....	14
Sustainability.....	15
2. TEACHING AND LEARNING	16
2.1. STEM	16
2.2. Retention	17
2.3. Enhanced Alignment of Skills Provision with the Needs of Employers.....	18
2.4. Additional Areas of Strategic Importance under the Teaching and Learning Theme	20
Language Skills, Gaelic and British Sign Language	20
Internationalisation	21
3. RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE	23
3.1. Research Performance	23
3.2. Knowledge Exchange (KE) – Contribution to Greater Innovation in the Economy.....	27
APPENDIX 1 – CASE STUDIES	29
APPENDIX 2 - UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN: NATIONAL TABLE OF MEASURES.....	33
APPENDIX 3 - UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN: UNIVERSITY INNOVATION FUND.....	34

FOREWORD FROM THE PRINCIPAL

For over half a millennium, the University of Aberdeen has been an institution which is rooted in its community and committed to bringing the benefits of global scholarship to Scotland and the North of Scotland in particular. This Outcome Agreement maintains that tradition of supporting our nation and this hugely important region to thrive and succeed, a success to which this University's future is intrinsically linked.

The Scottish Government is rightly committed to widening access to the wonderful experience and opportunities that an excellent higher education can open up for people – and it is right to challenge universities to identify how they can do more to help more people from the most deprived and disadvantaged areas of our society to benefit from higher education. This is a complex and multi-faceted issue that goes beyond any one sector's capacity to solve, but universities undoubtedly have a key role to play. A major part of this Outcome Agreement is therefore dedicated to how we are increasing our commitment to the challenge of widening access and how we will continue to work closely with the Further Education sector to enable greater numbers of students to articulate into university education at Aberdeen.

Of course, it is just as important that once students from disadvantaged or minority backgrounds come here, that they stay here and succeed. All students have different support needs but we recognise the particular importance of ensuring that we have the systems and networks in place to identify and provide the right type of support, at the right time, that some widening access students may need to flourish and realise their potential.

Widening access is important, but so too is the quality of education that we are widening access to. In a general sense, that has to be to a student experience that is fulfilling, enjoyable, stretching while also supportive, and of a quality that can rival the very best anywhere in the world. More specifically, our students need to be equipped with the generic skill sets that will enable them to thrive and succeed as citizens and in the world of work. And in turn, we need to be cognisant of our role as a bridge between the individual and the workplace where the Scottish Government has highlighted the need for more to be done in increasing the uptake in STEM subjects and bringing the strengths of our research to business to grow innovation in the economy. Ultimately this all goes back to the quality of our researchers, our teachers and our graduates as people, which is and always has been, one of the most central contributions we can make to Scotland.

People, is therefore, a key strand to this Outcome Agreement and the University is an incredibly diverse community. Across the following pages we highlight examples of our commitment to supporting and celebrating the contribution that our people and the diversity of our community makes to our success as an institution of learning. In particular, it sets out the actions we will take forward to address gender imbalances across our student and staff communities, including how we will build on the progress already made towards addressing the gender pay gap. It also reports on how, through the reform of our governing body, we have not only become one of the first universities in Scotland to implement the membership requirements of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act, but we have also transformed its gender balance to one of almost 50:50.

This Outcome Agreement, therefore, reflects the challenges which the Scottish Government have defined and asked higher education in Scotland to respond to. They are challenges which we welcome and which, as the document describes, we are committed to playing our part in helping Scotland meet. I commend the document to all who have an interest in the University and the major contribution we continue to make to Scotland's future success.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
April 2018

INTRODUCTION

This document supplements the three-year Outcome Agreement (OA) the University of Aberdeen published in 2017 with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (available [here](#)) and should be read in conjunction with that document. The University presents its OA by aligning it to its Strategic Plan 2015-2020 (available [here](#)), and to the areas of strategic importance identified by the SFC. In this way, the University addresses the requirements set out in the SFC guidance for 2017/18 to 2019/20 (SFC/GD/22/2016).

Particular emphasis is given to those areas of strategic importance identified by the Scottish Government for prioritisation and enhanced focus via the SFC guidance for 2018/19 to 2020/21 (SFC/GD/20/2017). These are widening access; retention and enhanced outcomes for disadvantaged learners; enhanced alignment of skills provision with the needs of the economy; increased participation in STEM subjects; supporting enhanced business innovation; and addressing gender imbalances. In this regard, this Agreement is designed to address directly the University's distinct contribution to delivering a positive return against the Scottish Government's strategic priority areas. It does so taking account of the Government's ethos for *intensification*, under which more ambitious demands and challenging targets have been set in specific areas, including widening access. In more general terms, this OA also provides a concise update on all other key commitments made in previous plans, against which the University has and continues to deliver.

As in the three-year OA published in 2017, this document ties all SFC strategic priorities, including the areas identified for prioritisation and enhanced focus, to the key themes that form the basis of the University's Strategic Plan (2015-2020). These are:

- People;
- Teaching and Learning;
- Research and Knowledge Exchange

This demonstrates the direct alignment between the University's own strategic priorities and those set out by the Scottish Government. It should also be noted that this document has been developed in consultation with key stakeholder groups across the University, at all levels, including: senior institutional management; management across different professional services functions; the Students' Association; students; staff and staff Trade Union representatives.

Finally, the University considers this document live and fluid; it reserves the right to revise this Agreement in response to changes from across the external environment which may adversely affect its ability to achieve the ambitions put forward or the targets set. This statement is made taking account of the great uncertainty currently affecting both the Scottish and UK higher education (HE) sectors, particularly in the context of Brexit and the range of impacts this might feasibly have across all areas considered strategically important, both by the University and by the Scottish Government.

Note: a summary of the University's milestones and targets for the period, as defined by the SFC under its list of "National Measures", is available under [Appendix 2](#).

1. PEOPLE

A central tenet of the University's Strategic Plan is 'People'. This refers to students, alumni and staff acting as the basis of every success the University achieves. The importance afforded to this area is evidenced by the institutional leadership role of the *Vice-Principal for People Strategy*. A number of institutional strategies with People at their heart are also in place to support this role, and the work of the People Directorate. Institutional strategies under this theme align with the following SFC priority areas:

- **SFC Priority 1: Widening Access;**
- **SFC Priority 5: High Performing Institutions.**

1.1. WIDENING ACCESS (WA) AND ARTICULATION

SIMD20

The University is pleased to report that across 2016/17, it exceeded targets set for the number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled students recruited from the 20% most deprived postcodes, with year on year growth across both metrics.

The University notes that widening access is now subject to further prioritisation and enhanced focus by Scottish Government and the SFC, reflected in the recommendations made by the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) and the SFC's review of funding arrangements for additional widening access places from 2018-19 onwards. Taking account of this shift, the University has agreed to the widening access targets set by SFC over the next four years (across both SFC and COWA measures). For 2018/19, the target has been fixed at 4.5%, although this will increase incrementally year on year, towards a longer term target of 8% by 2021/22 (for full breakdown of targets, see National Table of Measures for Aberdeen, [Appendix 2](#)). The University is therefore intensifying its long-standing commitment for ongoing improvement on widening access, and it supports this position by first, seeking to enhance its strategies for delivering the more ambitious targets set by Government, and second, by reviewing the range of programmes, initiatives and activities outlined last year in its three-year [Outcome Agreement](#) (*please cross refer*), to apply additional focus on activities that aim to increase and support the SIMD20 population specifically. This is led by a dedicated Widening Participation team located within the Marketing and Student Recruitment directorate.

In this regard, at a strategic level, the University is currently revising its WA strategy, with a view to identifying and developing those areas of activity and specific initiatives that have delivered the most successful outcomes. This will then inform allocation of investment to activities most likely to optimise increased recruitment and retention of SIMD20 students over the duration of the OA, and beyond. In operational terms, the most notable new initiatives are as follows:

- The offer of free accommodation to all SIMD20 students entering first year of study, rolled out for the first time in 2017/18 ([see Case Study 1, Appendix 1](#)) and to be continued in 2018/19. This is designed to attract and support SIMD20 students from across Scotland, and comes by way of response to the shortage of SIMD20 students within the University's immediate locality; noting that for financial reasons, students from lower income backgrounds tend to enrol in local universities to minimise living costs. In monetary terms, this initiative equated to an investment of approximately £200K by the University in accommodation costs; going forward, the level of investment will naturally increase, assuming more ambitious recruitment targets are met.
- The provision of free accommodation to Summer School entrants, and students enrolling on Gateway to Medicine; a programme designed to enhance access to Medicine for students from deprived backgrounds ([see Case Study 2](#)). A review is now ongoing to appraise the success of these offerings, to determine the impact and added value in both attracting and retaining SIMD20 students. All of the accommodation offerings will remain in place for 2018/19; the success and impact of these activities will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- The offer of a range of scholarships to WA students, designed to enhance not only recruitment, but also retention over the course of the degree programme; in this regard, the University is also considering the offer of annual bursaries for SIMD20 students in place of, or as an alternative to free accommodation, with a specific aim of enhancing rates of non-continuation.

It should be noted that Aberdeen has, in the past, developed a number of strategies that align with the *ethos* of WA, even if not meeting SFC criteria around SIMD20/40 *per se*. This has been a deliberate strategy, designed in-part to address more specifically the geographic and socio-economic environment in which the University operates. To give an example, the University is concerted targeting increased recruitment from local low progression schools, led by the dedicated Widening Participation team referenced above. Work is ongoing with these schools individually, to provide tailored support to meet their specific needs. The University is seeking to expand this to include low progression schools in Central and West Scotland, creating a real opportunity for students from these areas to consider Aberdeen as a viable option. Additionally, work is ongoing with the ASPIRENorth Project, and over the past year the Widening Participation team has arranged campus visits with Schools across the country, to include one to one meetings with academics and taster sessions for pupils who are taking part in the ASPIRENorth programme.

The University prides itself on the extensive measures that have been implemented over the past five years to support the transition, retention and progression of all students. The University does not consider recruitment of students under the widening access agenda a successful outcome *per se*; success also requires that students are supported and retained longer term, to achieve positive outcomes that prepare them to enter the world of work, or to contribute to internationally competitive and impactful research. Whilst recognising that it is vital to ensure appropriate support is available to students who are more inclined to require it, and therefore acceptable identification of such students is necessary, the University makes a concerted effort to ensure that all students have access to the highest levels of pastoral and non-academic support services, including and not limited to dedicated Mental Health and Wellbeing support, one-to-one Personal Tutors, careers advice, Students InfoHub, alongside the services offered by the Aberdeen University Students Association.

Articulation

Linked to WA, the University retains its absolute commitment to meeting the objectives set by Scottish Government under the Articulation agenda, noting this too is now subject to enhanced focus and prioritisation by the SFC, in line with ministerial expectations. With previous strategies having focused primarily on increasing the number of HN students progressing from the FE sector, the University has now set ambitious targets for the successful articulation of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from college to degree level courses with advanced standing. The aim is to achieve 35% by 2020/21, rising from a baseline of 7% in 2016/17. The targets set will increase incrementally year on year, as the University seeks to support enhancement of articulation across the sector (refer to [Appendix 2](#)). The University is pursuing delivery of its targets under this agenda via a range of initiatives which include the following:

- **New Articulation Routes:** throughout 2017/18, work has been ongoing to establish new articulation routes with both new and existing providers - including Fife College, Forth Valley, and New College Lanarkshire - resulting in the development of new routes linked to different disciplines, including Social Sciences, Biological Sciences and Engineering, to give examples. The University will continue these efforts into 2018-19. It should also be noted that a review of the University's current articulation agreements was undertaken over the last year to insure that all routes offer full credit transition. Where this is currently not possible due to a disparity in curricula, the University is working with college partners on models to deliver the additional content required, in the form of a Summer School bridging programme.
- **Summer School Programmes:** the University has rolled out a number of Summer Schools for Access – most recently the Engineering Transitional Summer School, piloted in August 2017 – designed to better prepare articulating students for study in areas where there have previously been concerns over the level of student preparedness ([see Case Study 3](#)).
- **Articulation Day:** the University held its second Articulation Day in December 2017, open to all College students from further education colleges across Scotland, with a view to providing an insight into what student life can hold for an articulating student at the University.
- **Access Programmes:** the University launched [two online Access Programmes, for Maths and English](#), to support students in entering PDGE Secondary Education programmes. These are flexible programmes, available online and nationally. In particular, the English SCQF 6 Online

Access is able to support entry to Initial Teacher Education. In April 2018, the University of Aberdeen will launch a SCQF 5 Maths Online Access course in order to further support entry to the teaching profession (across Primary and Secondary).

- **UCAS Cycle – Pilot Project:** the University has also developed plans to run a pilot project during the UCAS cycle for September 2018 entry, where applications will be triaged and students will be actively advised on the most appropriate pathways to allow fully informed choice, taking into consideration social and personal factors, as well as academic preferences. This follows a noted increase in students from College applying into lower years of study, rather than their eligible year of entry. The intention is to identify the most appropriate level of entry to help with the retention and progression of articulating students, leading to more positive outcomes.

