

REPORT

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE STRATEGY 2015/16 to 2020/21

1 Context

- 1.1 The Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Strategy underpins and supports the University's strategic goal of being 'committed to international level and world-leading research that is exploited and disseminated for the benefit of our communities'.
- 1.2 In addition, the strategy will embrace our values as an institution and align with other university strategies, in particular those supporting the student and staff experience, global partnerships and international development.
- 1.3 The University's research was externally assessed during the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 and the outcome indicated that 94% of our submitted research was internationally-recognised or better, an increase from 78% in RAE 2008. In the same period, the percentage of research judged to be world-leading (4*) almost doubled to 14.4% and internationally excellent (3*) rose from 36% to 69%. These results provide a clear indication of our areas of strength, as well as those with potential for future assessment at 4*. Overall, our Grade Point Average rose 21% to 2.65, against a sector increase of 13%; and the number of research staff submitted (in FTE) increased by 19% against a slight sector decrease. The overall consequence of these improvements was that QR funding increased by 41%, against a sector average increase of 3%. We thus have strong foundations on which to build our strategy for 2015-2020 and improve on this performance in the next research assessment (2020 or 2021).
- 1.4 University strategy for research and knowledge exchange must also reflect, and take account of, external influences that include:
- Government policies and priorities for research, knowledge exchange, innovation and enterprise
 - Relevant EU policies and priorities, e.g. Horizon 2020: Societal Challenges
 - Research Council and major funding body policies and priorities
 - Increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary research, including international collaborations and partnerships
 - Increasing focus on knowledge exchange and impact in order to realise the economic and societal benefits of research
 - Increasing competitiveness of funding streams
 - Changes in doctoral training and provision
 - Local city and regional policies, priorities and partnerships
- 1.5 The strategy presented here is intended to be a living document that guides us on our research journey at institutional, departmental and individual levels over the next five years.
- 1.6 Many colleagues have contributed to the discussions that have led to the final strategy presented here. In particular, we would like to thank everyone who contributed to the expanded RKE committee away day in September 2015 or responded to an invitation to comment on the draft strategy.

2 Strategic objectives

- 2.1 Our strategic goal of being 'committed to international level and world-leading research that is exploited and disseminated for the benefit of our communities' is underpinned by three strategic objectives:
- 1 To pursue and support research of the highest quality that is, or has demonstrable potential to become, recognised as internationally excellent or world-leading
 - 2 To promote and support collaborations and partnerships across the institution and with external partners locally, nationally and globally to enhance research excellence and facilitate knowledge exchange
 - 3 To enhance the impact of our research in its broadest terms, and to widen dissemination of our research for the benefit of our communities, whether local, regional, national or global, including our staff and students
- 2.2 Our research objectives will be informed by a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators (KPIs) that will allow us to monitor progress towards our goals, including improved performance in any future assessment of research (Appendix 1).

3 Strategic Objective 1: To pursue and support research of the highest quality that is, or has demonstrable potential to become, recognised as internationally excellent or world leading.

- 3.1 Our staff are central to our current research success and in taking forward our ambitions for the future. We will appoint, nurture and retain academic, research and support colleagues of the highest calibre or potential; working to create an inclusive, supportive and positive research environment in which they can thrive.
- 3.2 We will introduce and invest in a Researcher Development Framework to support colleagues at all stages in their research career – from early career researcher through mid-career to the Professoriate – through an integrated programme of training, mentoring and development opportunities.
- 3.3 We will retain and seek to improve our 'Your First Three Years' programme to ensure an appropriate balance of emphasis between research and teaching & learning. We will more clearly define research leadership positions and support staff undertaking these roles by providing a programme of development and networking opportunities.
- 3.4 We recognise the importance of focus and depth in our disciplinary base. The University is recognised nationally and internationally for its excellence in a number of areas of research, which help define our reputation and enhance the overall standing of the University. We will continue to invest, as appropriate, in research groups and themes that are, or have demonstrable potential to be, internationally excellent or world-leading; recognising that research excellence and impact require critical mass, teamwork and involvement of a range of colleagues with complementary roles.
- 3.5 Our research ambitions require concomitant investment, planning and effective management of our physical, digital and human resources to ensure that research excellence and impact are underpinned and supported by high quality services and facilities (Appendix 2). We will continue to invest in research infrastructure and facilities; and ensure that in future supporting and developing research activity is integral to university strategies and plans.
- 3.6 Securing external funding is essential to support our research activities, not as an end in itself, but to enable the high quality research that will deliver the broad range of benefits described in 5. We will