Finally, the University acknowledges the CoWA recommendation 18 and continues to support local authorities with provision of education where it can, in addition to the various bridging programmes on offer, with a number of initiatives aimed at secondary education. These include offering CPD events for Biology teachers to assist in the delivery of the new Higher and Advanced Higher Biology curriculum and CPD for Chemistry is being discussed in association with the Royal Society of Chemistry. In addition, the University has offered S6 labs days for Chemistry and Biology students for a number of years, supporting their completion of Advanced Highers. In addition to this, Chemistry is exploring offering School workshop visits to S4 pupils, allowing a specific focus on targeting local low progression Schools, instilling an earlier sense of interest in Chemistry, thus also aiding the University's activities to enhance the recruitment to STEM subjects as further discussed in section 2.1. Additionally under the Project REACH banner; discussions are underway with the Law School to potentially offer a Law Course to senior pupils during their final year of school, which would replace one of their Highers. In addition, the proposal states that the pupils would also be eligible for a Summer School offer, which would replace a Higher subject. The University's REACH Schools are largely in rural areas, and for 2017/18 the University was delighted to welcome on board Access to High Demand Professions funding applications to all Schools in Orkney and Shetland. Throughout 2017/18 the University will be developing new REACH activities and looking at new areas of high demand professions to support. Additionally, the REACH project will be opening to all Schools locally to target pupils with an SIMD20 postcode, who are not currently able to take advantage of the project.

Contextualised Admissions

The University has a new contextualised admissions policy ([available here](#)) to underpin efforts in this area. It has employed the use of contextualised admissions for a number of years, with minimum entry requirements published for all degree programmes. However, over the course of 2017/18 significant steps are being taken to enhance the provision of contextualised offers, with immediate impact in 2018, but more substantially, in relation to applicant knowledge, in 2019. Work will shortly be finalised on updating the information, to be published in the 2019 Prospectus, and in turn, published online. New access thresholds are also being developed, which will allow two sets of minimum offers to be published. This will specifically allow easy identification of the offer that those who meet eligible widening access criteria need to meet, setting it aside from standard minimum requirements.

Care Experienced Students

The University is pleased to confirm that in 2017, in line with CoWA Recommendation 21, Aberdeen made an offer of entry to any care experienced applicant who met the minimum entry requirements. This policy will continue going forward. More generally, activities listed in the 2017/18 Outcome Agreement continue to be operationalised to assist the University in working towards delivering the collective national ambitions in this area. This is led by the Widening Participation Team, with more work planned over the coming year. However, the University flags challenges around accurate identification of students from care or a care-experienced backgrounds, though states that it is confident that changes made to its systems are assisting in identification of the relevant students, where applicable.

In terms of its notable activities in this area, the University is working closely with North East Scotland College, Robert Gordon University and the three local students' associations on developing ways of jointly supporting students and applicants who have care experience. This work has led to the creation of a joint FE & HE Regional Corporate Parenting Framework. It should also be noted, in

relation, that the University published a Corporate Parenting Plan (CPP) in line with the Children and Young Person's (Scotland) Act 2014; this was done in 2016 and is available [here](#), via the University website and additionally a Student Carers Policy has been approved and published [online](#). The University is working with the Carers Trust Scotland to formally launch this policy in Spring 2018.

More generally, the Widening Participation team participated in an information and awareness raising event for local Social Workers and Foster Carers. In August 2017, the WP team held an information and awareness raising event for new Students' Association sabbatical officers which focused on the support needs and provision for Care Experienced Students, Student Carers and students who are estranged from their families. This was done in partnership with colleagues from NESCOL and RGU. Additionally Aberdeen held discussions with RGU and NESCOL on hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups of students (i.e. strategies and mechanisms to support Estranged Students), and continues to develop a collaborative approach to working on widening participation and access issues with teams across area. The University also continues to participate in the Homework Club, a case study in the previous OA. The University is actively seeking new volunteers to participate.

Early Years Engagement - The Children's University (CU)

The University continues to work closely with Aberdeenshire Council in this area, who have now brought on board another of the University's target schools, Mintlaw Academy. At the moment Aberdeenshire Council have a dedicated member of staff who co-ordinates the CU activity; however, this may change given amendments made to school funding models. The 3rd Graduation took place in June 2017 with 66 pupils taking part, out of a possible 82, with the 4th planned for 2018. One hundred and eighty-two family members also attended coming from nine different Schools across Aberdeenshire.

Project Search

Project Search was included as a case study in the previous OA, and is now in its fifth year. It continues to be a successful project supporting young people with additional needs to gain the skills and experience to set them up for future employment. The University became the first provider in the North East of Scotland to be accredited at Gold Level by Developing Young Workforce North East at the end of 2016, and since commencing the project in 2013, 68% of the graduates from Aberdeen are in employment in the local area.

At Risk Groups

The University is broadening its activities and policies to ensure that prospective students covered as *At Risk* are given tailored support, with their access to higher education enhanced.

The University's new contextualised admissions policy, referenced above, will specifically cover eight of the nine *At Risk* categories (missing only transgender) as identified by SFC, thereby demonstrating an institutional commitment to supporting these diverse groups of students. Specific actions planned to support different groups in 2018/19 include:

- Undertaking the Stand Alone Pledge for Estranged Students and making available a dedicated information page for this category of applicants on the University's website.
- Developing a policy and action plan to help support applicants and students who identify as coming from a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller background.
- All applicants who fall within an At Risk Group will be able to access pre-entry / application stage support from the Widening Access and wider Student Recruitment team, including help with the UCAS application process and answering queries about entrance qualifications.
- Participation in the [Cell Block Science](#) initiative led by researchers at St Andrews from 2018. The University views this project as a unique opportunity to inspire those with criminal convictions to explore skill sets that may ignite the possibility of pursuing further education in the sciences.

It should be noted that, whilst not specifically included in the contextualised admissions policy, the University does not underestimate its responsibility in supporting transgender students; if an applicant states that their education has been negatively impacted as a consequence of their Transgender status then this would be considered as an extenuating circumstance in line with the University's Contextualised Admissions policy.

The University's ethos is to encourage equality and diversity, knowledge, understanding and respect of all groups of students and staff, throughout the student and staff body. Detailed later in this Outcome Agreement through various initiatives under the Equality and Diversity umbrella, the University will utilise these advancements to seek continuous improvement and refinement of the recruitment process, to ensure equality and diversity considerations are embedded within the student recruitment functions.

Health Related Outcomes

The University is taking forward work to develop of measures focused on increasing access to Medicine for SIMD20 students. This will include working collaboratively with the sector to simplify and clarify the admissions process. An update on this will be submitted to the SFC, in parallel with this document, as required.

1.2. GENDER AND ATHENA SWAN

The University acknowledges the prioritisation of gender for enhanced focus by the Scottish Government and SFC, under the ethos of intensification, and remains fully committed to enhancing gender equality, both as an institutional strategic priority, and through its Outcome Agreement. The University also remains fully committed to ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The University's ambitions for gender equality are outlined in its new [Gender Action Plan \(GAP\)](#), published in 2017, and underpinned by its strong commitment to the Athena SWAN process, which spans all Schools and Institutes across the organisation. Targets set for achieving gender equality are included within the Table of Measures ([Appendix 2](#)).

It should be noted that the University actively engages its Students' Association and Trade Union representatives in dialogue around both gender and the wider equality and diversity agenda on an ongoing basis through different business-as-usual activities and fora. For example, both groups have the opportunity to inform policy formulation at an operational level via representation on different committees, such as the University's [Partnership and Negotiation Consultative Committee \(PNCC\)](#).

The Gender Balance – the Student Population

At institutional level, the University retains its aim of reaching an overarching gender balance of 45%/55% male/female split for Scottish-domiciled students by 2019/2020. In 2016/17 the split was 42.1%/57.9%/, and for 2017/18, the early data snapshot shows a split of 43.0%/57.0%, an encouraging shift. The University also retains its commitment to improving the gender balance in all subjects where there is an imbalance of 75%/25% or more, by a minimum 1% year-on-year.

The University's GAP will proactively seek to redress imbalances at institutional and subject level. As a first step, priority will be given to improving the gender balance in four disciplines: Physics, Computing Science, Psychology and Education. These subjects were selected for various reasons, as follows:

- Based on internal data they commonly suffer the most consistent gender imbalances across the Scottish-domiciled population, though this does not apply to retention, where non-continuation rates are not markedly different for male or female students, or relative to other disciplines;
- The STEM based subjects and Education are each SFC priorities;
- They are all subject to focus under the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) project *Attracting Diversity*, which has remit to improve gender inequality across the sector.

The University's GAP outlines a number of high level initiatives to address gender imbalances, both institutionally and with a focus on the subjects listed above. They include involvement in the Attracting Diversity project just referenced, and engagement in establishing and leading a Regional Gender Group to develop a regional response to gender inequality; it involves working with local partners like Robert Gordon University. The GAP also includes an extensive operational plan, to be reviewed regularly by a designated Working Group, with specific actions listed designed to address gender issues in a range of areas, including student recruitment and retention, among others. These are included in the [Gender Action Plan \(GAP\)](#); as above, please cross refer.

Outwith the actions listed under the GAP, the University is seeking to further understand why gender-based issues exist at subject level via a range of other measure, including:

- Undertaking a review of the gender balance in 2018 of all STEM Schools, under the Athena Swan process, with a view to investigating the underlying issues that cause imbalances, to make improvements via SMART actions.
- Consulting students using focus groups and surveys;
- Inviting students to sit on self-assessment teams (recognised via the enhance transcript);
- Ensuring gender balance in role models in open days, websites and prospectuses;
- Taking action to ensure potential unconscious bias is being reduced in admissions through the introduction of training – this is currently under trial.

Athena Swan

The University continues its strong commitment to Athena SWAN, with extensive engagement across the institution. The University is delighted to report that 11 of its constituent Schools or Institutes have received the Athena SWAN bronze award from a total of 15, reflecting a strong institutional commitment to addressing gender inequality, and indeed, impressive progress over the last year; when the three-year OA agreement was published in 2017, only two Schools had achieved bronze status. Of four outstanding Schools/Institutes, each has applied but all were unsuccessful; they will each reapply in April 2018. At institutional level, the University successfully renewed its bronze award in November 2016 and will now assess the action plan to ensure progress is made and the aim of successfully applying for Silver in April 2020 is achieved. The successful Schools are currently implementing their actions plans, which are designed to enhance gender equality across the student population wherever imbalances exist. On the whole, it is hoped that by focusing on gender imbalances within School student populations, improvements made at subject level will have the collective effect of improving the overarching imbalance at institutional level, particularly for male undergraduates where there remains collective under-representation.

Eliminating the Gender Pay Gap

Building on the efforts outlined in the three-year OA published in 2017, the University intends taking forward the following initiatives over the coming year, via its Remuneration Committee, to eliminate gender pay gaps at all levels, where they exist:

- Improve training and support for female academics to explore the benefits of achieving professorial tenure through the Reader route;
- Evaluate the annual review process, to include a performance assessment mechanism;
- Ensure staff have a clear understanding of expectations;
- Support applications for salary uplifts;
- The provision of appropriate benchmark salary data to selection panels to ensure starting salaries are within the norms;
- Development of a mechanism to see, at a glance, the change in pay gap, dependent on starting salaries.

It is hoped that combined, these mechanisms will help narrow the gender pay-gap further, and moreover, will enhance the University's ability to monitor current status of the pay gap at any given time, thereby enabling greater understanding of progress, and enhanced ability to exert control.

Gender Balance at Senior Staff and Academic Level

In general, the University continues to pursue initiatives designed to enhance gender equality across its staff-base. Adding to those highlighted in the 2017 OA, these include: establishing a Senior Women's Network, which has a core function within its remit to support junior women in career progression; ensuring representation of the Equality Networks on the Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity (AGED), providing an opportunity to engage and participate fully in policy development; development of a suite of family friendly policies, designed at least in-part to enhance career progression for women ([available here](#)); and, continued roll-out of mentoring and coaching schemes.

At senior academic level, the University remains fully committed to enhancing gender equality. However, while there has been an upward trend in the past few years across all pay grades when looking at institutional career tracks (Teaching and Scholarship, Research, and Teaching and Research), it is acknowledged that further work remains to be done to ensure the equal advance of women, notably within the research and teaching track across the institution, and within the research track in some STEM subjects. To this end, the University is and will continue to enhance gender equality across its academic functions by (among other initiatives): further supporting women through the promotions process; enhancing research mentoring and peer review initiatives to support women; developing new leadership programmes, such as the International Leadership Development Programme; and, full roll-out of unconscious bias training. While it is difficult to project the impact of any one initiative, the University is confident that collectively, these initiatives will deliver greater gender balance among senior academics and indeed, across all areas of the organisation.

Gender Balance at Court and Senior Management Level

With regard to gender equality at board and senior management level, Court has had in place, since 2014, a [Statement of Intent on Diversity](#) within its membership. This includes a goal of achieving and maintaining female representation of a minimum of 25%, with aspirations to achieve 50% over the longer term.

Following the passing of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act in 2016 which requires governing bodies to include specific categories of members who are either elected or appointed by bodies other than the Court, the Court amended its composition to increase the number of independent members it appoints. A key principle of these changes is to enable Court to better reflect the diversity of the University community and to target gender balance. The Court's revised composition was implemented in July 2017 and now has a gender balance of 56% Male, 44% Female (compared to 71% Male, 29% Female prior to the changes). The independent membership currently has a 50:50 gender balance. This is consistent with the Committee of Scottish Chairs 40:40:20 commitment. The University takes great pride in these outcomes.

1.3. ADDITIONAL AREAS OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE UNDER THE PEOPLE THEME

Equality and Diversity

The University's commitment to gender equality forms part of a wider commitment to the overarching Equality and Diversity (E&D) agenda. The University is fully committed to meeting all legislative requirements articulated in the Equality Act 2010, and has developed stand-alone strategies accordingly; for example, the GAP referenced above.

In line with the Equality Act 2010, the University has published its Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report (2017). This outlines four key equality outcomes, developed through consultation that the institution will pursue. These are:

- Considering the principles of E&D day-to-day within all of the University's activities;
- Giving staff greater understanding of their responsibilities in E&D and applying this in their practice to positively advance equality;
- Ensuring that the University is an inclusive community where staff and students are able to fulfil their full potential in their work or studies; and taking care to celebrate and recognise the diversity of the University community so that all staff and students feel respected and valued. Further information on how the University intends to deliver and operationalise these outcomes is available [here](#), via the Mainstreaming Report Action Plan.

Acknowledging the report of the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee: *Universities and Disabilities*, the University is fully committed in its response, and in particular, to the recruitment and retention of learners across all protected characteristic groupings. The University launched a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy in 2016 to enhance the support to both staff and students. To facilitate enhanced recruitment, it is engaged in projects such as Attracting Diversity, co-ordinated by the ECU (referred to above), among others. With regards retention, as stated above under Section 1.1., that the University aims to offer the highest level of support that is available to all students. All students at the University of Aberdeen will continue to have access to the highest levels

of pastoral and non-academic support services in order to optimise retention rates and more generally, the wider student experience offering.

In line with SFC priority objectives, the University is fully committed to undertaking meaningful Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) under its well established EIA process; this includes undertaking an EIA on all new policies, and as part of major exercises like the Research Excellent Framework. The University is also participating in the ECU project to implement EIAs as part of Outcome Agreements.

With regard to race equality, the University seeks to adhere to the principles set out in the Scottish Government Race Equality Framework (2016-30), and is fully engaged with the ECU Scottish Race Equality Network Forum. More generally, Internationalisation is a key thread that transcends the major themes within the institutional Strategic Plan; a key part of the Internationalisation agenda is for the recruitment and retention of staff and students from diverse national and ethnic backgrounds – the University pursues this agenda aggressively.

In terms of tangible activities, the University has and will continue to take forward a range of initiatives designed to enhance E&D. A selection of these are given below, to note:

- The governance of equality and diversity has been strengthened by reviewing the remit and membership of the Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity. The remit now covers intersectionality and the membership comprises Heads of School, Chaplains, Head of Communication and representatives from the Equality Networks.
- In relation to LGBT, a submission has been made to the Stonewall Equality Index, and National Coming Out Day was marked with a panel event and the flying of the LGBT/Pride flag from King's College. The University also signed up to the Stonewall No Bystanders Charge.
- In relation to disability, new Network co-chairs have been appointed, and the Network has been linked to Estates to provide feedback on projects. The Project Search initiative continues to be successful (25 interns have secured permanent work), and the University is in the process of becoming a *Disability Confident* organisation.
- With regards the Senior Women's Network, a Steering Group has been established for the Network, with the Network remit agreed.
- Under Mental Health, it has been a year since the launch of the institutional Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Examples of actions taken include launching an Employee Assistance Programme, launching a Staff Wellbeing Coordinators Service, appointing a Mental Health Adviser in Student Support, hosting Wellbeing Days for staff and students, and identifying Mental Health Champions across the University.
- To support race equality, the University is in the process of establishing a race equality network, and it engaged well with Black History Month.
- The University is engaged in a network of eight other European universities (Aurora), working with partners on equality initiatives e.g. a project on gender budgeting.
- The Equality Research Group is collating data on the impact of equality issues in strategic areas of importance for the University such as the National Student Survey and the REF exercise.

It should be noted that the Students' Association routinely engage in dialogue with the University on these issues. For example, it has different fora that look at issues linked to LGBT, Black and Minority, and Women and Non-Binary groups.

Society and Culture

The University remains committed to being a leading contributor to the cultural life of Aberdeen and the wider North East of Scotland. In line with the UK Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research, and commitments made in its Strategic Plan (2015-2020), the University retains its high-level strategic commitment to engage and empower local communities through research. As reported in its three-year OA in 2017, it hosts a diverse range of events, exhibitions and activities throughout the local region, led primarily through its Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU). Across 2016/17, attendance at University events collectively totalled over 100,000 people, with over 35,000 of those at initiatives directly delivered under the dedicated public engagement with research strategy. Outreach activities included 23 events, including public lectures and participation in Doors Open Day ([see Case Study 4](#)). A range of events are planned across the year ahead, extending the breadth of

its audiences further as a partner in a new Wellcome Funded project, 'Cellblock Science', aimed at delivering informal science learning to prisons in Scotland. Further funding applications will be taken forward for activities such as future European Researchers Night activities, extending activities across the whole of Scotland, and to external sponsors for the May Festival, with many of the events in 2018 created in collaboration with students and youth groups, following the Scottish Government 'Year of Young People' theme.

It should also be noted that the University both values and recognises academic staff for their involvement in public engagement – the annual Principal's Prize for Public Engagement with Research celebrates the quality and creativity of engagement by staff and students, recognising individuals who make outstanding contribution in the field of research-led public engagement. The University enables staff and student participation through training where required, and through support structures in place throughout the research lifecycle, from grant development to reporting and impact planning. In addition, to ensure ongoing best practice, the University also undertakes regular reviews of its public engagement activities, taking account of both its own programmes, and also those of the wider sector. This is enabled through sector wide engagement via different networks, for example: we work closely with the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) and are part of the SCOTPen public engagement network. We are also partners in public engagement research grants for example a European Commission grant, NUCLEUS (New Understanding of Communication; Learning and Engagement in Universities and Scientific Institutions), investigating how to make Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) a reality in universities and research institutions across Europe (Aberdeen share £180,000). The Public Engagement with Research Unit also share good practice at external conferences, presenting at both ARMA (June 2017) and Engage (December 2017).

Governance

The University remains fully committed to achieving the highest standards of corporate governance. The governance arrangements outlined in the last OA remain in place (please [cross refer](#)); however, since publication of that document, it is worth noting that Court has undertaken an independent effectiveness review, led by the Good Governance Institute (CGI). The Scottish Code of Good HE Governance recommends that a governing body should undertake such an externally facilitated review of effectiveness every five years under best practice recommendations. The remit of the review was to evaluate against best practice the effectiveness of the Court as a governing body and to make recommendations to anticipate some of the future demands of governance. The report identified that Court and governance at Aberdeen had many strengths, in particular adherence to best practice as recommended by the current Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and the mix of skills and experience of its membership. The report offered a series of recommendations on how Court might further develop its governance practice in the future. The Court has considered these and agreed to prioritise the report's recommendations regarding the respective roles of Court and the Operating Board. It has since approved new articulations of the roles of both bodies which are intended to ensure the Court can have a greater focus on its role in developing and agreeing strategy, with the Operating Board monitoring the delivery of that strategy. Further consideration of the report's wider recommendations will be progressed over the coming year, while also taking into account the implications of the new Scottish Code of Good HE Governance which was published in October 2017. In addition, the Governance and Nominations Committee has a standing role to advise Court on matters of governance and to conduct, on its behalf, reviews of the University's governance. The Committee undertakes a review of effectiveness annually through benchmarking against the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and through an annual appraisal questionnaire of governors.

Staff Wellbeing

The University continues to place emphasis on staff wellbeing as a key strategic priority within its *People* theme. It takes part in the Scottish Government's Healthy Working Lives Awards initiative and actively encourages and supports staff wellbeing. The University retained its Healthy Working Lives Silver Accreditation in 2017 and will aim to continue that going forward.

As outlined in its three-year Outcome Agreement published in 2017, the University has introduced a number of new initiatives to support staff in maintaining a healthy work-life balance across the institution, from introduction of a 'nine-day fortnight' scheme for Professional Services staff, to free off-

peak membership for all staff to the world class Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV) facility – over 55,000 staff trips are recorded to ASV each year. The University retains all commitments made under Staff Wellbeing in its three-year OA document, and flags the following as activities due to be taken forward over 2018/19: Student Health and Wellbeing Day was held in October 2017, to be repeated in 2018; online mandatory training for all first year students on Health and Safety and on Wellbeing; a review (ongoing) of the University's Policy on Stress Management in the Workplace; continuation of the University's Mental Health Strategy, following appointment of a Mental Health Advisor; online Wellbeing, Stress and Resilience training to be rolled out for all staff; Walk a Mile and Walking Meetings initiatives; the "Race to the North Pole" initiative, a staff team building initiative designed to encourage health and fitness related activities; mindfulness training courses will be open to all staff; health coaching will be rolled out, available to all staff; and, Britain's Healthiest Workplace Survey - the University again took part in this survey in 2017 and will do so again in 2018.

Sustainability

The University continues to place emphasis on Sustainability as an institutional strategic priority, as stated in its Strategic Plan (2015-2020). In 2016/17 it revised its Carbon Management Plan and set a target to reduce emissions by 20% over the five-year period of 2016-2021. To support this ambition, the University identified an extensive and rolling programme of energy efficiency projects and mitigation initiatives through to 2021. The first full-year of results from that exercise have been very encouraging, with headline gross emissions down 3,532 tonnes (or 11.2%) significantly exceeding the 4% target of 1261 tonnes.

In terms of energy-related emissions, a number of projects and initiatives resulted in a significant reduction in 2016/17. Scope 1 emissions (principally from natural gas use) were down just over 1% but Scope 2 emissions (principally from grid electricity) fell by 17.6%. While the latter was aided by a favourable shift in emissions factors, it also reflected considerable work to identify and implement energy savings projects. This included, as an example, optimisation of the efficiency of the University's Combined Heat & Power plant.

A substantial decrease in Scope 3 emissions (20.2%) was also identified, which relates in large part to business travel. While that Scope 3 data is inherently less reliable than Scope 1 and 2 (with sampling and other caveats meaning it is, in effect, a best estimate), this reflects a positive development in the face of continued efforts to enhance international profile and develop overseas ventures. Elsewhere in the Scope 3 return, it is also notable that a collaborative procurement exercise with Robert Gordon University (RGU) has transformed how the University's non-recyclable waste is treated ([Case Study 5](#)).

The University continues to report comprehensively on progress against emissions and climate change commitments through the mandatory 'required' section of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting regime. In 2017/18 the University will work with the EAUC and SSN to assess how best to contribute to the 'Wider Influence' section. In terms of the wider sustainability agenda, the University took on leadership of the sustainability strand of the Aurora network in 2017. Aurora is a network of nine European universities explicitly established to work together to find solutions to globally relevant problems, in areas such as sustainability, climate and energy, digital technology and human life and health. Opportunities to enhance and share research, teaching and operational sustainability lessons will be developed as this partnership matures.

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING

The delivery of excellent research-led teaching, as part of a world class teaching and learning environment that provides the basis for all students to achieve their potential, is one of the key themes central to the University's Strategic Plan (2015-2020). The SFC strategic priority areas aligned to this theme are as follows:

- **SFC Priority 2:** High Quality Teaching and Learning.

2.1. STEM

The University remains fully committed to increasing the recruitment and retention of students to STEM based subjects, reflecting the focus on STEM as a Scottish Government and SFC strategic priority, under the intensification ethos. The University sees this as a crucial component of servicing the future needs of the Scottish economy. It therefore retains its ambitious target to recruit 45% of SDUEs to STEM based subjects by 2021, though it now seeks to achieve this on an incremental basis, with a target of 35% set for 2018/19 and 40% for 2019/20 (see [Appendix 2](#)). This shift to gradual delivery of the longer term target is considered a more feasible approach, and reflects a disappointing decrease in the percentage of Scottish-domiciled students entering STEM based courses in 2016/17 although overall STEM recruitment is on a positive trajectory. Similar figures are expected for 2017/18, caused at least in-part by the depressed Oil and Gas sector which plays an important role across the local economy.

Responding to the 16/17 decrease, the University is underpinning its efforts to increase STEM based recruitment through a variety of means. First, an internal analysis of STEM recruitment and population trends has been undertaken, in order to better understand key factors impacting on the University's performance in this area, and in turn, to inform next steps as it seeks to develop strategies for making the improvements required. In particular, the University will focus on:

- More effective marketing of STEM subjects;
- More effectively highlighting longer term employability prospects;
- Improving league table performance across STEM based disciplines, which is shown to affect recruitment trends;
- Improving conversion rates for STEM applicants.

Collectively, these measures will form part of a longer-term STEM strategy around marketing and outreach, designed to enhance performance against targets set. In operational terms, the University will continue to undertake a diverse range of activities to enhance uptake in STEM subjects. Examples include:

- Outreach work within the local community ranging from interaction with the early years group all the way through to engagement with senior year secondary pupils. Public engagement activities are broad ranging in their content and delivery, further detailed in section 1.3, several of which are specific events promoting and encouraging an interest in STEM.
- Longer term programmes such as Go4SET STEM ([see Case Study 6](#)); bridging programmes for articulating students in Engineering and Psychology which are being offered or piloted; the launch of the Access course in Maths, with consideration being given to Chemistry; and, the participation in the Gateway to Medicine Programme.
- The successful *Girls in Engineering* conference jointly hosted by the School of Engineering and a local school in 2016. Several other events were organised by Engineering throughout 2017 to continue their efforts in promoting Engineering, but specifically to female pupils. To enhance the success of the 2016 conference, a rebadged conference, "[Women in Engineering Summer Conference](#)" has been organised for summer 2018, and is open to applicants from across the UK aged 15-17. The conference is a residential event at the University, hosted again with a local School and generously sponsored by Chevron. The conference will provide the opportunity to explore engineering in both a work and university setting, including the opportunity to visit the Integrated Operations Centre at Chevron Headquarters in Aberdeen. To help ensure fair access to the event a travel bursary will be offered.
- The STEM Ambassador programme, designed to capture the diverse activities it undertakes to support STEM recruitment. STEM Ambassadors undertake a variety of functions, including

delivering careers talks in local schools, hosting work experience within research labs and attending School Careers events. As part of the strategy mentioned above the University will work on identifying all of the activities undertaken to ensure appropriate support is provided, and resource is targeted at strategically important areas.

The University is keen to highlight that despite the challenges it faces in delivering targets set, it is extremely proud of its engagement and outreach activities, that help contribute to the access and provision of STEM subjects. The commitment and effort the University has invested in the local area, and further afield, cannot be quantified by the number of registered students alone at the University of Aberdeen. The University sees it as its civic and corporate responsibility to enhance provision and access to STEM, regardless of the institution in which the prospective student may choose to study.

2.2. Retention

The University reaffirms its commitment to increasing rates of student retention as an institutional priority, in line with Scottish Government and SFC strategic priorities; non-continuation is integrated into the University's current institutional Strategic Plan (2015-20), with a KPI aligned to directly monitor this metric at institutional and School level on an ongoing basis as part of the annual strategic planning process. With regards the OA specifically, the University has retained or increased the high-level targets it has in place over the coming three years for the percentage of SDUEs returning to study in year two; the target rises from 95% in 18/19 to 96.5% by 2020/21 (see [Appendix 2](#)). Similarly, the University has either retained or increased the targets set against each of the Protected Characteristic groups over the same period. These commitments are made on the back of excellent retention rates delivered over recent years; for example, in 2016/17, the University performed ahead of target for the majority of its retention metrics, with improvements year on year across a range of groups, including: Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants, SIMD20 students, BME students and the proportion of students suffering a disability.

The University's retention rates are the result of both proactive and stringent measures taken to improve performance over the past few years, articulated in the previous OA. This is overseen centrally by a Retention Taskforce, and as noted, also falls within the scope of the institutional strategic planning process. Going forward, the University will continue to develop and implement new and enhanced retention strategies to address and reach the widest possible range of students, with a particular focus on new student orientation (see [Case Study 7](#)), early intervention, and wider student support services. The following are tangible examples of measures in place or planned to underpin continuation of excellent outcomes:

- At School level, comprehensive induction and student orientation programmes are now routinely rolled out to enhance retention rates at all levels, but most notably for students in Years 1 and 2. Additionally, Schools are now extremely proactive in supporting students via the allocation of Personal Tutors, and through early intervention; attendance and performance is monitored closely, and support routinely offered where there are early indications of underlying issues. Collectively, measures like this have had the impact of driving retention rates up.
- Over the next few years the University will specifically be looking to develop its strategies to provide exceptional mental health and wellbeing support and advice to both students and staff. The importance of this area of support cannot be underestimated, and the University is acutely aware of the difficulties in identifying and encouraging those who may require access to support in utilising it. Feedback from academic and administrative staff suggests that retention issues related to mental health continue to be the most difficult to identify and appropriately address. The University will focus on ensuring services relating to these areas are accessible to all, and that all staff have adequate training and support in place, as well as access to resources, to support the trained services in providing the highest quality service possible.
- The University appointed the additional resource of a Mental Health Adviser, who took up post in August 2017. In addition to managing a caseload, the Adviser has given advice and guidance to colleagues in Student Support, other support services in the University, academic staff and those who support students in the Halls of Residence. This has been hugely beneficial in providing reassurance and/or strategies to dealing with specific circumstances. The Adviser will be developing workshops and training sessions for colleagues and is working closely with the Convener and Clerk of the Mental Health Working Group in the delivery of the University's Mental Health Strategy. Additionally, Mental Health First Aid training will be rolled out to staff to ensure as

many staff as possible are in a position to help identify signs of difficulty that indicate that a fellow member of staff or student may require mental health and wellbeing support.

- After an initial pilot in September 2016 with the international student population, which was awarded the 2017 Silver HEIST award for “Best International Initiative”, an enhanced orientation event was rolled out to all students in September 2017. It took place as a conference-style event where students chose their own schedule from sessions run at multiple times over two days. The sessions included workshops and presentations on everything from banking in the UK, NHS, Study Skills, Private accommodation, Cultural Adjustment and Library & IT. Almost 1500 students engaged in the activity. This has prompted a review of academic induction initiatives with the development of a ‘Welcome Week Working Group’ to include parties from across the University and an effort to standardize all induction and orientation activity.

2.3. Enhanced Alignment of Skills Provision with the Needs of Employers

The University is fully committed to developing students with the skill sets required to meet the needs of industry and employers, and to filling skills gaps in the economy where they exist. The University’s high-level commitment to skills development is reflected via its Strategic Plan, under which it actively monitors positive destinations as a key performance indicator, reporting on this metric to the University Court bi-annually, as part of its strategic planning process. The University has performed strongly in this area in recent times; in 2016/17, over 95% of its Scottish-domiciled graduates moved on to a positive destination. Over the coming period to 2021, the University has fixed this target at 96% on an annual basis (see [Appendix 2](#)); ambitious, but in line with the excellent results it has delivered in recent years. To achieve these targets, the University will continue to work closely with different stakeholder groups, including employers, to ensure alignment with the curriculum to student and employer needs, across a range of disciplines, covering different sectors. Moreover, the University will continue to focus on supporting areas of the economy where there are recognised skills shortages; for example, in General Practice in Medicine, and in teacher numbers, in both primary and secondary education.

The University continuously reviews its curriculum and subject provision, working to ensure that students have the right knowledge and skillsets to meet the demands of the economy that they will enter. Through its Careers Services and employability enhancement initiatives, the University has made significant and notable developments over the last academic year, with further activities planned in the coming years. A selection of these is detailed below.

- **Meeting Market Demands:** this has been challenging in recent years, notably due to the depressed Oil and Gas sector, and the adverse impact this has had on the local economy. However, the University has responded quickly, reviewing and developing its degree programme provision to meet local economic demand, and indeed, demand across Oil and Gas as a whole; for example, rolling out programmes in decommissioning at PGT level to accommodate changing sector requirements, and diversifying its modes of delivery to include online, therefore reaching larger markets.
- **Positive Outcomes Taskforce:** the University has recently established a Positive Outcomes Task Force to provide a vital channel for the Careers Service to connect with employability champions from each academic School, thus strengthening the links between the Careers Service and each academic unit. A key aim for 2018-19 is to establish a baseline minimum undergraduate careers entitlement in each academic School. A School-level infographic which presents information and data regarding each School’s student engagement with the available careers and co-curricular provision is under development, and designed to feed into School-level strategic plans, enhance the student learning experience and help the Service connect with academics to inform future employability decision making.
- **Work-Related Learning:** the appointment of dedicated staff within the School of Engineering has enabled the Careers Service to strengthen collaborations and to build capacity for a new curriculum-based work-related learning course designed to significantly enhance employability, *Engineering Work Experience*. Additionally, a new Work-Related Learning course is being piloted in the Schools of Biological Sciences and Psychology. This is structured for students to secure their own placement, part-time work or a personal development project which is approved by their academic School. Specifically, the course provides opportunities for the University to offer degree programmes with different forms of external engagement and for a wider range of

students to have access to work-related learning opportunities during their studies, addressing the Universities Scotland's 'Making it Happen' Strategy. Subsequent years will focus on rolling the course out more widely across the University. In addition, research funding secured from the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU) has enabled a piece of research, *Summer Vacation Activities: An Investigation of Students' Attitudes, Experiences & Perceptions* to be completed. The study has confirmed and identified the vast array of summer activities students undertake. One of the report's recommendations is to provide more structured reflection opportunities for students to analyse their summer activities.

- **Employer Engagement Activities:** initiatives and approaches also continue to further develop the quality and quantity of links with employers and organisations and to enhance students' employability. This activity is supported by the University's 20 Programme Advisory Boards/employer liaison groups; the Boards provide a forum across the University for employers, alumni, students and academic Schools and disciplines to share employability experiences and developments in a meaningful and impactful way. Each Board has a minimum remit of topics, namely: Aberdeen Graduate Attributes, graduate destinations data, employability and the co-curriculum, other areas covered include curriculum content and design. To increase academic School/discipline engagement with the graduate destination data within the University's annual review processes, Boards are invited to discuss and comment on supplied graduate destinations data. Each academic School is required to comment on the split between graduate-level and non-graduate level employment and provide employability actions. That said, more detailed research is needed regarding how employer engagement impacts on the student experience and employability, which the Careers Service will aspire to undertake in the future.
- **Work Placements and Internships:** the co-curriculum continues to complement the academic curriculum and provides opportunities for students to develop their skills and attributes. Opportunities include work placements, the BP Student Tutoring Scheme, career mentoring, Leadership Academy, enterprise & entrepreneurship opportunities and the STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award initiative. The Careers Services will be working to expand opportunities to work in partnership with the Santander Universities UK initiative to enhance internship provision and, to secure additional funding to support employability initiatives.
- **The Enhanced Transcript:** this was an institutional precursor to the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), which is a valuable tool helping the University to document the wider student experience. At the same time it also helps students themselves to demonstrate the skills and experiences sought by employers beyond those developed through the formal taught curriculum. 834 students received co-curricular Enhanced Transcript entries in the AY 2016-17, an increase of approximately 200 students compared to the previous academic year.
- **Aberdeen Graduate Attributes:** the Careers Service and the Student Learning Service continue to devise and provide resources to support our students in developing [Aberdeen Graduate Attributes](#), new in the academic year 2016-17 is the Achieve+ site tailored for taught postgraduates and online learners. To raise student and staff awareness of the resource a new promotional video was commissioned. The video complements a new Careers Service [video](#) which has been designed to showcase to new and prospective students the University's careers and employability provision. To raise awareness of the range of services and showcase the wide-ranging careers provision offered by the University's Careers Service for postgraduate students, a new video is in production.

In terms of working to support areas of the economy where there are recognised skills shortages, the University continues to target specific areas. For example, in Medicine, the institution is reviewing the structure of the intercalating option within the MBChB programme, and is proposing a General Practice Enhanced Programme to help address shortfalls in the numbers of GPs in Scotland.

In Education, the University has rolled out new programmes, designed specifically to help address teacher shortages in the North East and Highlands of Scotland. This includes its new PGDE Distance Learning Initial Teacher Education (DLITE) Secondary, included as [Case Study 8](#); this follows DLITE Primary, launched some time previous. The University has also developed a PGDE Internship programme for secondary education as an alternative route into teaching, as part of the iSTEP scheme (*into STEM Teaching Energy PGDE*). This innovative programme, which is funded by Scottish Government, has been developed collaboratively between the University and the Northern

Alliance local authority partners in direct response to the shortage of teachers in the region in particular subjects (Business Education, Chemistry, Maths and Physics). The route enables participants to develop a knowledge of Scottish Education through a paid internship in a school in their home authority whilst they study for a PGDE qualification in teaching. The PGDE is a fulltime, campus based programme with teaching placements in schools in addition to the internship part of the model. Local Authorities sponsor individual participants, provide teaching placements in schools and benefit from those “home grown” teaching professionals who then undertake their probationary year, for full registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), within their own locality. In most instances, those who have successfully completed the PGDE Internship programme will continue their careers within the sponsoring Local Authority.

2.4. Additional Areas of Strategic Importance under the Teaching and Learning Theme

Language Skills, Gaelic and British Sign Language

Language Skills

Growth in language skill provision continues at the University, and is integral to the institutional internationalisation strategy. Whilst the University continues to offer Sustained Study options to students, as discussed in the three-year Outcome Agreement, new language provision is coming on stream from September 2018. New Honours options in Mandarin, enabling the expansion of Mandarin delivery, will be available alongside a new MA degree in Modern Languages and Translation and Interpretation. Mandarin continues to be a popular choice for both students, and staff, with the Confucius Institute providing Chinese language teaching and culture classes and cultural events to the North East Scotland community, including, schools, business and industry, and community organisations and individuals. It acts as a linguistic and cultural bridge, promoting knowledge exchange between China and the people of North East Scotland and serving as the first port of call for information on China.

Continuing a commitment to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), the Language Centre at the University is rapidly expanding, in part to support to the ambitious internationalisation strategy of the Business School and other priority areas, but also to enhance the support offered to current students. Currently an ongoing pilot is assessing whether unconditional offers, including a compulsory pre-sessional language course, would enable more students to be eligible to commence study at the University, by way of a lower IELTS score. Specific and directed pre-sessional support is also being developed in collaboration to support students entering the Business School to ensure they are fully prepared to commence their studies, thus aiding their retention and successful completion of study.

The University is delighted to report that the Modern Language Placement Scheme ([Case Study 9](#)) continues to run, with good uptake from students. Due the success and demand the scheme has been expanded to qualified students in Level 1 and 2. Students undertake a ten-week placement in Aberdeen City Council primary schools, with options in secondary schools, helping to deliver language teaching. The scheme developed out of a range of initiatives that the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture has developed in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, SCILT (Scottish national centre for the promotion of language learning) and the University Council of Modern Languages Scotland. The development and enhancement of the scheme responds in part to interest amongst students for extended engagement with schools, with students specifically interested in pursuing a career in teaching via the PGDE. In recognition of the skills development and experience the scheme provides, the University is considering the possibility of making the primary placement a credit-bearing course for students, further reiterating the University's position on developing language skills for current students, as well as enhancing the provision of foreign language provision to the Early Years category. More information on the scheme is available in the three-year Outcome Agreement.

Gaelic

The University's current Gaelic Language Plan (2013-2018) which sets out the University's commitment to the national effort to ensure that Gaelic has a sustainable future, is nearing its end. As such the University is drafting its second Gaelic Language Plan and reviewing achievements and challenges to inform the commitments being made. The University intends to produce a second plan

where commitments are delivered sustainably, and to ensure that activities are embedded within existing services and procedures.

The University continues to work with partner agencies to promote and deliver the range of activities supported, and partnerships will be one of the priorities included in the second Gaelic Language Plan.

British Sign Language (BSL)

The University acknowledges the requirements regarding BSL and will ensure work is undertaken to publish a BSL Plan by October 2018.

Internationalisation

Enabling a diverse and international community remains a key strategic priority for the University and is embedded throughout its Strategic Plan. The University is pleased to highlight that it has risen to 33rd in the world for International Outlook according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE, September 2017 Ranking). New initiatives and developments under Internationalisation include:

- A move to a self-contained unit with a kitchen, meeting rooms, and main student-space.
- Close relationship with the PG Research School for Family Programming (Global Families), and PG focused activities.
- Development of pre-arrival online micro courses to help prepare students culturally and to manage their expectations about university life.
- Simply Living Workshop series working with Support Services around the University as well as external agencies to host workshops about budgeting, culture shock and private accommodation.
- Lifestyle video series including short themed YouTube videos on how to get to/from the airport and train station, spending time on campus at Christmas, practicing your faith in Aberdeen, and grocery shopping in a new city.
- Targeting International and Go Abroad students to participate in the A-Team Leadership Scheme which operates within the remits of the STAR Award scheme (two tiered programme run by paid ambassadors and volunteers to run all the programming and events within the International Centre).
- Continue to expand on the events to include: Discover Aberdeen (free events and activities around Aberdeen), Northeast Explorers (trips around the North-East of Scotland), Prime & Unwind (afternoons showcasing topical movie and TV), Taste of Aberdeen (celebrating the different cultures on campus through food).
- English Language Groups & Language Groups (Arabic, German, Spanish & Japanese) are run on a regular basis through the use of games, and volunteers to practice language skills learned in a more formal setting.
- Pre-start programmes were run in January and August to help students find their way around campus and to meet new people through the Advance into Autumn and January Jumpstart programmes.

The mobility of students continues to grow, both in relation to Erasmus+ and International Exchange. The summer internship option within Erasmus has also proved popular and has been a contributing factor. The upward trend has continued in 2017/18 with 379 students preparing to undertake Erasmus+ or International exchange (*note: these numbers are provisional and may change throughout the 2017/18 Academic Year*). Work over year ahead will focus on addressing the barriers in place for students, including improving curriculum mapping to partner institutions, and the financial barriers that international exchange student's face. Half year exchange options are now routinely offered where the curriculum permits, further expanding the accessibility of the programme.

Transnational Education projects continue to advance, with the opening of a campus in Doha, Qatar, in partnership with the Al Faleh Group for Educational Services (AFG). Teaching commenced in September 2017 and estimated student numbers for the academic year are c120. Presently the campus offers provision in Business with discussions are already underway with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education regarding additional undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for delivery in 2018. In addition, early discussions are being held with AFG regarding infrastructure

requirements for phase two of the project that will involve the construction of a new dedicated campus in Doha at which a much broader range of subjects could be delivered.

The University's plans to open a South Korean Campus in 2017/18 remain under discussion with partners in Korea so as to ensure best fit with the current economic situation in the country. The University also remains committed to expanding its transnational reach through the appropriate and strategically located establishment of overseas campus operations elsewhere in the world with a particular focus on locating in eastern sub Saharan Africa. Such campuses offer scope for students at the main Aberdeen campus to travel and experience life and study at the remote campus whilst also potentially giving students at the remote campus the opportunity to spend time in Aberdeen itself.

The alliance established with Curtin University goes from strength to strength, with 12 students currently enrolled and a further 11 are expected to enrol in 2018. A joint MSc in Subsea Engineering has been created and, with it, a framework for the smooth expansion of Masters opportunities – for example in Project Management – that will see students starting at one university and spending a semester in the other before returning to complete a research project.

3. RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The University's Strategic Plan (2015-2020) identifies Research and Knowledge Exchange as the third of its key strategic themes to support the University's commitment, as a research intensive University, to deliver world class research, with a focus on areas of excellence. It also articulates an ambition to increase the impact of institutional research by enhancing the portfolio of knowledge exchange activities with industry, business and society. These institutional commitments directly align with the following SFC priorities:

- **SFC Priority 3: World Leading Research** (covered under 3.1., below);
- **SFC Priority 4: Greater Innovation in the Economy** (covered under 3.2., below).

3.1. Research Performance

Growth in Research Income

The University has set ambitious targets to deliver growth in research income, both through its institutional Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, and through milestones set via the OA. The University retains its longer term aim to increase research income from all sources to £65m under the Outcome Agreement, though extends the timeline for achieving this to 2021. In parallel, it aims to increase income from Research Councils UK (RCUK) to just over £16m within the same period (see [Appendix 2](#)). This is a more incremental approach which takes account of different environmental factors that have put pressure on performance; in particular, it should be noted that the number of academics at the University has fallen by approximately 8% in recent years, at least in-part as a consequence of restructuring, making it more difficult to achieve the overarching totals. However, conversely, research income per FTE has grown by 4% (from 2015/16 to 16/17), meaning the University is improving performance, at least in proportional terms. As such, while the targets set have and will be challenging to achieve, they will remain ambitious over the coming years, in line with strategic institutional ambitions.

To strengthen its commitments and leadership in this area, the University has recently appointed a new Vice-Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange along with three Deans of Research and KE. To achieve its targets for growth, it will pursue the range of strategies and activities outlined in its three-year OA, published in 2017 (please cross refer). Notable developments include:

- **Internal Research Review:** this was led by the Vice-Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange, looking at the structures the University has in place to support interdisciplinary research. The recommendations to emerge include an institutional pump priming fund for interdisciplinary research, and the recognition of interdisciplinary research activity in the institutional promotions criteria. The report recognised the importance of the institutional research facilities in enabling interdisciplinary research and proposed additional support for early career researchers who wish to use the facilities.
- **Grants Academy:** the University launched its new Grants Academy in 2017 ([Case Study 10](#)) to provide the underpinning infrastructure required to support the development and nurturing of the University's future leaders in research. The Grants Academy promotes a community of researchers providing constructive peer support, complemented by networking events, interdisciplinary sandpits and staff development. It is based on best practice in the sector and on the University's own experience with quality assurance and internal peer review of RCUK grant applications, which has seen a particular increase in NERC and BBSRC success rates. These activities will be supported by core funds and will be supplemented by enabling funds from external funders. Going forward, the University will also launch Phase II of the Grants Academy, focusing on networking, collaboration and inter-disciplinarity to further engagement in various initiatives, like the Aberdeen City Deal, Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), Horizon 2020 and others. Phase I of the Grants Academy focused on grant acquisition, and on support at the pre-award stage of the grant life cycle. The next step is to focus on the delivery of excellent outcomes and enabling their effective dissemination, knowledge exchange and follow on funding.

The main opportunities for growth of quality activity and income for research and knowledge exchange continue to arise from changes in the external funding landscape and development of

external partnerships. For example, the City Deal will offer opportunities within Aberdeen and the region, and reaching out further to industry nationally and internationally. Separately, the Government's White Paper, 'Higher Education: Success as a Knowledge Economy', announced the creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) which will bring together all the research funding councils, research support currently located within HEFCE and Innovate UK. This, together with the stronger emphasis on interdisciplinary research recommended by Sir Nicholas Stern in his review of the Research Excellence Framework, will create funding opportunities for institutions whose research strengths and knowledge exchange activities are well aligned with government priorities.

The Aberdeen Region City Deal Innovation strand includes the Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC), Innovation Hubs for Biopharmaceuticals, and Agri-Food and Drink, with Big Data being a component throughout each Hub. Near market Solutions Centres within OGTC are now operational and are engaging researchers developing proposals to meet industry needs. The University is working with Opportunity North East to deliver the new infrastructure for life science companies based in Aberdeen. Training for enterprise and entrepreneurship is embedded within each of the strands of the Innovations areas of the city deal and the University is working closely with partners to ensure the opportunities are available to staff and students to complement existing enterprise training within the Researcher Development Unit and Grants Academy. For example, ONE supported the delivery of boot camp for the life science researchers, with an accelerator programme planned for early 2018.

The RCUK GCRF has also offered opportunities for the University to achieve growth. The University currently has a grant portfolio of just under £5.5m, supported through RCUK GCRF and the Newton Fund. The bids were supported through the University's Grants Academy which facilitated workshops, sandpits and networking events to assist researchers in developing competitive bids. The University is planning to adopt a similar enabling approach to calls issued under the Government's Industry Challenge Strategy Fund. The SFC's enabling GCRF award has been extremely helpful in achieving engagement and supporting applications. It is also notable that the BBSRC has recognised the potential within the institution through an award to pump prime activities and applications to the GCRF. The University has attracted further enabling awards to support research excellence from the Wellcome Trust (Institutional Strategic Support Fund, £1.5m over 5 years) and the MRC (MRC Discovery Award) which provides development funding for research areas that have the potential to be recognised as MRC Centres of Excellence in the near future).

The main challenges for the University over the short to medium term include an increasingly competitive funding environment, and uncertainty over Brexit in terms of access to EU funding and retention of key staff, including those from EU countries and those who wish to continue their careers within the EU. The University is currently undertaking a high-level appraisal and risk assessment, to identify the adverse impacts likely to arise from Brexit, and in turn, strategies for mitigation. This will include strategies to address potential impacts linked to the institutional research agenda, including those aligned to funding and staff and just referenced.

Research Staff Training and Development

The University continues to invest in sustaining a high quality research environment for research training and development. Support for researchers at all levels is provided throughout the institution, within Schools and Institutes, and across Professional Services. Support and development services for research staff and (postgraduate research (PGR) students) includes both training and professional development initiatives, and is available to all researchers across the career spectrum, including research students, research-only (postdocs) and academic staff. Within Professional Services, this support is offered primarily via the Centre for Academic Development and the Postgraduate Research School (more on this below). For individuals - be they research staff or students - the intent is to enhance career development and progression by facilitating realisation of personal potential, with a view to optimising the quality of research outputs produced. In turn, as an institution, researcher development activities are designed to maximise research and teaching capacity at all levels, and to optimise the research quality at a collective level, within Schools and Institutes and within other organisational structures; for example, Units of Assessment.

Researcher development programmes are available through a variety of open and bespoke courses, workshops and individual interventions. Examples include grant writing workshops, peer review programmes for research grant development, and researcher mentoring schemes; noting such schemes are often led by Schools, tailored to disciplines and to the Schools unique research

environment. Different offerings are made to research staff at different stages in their careers. For example, under the banner of *Academic Leadership*, the University offers bespoke Principal Investigators (PI) development programmes promote excellence in leadership and management for PIs. These programmes are designed to support new and aspiring and also experienced PIs to ensure that they are equipped to reach their full potential by enhancing their understanding of the University environment. Since being introduced in 2007, the University has delivered over 17 programmes to 325 PIs across the University.

It should be noted that while training programmes and courses are designed for all researchers, it is recognised that not all of researchers will remain in an academic role, notably research students or early career researchers. To this end, a comprehensive programme of activities to support researchers to deliver societal and economic impact in a global environment is also provided. This covers areas like enterprise, entrepreneurship, creativity, commercialisation, teaching and self-management. The importance of engaging in skills development in a variety of ways and the importance of building a portfolio of evidence of skills and learning is thus promoted widely.

Research Excellence Framework Preparations

Throughout the REF assessment period, the University has focused on enabling and supporting excellent and impactful research, knowledge exchange and researcher development through a variety of means, most of which are covered in this section. Much of this activity is supported via institutional core grants, supplemented by external enabling funds. From these efforts, the University aims to deliver an enhanced institutional performance in the REF2021 as part of an ongoing drive for continuous improvement. Having now received the latest REF guidance, the University has intensified the process of identifying excellent research outputs and impacts that may be of requisite quality for submission to REF2021. This has been underpinned by establishing strong governance, management and support structures by Unit of Assessment, and through robust quality appraisal exercises, including internal and external peer review of selected outputs. Through such initiatives, the University aims to optimise the strength of its submission across each Unit to which it submits, looking to achieve critical mass and to maximise performance.

Research Impact

The REF2014 recognised 85% of the University's non-academic research impact as either 4* (world-leading) or 3* (internationally excellent). The drive to deliver world class non-academic impact is one of two strategic goals under the research theme in its Strategic Plan (2015-2020), and is central to both the University's research environment and its institutional research support arrangements. Researchers have access to support and advice about ways of engaging with research users, collaborating with non-academic partners and designing projects that are capable of delivering impact. Impact training and awareness is delivered through the Grants Academy which provides general as well as project specific impact support. The University has provided enabling funds for both developing and maximising impact through a University wide competitive process, providing additional examples to undertake a range of showcasing events.

The University's strategies for achieving impact are embedded in its priority research activities over the next five years. The University will continue to work closely with health authorities in clinical and health care research (which was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize recently); work with industry through the City Deal to support regional economic growth, engaging with industry parties to access Innovate UK funding and further strengthen our partnerships with charities, local and national government to inform policy and decision making. The University's research is internationally focused, with the majority of research publications co-authored with international partners. We have a strong track record of attracting overseas industrial income through a number of long standing industrial partnerships. Over the period of this Outcome Agreement, the University's focus on international impact activities will be on those delivered through the GCRF, where several projects are already supporting development activities in DAC countries.

Support for Postgraduate Research Students

The University remains fully committed to growing its PGR student population; the target of 1,100 students remains in place, though the timeline for delivering this has been extended to 2021 (see

Appendix 2). This reflects increasing challenges across the recruitment environment, enhanced by factors like Brexit.

The University has strategies in place to mitigate threats emerging from Brexit, and to facilitate growth in the PGR population. Most notably, it has created a new University-wide Postgraduate Research School, led by a specifically appointed Dean. This was introduced in September 2017, with a view to markedly improving the PGR experience, and in turn, underpinning growth in the PGR population. The School has a remit to provide strategic and operational leadership for research degrees, the research student experience and research training and development, for students and academic supervisors. The School supports PGR students and supervisors throughout the entire PhD journey from recruitment to alumni relations and supports researcher/personal skills development, with a strong emphasis on generic skills, employability, practitioner engagement and entrepreneurship. The School also supports supervisors through clearly signposted support services and clearly articulated expectations, complemented by a programme of supervisor training. Research methods and research specific skills are provided within schools and disciplines. Specifically, the PGR School provides strategic oversight and guidance on areas related (but not limited) to: recruitment and admissions; support, monitoring and progression; training and development; and funding and scholarships, which includes providing support for institutional funding applications, facilitating the development of external partnerships including overseas government bodies. Moving forward, the Postgraduate Research School will focus on defining essential research skills and will explore the formalisation of skills development as a core part of research training. At the current time, PGR students have access to skills development through workshops, individual writing advice sessions and online materials. All new PGR students are provided with the opportunity, via their own School, to undertake an introductory development session on demonstrating and/or tutoring. In tandem, Schools frequently offer discipline-specific support and development around marking and feedback provision.

Finally, as a general point, the University is using a range of mechanisms as a means of facilitating improvement in its PGR offering, and in turn, growth in its PGR population. For example, it is looking to gauge performance through the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). PRES gathers information about the experience of any research student on a doctoral or research master's course, focusing on the experiences of supervision, resources, research community, progress and assessment, skills and professional development. This year past the University achieved a response rate of 36% (compared to 20% previously), and an aggregate score was 79%, equal to the UK sector average. Based on this, the University acknowledges that there is scope for improving the research culture within disciplines and across the institution as a whole.

Diversity in Research

As referenced under Sections 1.2. and 1.3. (Gender and Equality and Diversity) above, the University is currently implementing a range of initiatives and activities designed to enhance both gender equality, and equality and diversity more generally. Within the context of REF2021, the University is awaiting guidance from the E&D Advisory Panel (EDAP) on exact requirements specific to that exercise. However, the current expectation is to develop an institutional code of practice for the selection of outputs, taking care to ensure that the impact of selection decisions on all groups protected by the Equalities Act is monitored, with appropriate action taken where necessary to ensure that there is no disadvantage to those groups.

More generally, as noted already, all Athena SWAN action plans have a focus on ensuring gender balances where possible, including across research staff cohorts. This is a particular focus for STEM based subjects, notably those where there were significant gender imbalances in the REF2014 submission. Initiatives like Athena SWAN are complemented by the HR Excellence in Research Award (achieved in 2010, and successfully retained 2012, 2014 and 2016 – to be externally reviewed in 2018), awarded by the European Commission. This recognises the University's commitment to the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and aligns with alignment with the European Charter and Code for the Recruitment and Management of Researchers. It should also be noted that the University Court recently approved the Employee Engagement Strategy and Action Plan (available [here](#)), and this outlines a commitment to adhere to the values of trust, integrity, respect and inclusion. The strategy is designed to support the institutional values set out in the Strategic Plan 2015-2020 and to help create "A respectful and inclusive community, built on communication, trust and integrity".

Finally, in terms of more tangible actions, the University is also taking part in a Scottish Governance initiative to support female early career researchers, *Ingenious and Enterprising Women in Scotland* ([see Case Study 11](#)).

Enhanced Research Collaboration

The University continues its commitment to collaborative research, as articulated in its 2017 OA. For example, it retains its membership of various Scottish Research Development Grant (SRDG) research pooling initiatives and national research partnerships. It also retains collaborative arrangements with different research institutes, Scottish Government and NHS Scotland, particularly through the James Hutton Research institute, the Marine Laboratory and Health Science Scotland. Internationally, the commitment to the Confucius Centre remains in place, a global alliance with Curtin University has grown in strength, and new opportunities continue to emerge for partnerships via the Newton and Global Challenge Research funds.

Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity

The University has in place a comprehensive Research Governance Handbook [available here](#). The Handbook details institutional expectations and policies around research integrity and governance, and was designed in-part to meet the principals set out in the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. In 2017, the Handbook was subject to major review as part of an ongoing continuous improvement process. It was updated in the light of changes made to organisational structures, and to take account of changes in the external research environment, including PREVENT, the Nagoya Protocol, funders' open access mandates. Over the coming period, the University will be working towards further improving and streamlining its processes around ethical approval of research applications and related governance arrangements, looking to ensure a robust and transparent institutional approach.

Concordat on Open Research Data

The University engaged in the consultation on the RCUK Concordat on Open Research Data in 2015 and welcomed the introduction of the concordat in 2016. In 2012, the University put in place a high level institutional policy on research data management which requires researchers to manage and secure their research data effectively, and which also supports the publication of data where possible.

The University also has in place infrastructure to enable researchers to generate, store securely, publish, archive and dispose of their data in accordance to data management plans. Researchers are able to publish datasets on our [institutional research portal](#) or on externally hosted sites such as UK DataArchive or Figshare. Over the period of this Outcome Agreement, the University will work with the academic community through staff development activities to further enhance compliance with open data requirements.

3.2. Knowledge Exchange (KE) – Contribution to Greater Innovation in the Economy

As noted above, the delivery of excellent non-academic research impact is one of the two specific goals articulated in the University's institutional Strategic Plan (2015-2020). The University remains fully committed to contributing to economic development through greater innovation, with targets for Innovation Vouchers (IVs) and Follow-on IVs in place; incremental increases are targeted to 2020/21 for both ([see Appendix 2](#)). In order to achieve the targets set, the University has undertaken a range of initiatives and activities, including:

- **Innovation Vouchers:** as noted, the University continues to target an increase in its Innovation Vouchers (IV) and Follow-on IVs over the coming years, though the targets have been revised back to a level considered more feasible than those previously set. It continues to promote IVs and H2020 IVs to its SME partners as a first step for innovation and collaboration. The University is also actively reviewing the Innovation Voucher project as part of the post referral process with Interface to continue to meet the needs of industry partners.
- **North East KTP Centre:** the University remains a committed member of the North East KTP centre, with new membership embedded. After a challenging year for the KTP centres, demand

for KTPs has improved considerably and the University is targeting both researchers and companies to ensure awareness of the additional funds through Innovate UK. It continues to seek opportunities to secure matched funding from industry, whether that is for KTP projects, Innovate UK, studentships, or for SFC funded Innovation Centre projects. Industry and overseas supported research income also remains strong at £11.4m for 16/17, remaining at 19% of the institutional total research grant income portfolio.

- **Innovation Scotland Action Plan:** the University has continued to contribute to the innovation landscape in Scotland and remains committed to the delivery of the Innovation Scotland Action Plan. It has increased engagement with the Innovation centres and Interface along with increasing the demand for Innovation vouchers. It has also built on the collaborations with the Innovation Centres, with notable new relationships through the Oil and Gas Innovation Centre and the implementation of the association MSc programme. Additional programmes are being supported through Stratified Medicine Scotland Innovation Centre.
- **University Innovation Fund:** The University is on target for delivering its contribution to the nationally agreed University Innovation Fund (UIF) outcomes. In demonstrating its commitment the University of Aberdeen is leading Outcome 2 (Simplification / Commercialisation). An updated version of the University UIF plan is submitted with this OA under [Appendix 3](#), for consideration. The University supports the newly created UIF Manager post and will engage with the individual, to ensure the collaborative actions are delivered. Through our Grants Academy programmes we are ensuring that enterprise training is being embedded in the programmes and enhancing the opportunities for academic staff to engage with industry, In 16/17, the University increased income from Innovate UK and the number of projects with industry, in particular with OGIC. This is being sustained and expanded through the opportunities presented by the Region City Deals.
- **Opportunity North East and the Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC):** The University remains committed to supporting sustained economic development for the North East of Scotland and beyond, as demonstrated through its partnership within with Aberdeen City Region Deal. As part of the engagement with the City Deal, the University is a member of Opportunity North East and the Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC), along with the boards overseeing the delivery for Life Sciences/Food and Drink Agri-Tech. As noted above, researchers are responding to industry needs being presented through OGTC and supporting the accelerator programmes being developed in partnership with ONE, also ensuring that enterprise and entrepreneurship training is being embedded wherever possible. Industry placements and internships remain a key component of the University's industry engagement strategy. Through the Santander University support, we have grown the opportunities for industry internships and provided additional entrepreneurship opportunities with the launch a University Light Bulb week-long support programme and competition.

The University continues to embed KE outcomes and non-academic impact in the activities offered through the Grant Academy; enabling funds to support KE activities are available through our UIF allocation and the BBSRC GCRF impact accelerator award. The University is also providing bespoke training to embed culture change in interactions with industry. The MRC Proximity to Discovery award supports KE and people exchange within the life science industrial sector and cluster development as part of ACRD.

In supporting the delivery of the Enterprise and Skills review actions on internationalisation, the University is using the Official Development Assistance to enhance the skills and capacity of researchers to address global challenges, through Grants Academy from focussed workshops, building upon existing partnerships and providing pump priming for pilot projects. Working with partners within the AURORA Network, the University is mapping its expertise and existing relationships across the sustainable development goals to provide a strategic approach to its support.

The University is a major contributor to the Aberdeen innovation ecosystem, through ABVenture Zone (for student start-ups), Life Science innovation and working with ONE, Elevator and others to enhance the support for company creation. The University continues to host 14 spin-outs across the institution along with the numerous individual industry projects, thus demonstrating its commitment to embedding innovation throughout the University. New spin-outs in 16/17 raised over £20m, whilst other portfolio spinouts raised additional funds of over £60m, contributing to the economic development of the Scottish industrial sector.

APPENDIX 1 – CASE STUDIES

DEMONSTRATING IMPACT: CASE STUDIES

To note: this section includes a number of case studies, designed to showcase best practice or initiatives unique to Aberdeen where we can demonstrate tangible impact in line with Scottish Government and SFC areas of strategic importance.

1. **PEOPLE** – the following case studies fall under the University's strategic theme **People**.

Case Study 1 – Widening Access for SIMD20 Students

Free 1st Year Accommodation for SIMD20 Students

The University has launched a new initiative where SIMD20 students are offered free accommodation in student halls in their 1st year, with a view to increasing SIMD20 intake, and delivering SFC targets. This resulted in a 50 per cent uptake by SIMD20 students in 2017/18. As well as providing financial relief for students who the University has previously struggled to attract, the initiative encourages closer integration with the wider University population – key to underpinning student retention. This offers eligible students greater opportunity to form friendships and social networks that will play a significant role in helping them make the most of life at University, both socially and in terms of academic achievement.

Case Study 2 – Widening Access to Medicine

Gateway 2 Medicine

Many pupils from deprived backgrounds think that application to medical school is out of their reach, so the University has developed [Gateway 2 Medicine](#) (G2M) to provide a supportive route into medicine for these pupils. This one-year pre-medical entry programme for 20 students is being delivered in Aberdeen for the first time in 2017-18, and is backed by a bursary of up to £2000, along with a free place in University accommodation for the first year of study. The course uses existing modules from the University's Year 1 science programme and units from North East Scotland College's applied sciences course. It also includes a work experience module which will be the first of its kind, allowing for paid work with NHS Grampian. Programme recruitment, course delivery and student support will be shared by both institutions. All students who successfully complete the one year programme and meet UKCAT and interview standards will be granted a place on the University of Aberdeen Medicine degree programme.

Case Study 3 – Access for Articulating Students

Summer Schools

The University's Summer Schools have gone from strength to strength in recent years, most recently through the introduction of an [Engineering Transitional Summer School](#). The two week Summer School, piloted in August 2017, was designed to focused on four key areas that articulating students had previously expressed concerns over their preparedness for – in this case mathematics, MATLAB, materials science and integration into University life. The Summer School was designed around a model that could be rolled out to other disciplines if successful, and featured an intensive timetable that included a mixture of skills modules and academic classes. Students were given free accommodation and lunches for the duration of the Summer School.

The results of this initiative have been impressive. Students demonstrated an increase in academic knowledge over the duration of the Summer School and gained confidence as they became familiar with their new learning environment. Perhaps most importantly, staff have reported that students who attended the Summer School are noticeably better prepared for study. The success of this initiative has meant that it will be rolled out to Psychology and Accountancy students in 2018.

Case Study 4 - Society, Culture, and Outreach*Doors Open Day*

The University takes the lead role in organising [Doors Open Day](#), a major engagement and outreach initiative where buildings throughout the city are opened up to the public. Over 15,000 visitors participated in last year's event, over a third of whom visited the University to find out more about its work. Over 65 University researchers were involved in the event, sharing their work through interactive demonstrations, lab tours and exhibitions. Social media proved an excellent tool for promoting the University's activities, with broadcasts on Facebook Live helping attract many visitors to the University's buildings.

Case Study 5 - Sustainability*Non-recyclable Waste Reduction*

The University has teamed with Robert Gordon University (RGU) to transform how non-recyclable waste is treated. It is now segregated, with waste that can be re-cycled removed prior to being used in energy recovery rather than landfilled. This has resulted in at least 140 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill in 2017/18, and an improvement in the University's recycling rate from 44.6% to 53.6%.

2. **TEACHING AND LEARNING** - the following case studies fall under the University's strategic theme **Teaching and Learning**.

Case Study 6 – Enhancing Interest in STEM Subjects*GO4SET STEM*

The University is once again participating in the Education Development Trust's [Go4SET](#) STEM Schools Programme, a 10 week project for 12-14 year olds designed to stimulate interest at a young age in potentially studying STEM subjects at University. The Programme has been well received by pupils who have reported that it has encouraged them to consider a STEM-related career.

Ultimately, this is considered part of a long term strategy to boost undergraduate entrants into STEM. The University views initiatives such as this as critical in helping school pupils understand the link between STEM subjects and their application in industry, specifically when the projects demonstrate real-world problems in important economic areas such as environment, finance and technology.

Case Study 7 – Retention*New Student Orientation*

A positive transition into higher education is vital to ensure students settle into their new life at university. In 2017 the University launched an enhanced Student Orientation initiative, which following a successful pilot for international students in 2016 was awarded the 2017 Silver HEIST award for Best International Initiative. This initiative is designed to underpin enhanced rates of student retention.

The initiative took the form of a conference-style event where nearly 1500 students selected their own schedule, choosing from workshops and presentations on subjects including banking in the UK, the NHS, study skills, private accommodation, cultural adjustment and library & IT skills. This led to the development of the Welcome Week Working Group, where staff and students come together in an effort to enhance all induction and orientation activity.

Case Study 8 - Meeting Skills Shortages in the Economy*PGDE Distance Learning Initial Teacher Education (DLITE)*

The University has developed PGDE Distance Learning Initial Teacher Education (DLITE) programmes for both primary and secondary education. These alternative routes into teaching were initially developed collaboratively with local authority partners in direct response to the shortage of teachers in the North East and Highlands of Scotland; however, they have now been extended and are also available nationally, thereby helping to address teaching shortages not only locally, but across the country. These routes enable participants to continue working whilst they study for a career in teaching. The programmes are mostly delivered online, with some face to face engagement and teaching placements in schools. Local authorities sponsor individual participants, provide teaching placements in schools and benefit from those “home grown” teaching professionals then undertaking their probationary year, for full registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) within their own locality. In most instances those who have successfully completed DLITE will continue their careers within the sponsoring local authority.

Case Study 9 - Language Skills*Modern Languages Placement Scheme*

The Modern Language Placement Scheme allows qualified students to utilise their language skills through a ten-week teaching placement in local schools. The scheme has developed from a range of partnership initiatives involving the University, Aberdeen City Council, the Scottish National Centre for the Promotion of Language Learning, and the University Council of Modern Languages Scotland. It is offered to all students interested in working in schools, and is especially popular among those who wish to pursue a teaching career via the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education. The University is considering making the placement a credit-bearing course for students, reinforcing the University's commitment to developing language skills for current students while enhancing the provision of foreign language teaching to local school children.

3. **Research and Knowledge Exchange** - the following case studies fall under the University's strategic theme *Research and Knowledge Exchange*.

Case Study 10 – Researcher Support and Research Grant Income Generation

Grants Academy

The University has launched a [Grants Academy](#), which aims to significantly enhance the research environment, and to facilitate increases in the submission and success rates of research grant applications. It aims to support staff and research postgraduate students through all stages of the research grant cycle, from conception of ideas, through development of a funding application, to research delivery and impact. The Academy provides support to staff on knowledge exchange, research funding and commercial activities, including the University's procedural and reporting frameworks, and REF 2021 preparations. It also supports current and emerging leaders by offering a comprehensive programme of development directly linked to our strategic objectives, thus enhancing the career prospects of our researchers, particularly those who are at the early stage of their careers. In addition, the Academy offers horizon scanning so that researchers are prepared to respond to calls for research applications.

Case Study 11 - Diversity in Research

Ingenious and Enterprising Women in Scotland (in 2018)

The University of Aberdeen is part of an initiative backed by the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government to support female early career researchers (in industry as well as academia) to develop their entrepreneurial skills and to realise the full potential of their ideas. A key part of this project will focus on learning what works and disseminating that across our networks in Scotland. This project will invest significant effort in building a strong and sustainable network for ongoing peer support and mentoring, and will help address the economic need to promote and support women's entrepreneurship in Scotland.

Annex A: SFC Outcome Agreement Targets for 2018-19 to 2020-21

- * denotes priority measure
 ** denotes retention figures where the underlying proportion is likely less than 50, meaning projections are subject to greater change

	2016-17 baseline	2018-19 Projection	2019-20 Projection	2020-21 Projection	
Scottish Government strategic priority: Access to education for people from the widest range of backgrounds, including implementation of the recommendations of the CoWA and addressing gender balance					
Measure 1: Articulation - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing					
Scotland-domiciled HN entrants from college to UG programmes	254	265	270	275	*
Proportion of Scotland-domiciled HN entrants articulating with Advanced Standing	8.7%	15%	25%	35%	*
Measure 2: Deprivation - The proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes					
2a: Proportion of SDUEs from 20% most deprived postcodes	5.4%	4.5%	5.3%	6.3%	*
Additional CoWA target: proportion of full-time first degree SDUEs entrants from the 20% most deprived data zones	5.4%	4.5%	5.3%	6.3%	
2b: Proportion of SDUEs from 40% most deprived postcodes	15.6%	20.5%	22.3%	24.3%	
Measure 3: SHEP Schools - The proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the SHEP schools (i.e. schools with consistently low rates of progression to higher education)					
Proportion of SDUE from SHEP Schools	4.9%	6.0%	6.5%	6.5%	
Measure 4: Protected Characteristics - The proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants by different protected characteristic groups and care leavers					
Male Proportion	42.1%	45.0%	45.0%	45.0%	
Female Proportion	57.9%	55.0%	55.0%	55.0%	
Under 21 Proportion	81.7%	82.0%	82.0%	82.0%	
21 and over Proportion	18.3%	18.0%	18.0%	18.0%	
Proportion – BME	7.4%	8.5%	8.5%	8.5%	
Proportion – Disability	11.8%	14.0%	15.0%	16%	
Proportion - Care Experience	1.4%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	*
Measure 5: Retention by Protected Characteristics - The proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled entrants from different characteristic groups returning to study in year two					
Proportion MD20 retained	92.9%	92.0%	93.0%	94.0%	*
Proportion MD20/40 retained	92.3%	93.0%	94.0%	94.0%	
Proportion of Males retained	95.4%	95.5%	96.0%	96.5%	
Proportion of Females retained	96.0%	96.5%	97.0%	97.0%	
Proportion of Under 21s retained	96.4%	96.0%	96.5%	96.5%	
Proportion of 21 and over retained	92.2%	93.5%	96.5%	96.5%	
Proportion retained – BME	96.6%	96.0%	96.5%	96.5%	
Proportion retained – Disability	96.8%	95.9%	97.0%	97.0%	
Proportion retained - Care Experience**	100.0%	92.6%	92.9%	93.1%	*

Scottish Government strategic priority: High quality learning in a learning system which is seamlessly connected for the learner, including learning which prepares people well for the world of work, prioritising provision that meets known skills gaps in the economy				
Measure 6: Retention - The proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants returning to study in year two				
Proportion retained	95.7%	95.0%	96.0%	96.5%
Measure 7: Satisfaction - The difference (+/-) from the individual institution's benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey				
% Satisfaction	88%	88.5%	89.0%	89.5%
Measure 8: STEM - The proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants to STEM courses				
Proportion of SDUE to STEM courses	34.8%	35.0%	40.0%	45.0%
Measure 9a: Graduate Destinations - The proportion of Scotland-domiciled graduates entering positive destinations				
Proportion of graduates in positive destinations	95.1%	96.0%	96.0%	96.0%
Measure 9b: Graduate Destinations - The proportion of Scotland-domiciled full-time first degree respondents entering professional occupations				
Proportion of FT first degree respondents in professional occupations	63.0%	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%
Scottish government priority: internationally competitive and impactful research				
Measure 10: The number of research postgraduate students				
RPG students	1,196	960	1,020	1,100
Measure 11: Total income from the UK Research Councils				
RCUK income	£13,294k	15,244k	£15,744k	£16,246k
Measure 12: Total research income from all sources				
Research income	£60,973k	£61,000k	£63,000k	£65,000k
Scottish Government priority: effective knowledge exchange and innovation including excellent collaboration between universities and industry				
Measure 13: IVs - The number of SFC innovation Vouchers (IVs), Follow-on IVs				
Innovation Vouchers (IVs)	4	6	7	8
Follow-on IVs	0	2	2	3
Measure 14: UIF - Individual HEI UIF progress measures and sector wide reporting				
Scottish Government priority: ensuring provision of quality learning in Scottish higher education institutions, i.e. HE strategic futures, Quality Assurance and HE governance				
Measure 15: Carbon - Gross carbon footprint				
Tonnes CO2e	27,989	27,739	26,478	25,216

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APPENDIX 3 - UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN: UNIVERSITY INNOVATION FUND**2018/19 - UPDATE**

To note: The UIF national outcomes have been set for a three-year time period (AY2017-20), in line with the University's current Outcome Agreement, and they remain the same as those used in 2017-18. This document provides an update on progress made against those outcomes.

Introduction

The University of Aberdeen's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has already set out the University's commitment to deliver its strategic objectives in line with the Scottish Government priorities detailed in the Scottish Economic Strategy and annual Programme for Governments in return for public investment. The process is intended to complement and support the University's strategic ambitions.

We confirm our ability to utilise and match the Platform Grant (PG) to support our programmes of:

- Commercialisation and business incubation;
- Knowledge exchange;
- Regional economic development and industrial engagement;
- Student Enterprise;
- Entrepreneurship education and training;
- Public engagement;
- Culture and societal engagement.

The details of the activities we will deliver through our support in these areas are included within our draft Outcome Agreement for 2018-19.

UIF Outcome Grant

The University of Aberdeen will continue to contribute to the development of the UIF Outcomes Grant and its priorities in collaboration with the HEI sector in Scotland and other stakeholders. We have participated in the national workshops over the course of the last year to engage, contribute and lead on the development of the collaborative programmes and evaluation of the UIF.

Commitment to Collaboration Across the Sector via Universities Scotland RCDG

In discussion with SFC, Universities Scotland has agreed that the best mechanism to work at a sector level to deliver the national outcomes is to undertake to work together to:

- Analyse current activity and identify best practice
- On the basis of this, where appropriate, devise and execute (a) pilot programme(s)
- If successful, develop/initiate a sector-wide programme

Through Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG) each institution has agreed to contribute to various outcomes. Each institution notes and acknowledges the importance of each of the outcomes but for the best use of resource each institution will be involved with a different combination of work.

It should be noted that the University welcomes the SFC's support for a UIF manager to work with those institutions leading the Outcome Actions, to help facilitate the collaborative activities and workshops.

Aberdeen has committed to contributing to all outcomes, and has specific responsibility for leading Outcome 2. Key activities associated with Priority Actions 1 to 12 (PA1 – PA12) are flagged in the text. A summary of progress made or key developments against each outcome is given below.

Outcome 1 - Demand Stimulation: “Working with enterprise agencies, SG, Business networks, Interface and others... help increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for university services”.

The University is a founding partner of the Aberdeen Region City Deal (ARCD). In collaboration with all the partners of the ARCD (Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, the Robert Gordon University, Scottish Enterprise and Opportunity North East (ONE) (providing sector industry leadership)), the implementation strategy has been developed in response to the industry demand. The ARCD is providing opportunities for industrial engagement through projects that address industry needs and seeks to contribute to the economic development of the region through new job and company creation, particularly within the Innovation Theme of ARCD. The four strands of Innovation include Oil and Gas, Life Sciences, Food, Drink and Agriculture, and Tourism, with a further strand for Digital being created. Each strand includes activities around promoting and supporting entrepreneurship through accelerator programmes, which the University of Aberdeen is contributing to at various levels through the institution. City deal structures provides models of good practice for regional development, and where innovation is key to the strategy close cooperation amongst the academic, public and industry partners is essential. The Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) is now working across the sector to identify projects to advance its priorities. Aberdeen is actively involved in submitting proposals for industry-led projects, with one project funded and others in development. The OGTC board has approved the Strategic Business Case of a Centre of Excellence in Decommissioning and Late Life, which is led by the University of Aberdeen. We will work with OGTC to ensure a full range of stakeholder engagement from both industry and other HEIs to contribute to demand stimulation of the energy sector.

In 2017/18, Aberdeen launched its MRC Proximity to Discovery pilot to promote ideas and people exchange between industry and researchers. The pilot was initially limited to Aberdeen’s MRC Centre for Medical Mycology but it has now been opened to all eligible researchers. Aberdeen will continue to work with ARCD during the development of their business support programme for the regional life science community, leading on activities such as the bespoke boot-camps and accelerators for life scientists, as run in 2017/18.

As a member of the Santander Universities Network, we are able to offer opportunities for businesses through our SME Internship Programme. On the back of its success over the last 3 years, we have built up a network of SMEs accessing interns who previously may not have collaborated with universities. In collaboration with Santander and the wider network we are able to access, we use the examples of the Internships to showcase the opportunities to access academic expertise and our highly skilled graduates.

We will continue our partnership approach with the Innovation Centres, Interface, and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships to enhance the demand from industry. Aberdeen’s Institute for Energy already provides a “one stop shop” for the energy industry, including access to experts from a range of disciplines and training solutions (PA4). Working closely with OGTC and RGU, it will facilitate the interface between the industry and researchers to provide an enhanced service to industry for research and consultancy expertise.

We will also contribute to the University of Glasgow led workshops for 18/19 and contribute to the agreed programmes being developed.

Outcome 2 - Simplification / Commercialisation: “In partnership with enterprise agencies and Interface...demonstrably simplified business access to the knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities”.

Aberdeen is leading in this area of the UIF Outcome Agreement, and the first of the collaborative workshops was held in 17/18. A number of key themes arose to guide the priorities for 18/19, including use of single points of contacts for industry engagement, implementation of post-project referral procedures in collaboration with Interface (PA8), stimulating more strategic relationships with industry, developing more case studies to encourage businesses to innovate with universities, and developing programmes to increase the skills for researchers in working with industry. Further

collaborative workshops will take place to include the other agencies ensuring programmes are delivered at a regional level and which complement existing activities.

By developing more strategic relationships with industry with shared goals, shifting from a transactional nature starts to demonstrate to businesses and HEIs the long term benefits of partnership (PA6). As part of our commitment to collaboration, the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University and North East Scotland College have launched a joint platform dedicated to promoting to the industry our combined talent, track record and technology for Oil and Gas research, training and study. We would envisage the partnership exploring further ways to enhance post project referral protocol and to provide a model for regional collaboration. Expanding this activity, we will provide a programme of training aimed at researchers focused on the collaborative competencies to enhance engagement with businesses.

Aberdeen has been a strong supporter of simplifying processes and promoting efficient commercialisation, as demonstrated by our commitment to using standard templates wherever possible and our track record in commercialisation. Aberdeen is a member of Universities Scotland RCDG Contracts Sub-Group and a member of the working group to agree the protocols of the post project referral. Both initiatives are aimed at ensuring the simplification and harmonising of the process for businesses to access knowledge within all universities. The Contracts Sub-Group has already provided a range of commonly used contracts (PA7), which are promoted on Interface's website. We will promote the good practice and knowledge within our partnership with the ARCD and other multi party collaborations.

As a member of RCDG's sub-group to support and promote good practice for spin-outs, we have promoted the recently agreed common principles and embedded within our institutional policies.

Outcome 3 - Simplification/ Greater Innovation: "In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface... at a national level made use of their sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy (including beyond non-STEM)".

Aberdeen contributed to the collaborative workshop held in 17/18 led by the University of St Andrews. A number of key themes arose including increasing the number of innovation events held at regional levels to build networks, increase common goals and understanding within sectors, and enable challenge based workshops.

The University is currently refreshing its Industrial Engagement Strategy ensuring that it meets the needs of all of its researchers and of industry, responding to the UK Government's Industrial Strategy and the collaborative programme within the UIF. We expect the revised strategy to be launched in AY18/19.

Aberdeen has evidenced our commitment to engaging and collaborating with other universities and the enterprise agencies through our partnership approach in ARCD, but also our ongoing commitment to the long standing partnership of the North East of Scotland Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) centre and the renewed commitment in the Offshore Renewal Institute (ORI). The KTP centre which is hosted between Aberdeen and RGU now includes the James Hutton Institute, Abertay University, University of Highlands and Islands and SRUC. As the numbers have seen a decline in some industries (e.g. Oil and Gas), there has been an increase in business, management and food and drink associated with the centre.

An MRC Proximity to Discovery award supports people exchange in 2017/18 to support our engagement with the life science industrial sector and cluster development as part of ARCD (PA3). We will continue our staff development activities, providing in-house training to staff and extending to external training and conferences as required (PA4).

Outcome 4 - Entrepreneurialism: "(The) sector will have made significant positive change in the way entrepreneurial opportunities are promoted and delivered to students, HEI staff and businesses".

Aberdeen has provided leadership for the North Hub of Enterprise Campus (ECN), working with Edinburgh and Strathclyde to deliver the EC project, and engaging well with the University of Dundee, UHI, RGU, Abertay University to tailor the EC support available to meet the needs of their

postgraduate student entrepreneurs. This has resulted in enhanced student entrepreneurial activity over the last 3 years with ECN supporting the incorporation of 12 student business out of a total of 56 across Scotland, in line with the proportion of postgraduate students in ECN. We are keen to provide national and regional leadership to continue entrepreneurial support to students (PA1) through an extension of the Enterprise Campus project, working with our other HEI partners for its delivery.

Aberdeen is an active and successful participant in the Converge Challenge competition, with student entrepreneurs winning the social enterprise awards in the Converge Challenge competition in 2015 and 2016. Aberdeen has agreed to provide further support for Converge Challenge from 2018 – 2021. We will run internal business plan competitions to raise awareness, encourage entrepreneurship and provide support for promising early-stage start-ups (PA2).

Aberdeen will continue to support its ABVenture Zone incubator for entrepreneurs pre-incorporation and for micro-SMEs. We will continue to host carefully selected non-student start-ups to ensure a creative mix of entrepreneurs in the incubator. We will also provide a hosting opportunity for student entrepreneurs applying for RSE Enterprise Fellowships. We have already supported two such opportunities within ABVenture Zone.

We will continue with our Festival of Ideas project (the Lightbulb competition) with the aim of expanding it year on year, supported by an Intern funded by the University to encourage enterprising students to develop ideas to influence the social, economic and cultural life in Aberdeen. Focussed on developing early stage ideas and supported by student entrepreneurs, Lightbulb promotes entrepreneurial thinking. The University will work with Elevator and other accelerator programmes to channel entrepreneurial students into its accelerator programmes.

We will work with the University of Strathclyde who leads this Outcome to ensure that all the programmes will create a cohesive single system for support to entrepreneurs. Aberdeen will contribute to the ongoing development of Scottish Enterprise's High Growth Spin out Programme, promoting to our spin-outs where appropriate.

Outcome 5 - International: "in partnership with SDI, Connected Scotland others...pooled knowledge and networks and shared good practice to promote and engaged Scotland internationally".

Linked to our internationalisation strategy, new networks are being created to enhance the collaborative opportunities for our researchers. A few examples include our status as a founding member of the new European Network, AURORA, our renewed commitment to the Confucius Centre, a global Alliance with

Curtin University and the multiple partnerships supported by the Newton Fund and Global Challenge Research Fund. We will use the newly formed AURORA Network to provide a platform for enhanced collaboration and to seek new opportunities for research and knowledge exchange across Europe, and building on the success of the European Commission funded project "Explorathon". We have shared our experiences and good practice in Responsible Research and Innovation arising from the Network across the sector and with business (PA11); underway with European partners, funded by the NUCLEUS award.

We are progressing with the projects funded through Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF): Impact Acceleration Account (GCRF-IAA) and have developed mechanisms through sharing of best practice with other institutions funded under GCRF-IAA to assist knowledge exchange through embryonic enterprises and commercial opportunities resulting from previous projects in Africa, Asia and specific DAC listed countries. We will promote the UK Science and Innovation Network to our researchers and business contacts and enhance our use of Research management information to promote the sharing of networks.

We are undertaking a range of collaborative approaches in international projects, (i) SDI involvement which assisted our feasibility and market assessment of the planned South Korean campus in Hadong, which involves a number of industrial partners in Korea for teaching and training, but also research opportunities for our staff and collaborators (ii) our collaboration with Edinburgh, Strathclyde and Heriot- Watt on the Marketing Initiative run by SDI's US East Coast office (iii) the newly launched alliance with Curtin University which will enhance our approach to collaborating with the oil and gas industry and (iv) the opportunities arising from the Transnational Education initiative based in Qatar.

Outcome 6 - Inclusive Growth and Social Impact: “Building on current and good practice, Scottish HEIs will have scaled up their support of the Scottish Government’s ambitions for inclusive growth”.

Public engagement remains a priority – the University of Aberdeen’s Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) maintains a calendar of popular events which include Explorathon, British Science Week and the successful lecture series Café Scientifique. The team’s successful model of collaboration and promoting public engagement was recognised in 2016 through the national ARMA awards. The Aberdeen-led *EXPLORATHON (European Researchers’ Night, Scotland)* project, in collaboration with the universities of Glasgow, Strathclyde, St Andrews and the Edinburgh Beltane Public Engagement

Network, picked up the Outstanding Collaboration award and the partners are seeking further funding to continue this project. In addition, PERU won the Public Engagement and Advocacy award for its strategy to support academic-led public engagement. Many of the tools and approaches are now being used across other collaborative training networks funded by the EC. To build on this success, we delivered a new public research portal in 2017 and an enhanced approach to digital communication of our public engagement activities. The portal provides continued access to the institutional repository of publications and, in addition, will deliver researcher fingerprinting technology which will enable identification of expertise. It also allows researchers, research users and members of the public to explore expertise and publications across all research areas within the University of Aberdeen.

The renewal of the Wellcome Trusts’ Institutional Strategic Support Fund and the newly launched MRC Centre for Medical Mycology provides enhanced opportunities for collaborative public engagement. We will be delivering new training programmes for researchers in 2017 as part of these initiatives and our new *Grants Academy* to support impact and working with industry (PA10).

We aim to work with Elevator to deliver a pilot accelerator for student entrepreneurs over a 4 week period, with bursaries for participants to support inclusive growth and social enterprises as part of our ABventure Zone facility.

Outcome 7 - Equality and Diversity: “Building on current and good practice, HEIs will have ensured positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of the UIF”.

We will continue to ensure positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of UIF. We contributed to the Heriot-Watt led workshop on supporting this outcome and have agreed to contribute to a wider learning group focussed on best practice, sharing of data and information to inform projects. Our pilot programme mentioned above has the added aim of ensuring widening access to entrepreneurial opportunities.

Outcome Agreement between University of Aberdeen and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2018-19

On behalf of University of Aberdeen:

Signed:



Print name: PROFESSOR PHIL HANNAFORD

Position: Interim Senior Vice-Principal

Date:

10/7/18

Signed:



Print name: MARTIN GILBERT

Position: Chair

Date:

01/7/18

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:



Print name: John Kemp

Position: Interim Chief Executive

Date:

22 June 2018