support colleagues to apply for funding appropriate to their disciplines and expect individuals, teams and centres, as appropriate, to achieve a broad portfolio of grant and other income streams.

- 3.7 Research students, post-doctoral researchers and research assistants are all vital to our research ambitions. We will recruit high calibre doctoral students and will deliver an excellent research student experience through the establishment of Doctoral Training Programmes either within the institution or in partnership with external organisations. We will support and develop our research assistants and fellows through our Researcher Development Framework (3.2).
- 3.8 We will invest in infrastructure and services to support research students and staff involved in the delivery of high quality Doctoral Training Programmes to ensure our research students have opportunities for training and development for a variety of future career pathways.
- 3.9 We will continue to increase the number of research students through better promotion and marketing of doctoral opportunities and by exploring a range of funding streams to support studentships and doctoral training programmes. We will increase the number of post-doctoral and post-graduate research assistants through our success in external research funding as well as by an appropriate level of strategic internal investment.

4 Strategic objective 2: To promote and support collaborations and partnerships across the institution and with external partners locally, nationally and globally to enhance research excellence and support knowledge exchange

- 4.1 Our research and knowledge exchange partnerships strengthen and enhance our growing national and international reputation. We will encourage and support activities and actions to develop, enhance and promote strategically important collaborations, networks and partnerships at individual, faculty and university levels. Building on our existing relationships and developing new partnerships will increase our national presence and global reach.
- 4.2 We recognise that many of the challenges and priorities facing societies across the world require multi- or inter-disciplinary approaches to research and knowledge exchange. Indeed, many funding streams are dedicated to responding to Societal Challenges, e.g. Horizon 2020. We will continue to support and develop collaborative research across departments and faculties, and with external partners, in order to respond more effectively to multi- and interdisciplinary initiatives, and research priorities, locally, nationally or globally.
- 4.3 We will continue to support and develop our successful University Research Centres, whilst seeking to foster and develop emerging areas of research excellence, and will focus on activities and actions to build the external partnerships and income streams that will enable them to flourish.
- 4.4 We will pursue opportunities for knowledge exchange with industrial, commercial, public sector and other partners, to enable them to benefit from our research capabilities, intellectual property and other knowledge assets and to enable us to establish pathways to impact.
- 4.5 We will establish appropriate infrastructure and services to underpin collaborations and partnerships and ensure these are effective in supporting, developing and promoting inter- and multi-disciplinary research including doctoral supervision, placements and knowledge exchange.

5 Strategic objective 3: To enhance the impact of our research in its broadest terms, and widen dissemination of our research for the benefit of our communities, whether local, regional, national or global, including our staff and students

- 5.1 Our success and strengths as a university reflect the quality, diversity and enthusiasm of our immediate communities of staff and students. We are committed to creating an inclusive and

supportive research environment in which colleagues are valued for their contributions and benefit from the collective efforts of all.

- 5.2 We will ensure that our students benefit from our research through a research-informed curriculum, and by the provision of opportunities for direct student engagement in research, knowledge exchange and enterprise activities. A research-informed curriculum enables students to benefit from collaboration in a research community as producers of knowledge through research-based learning.
- 5.3 We will focus our research support and outreach activities to engage with public, charitable and commercial organisations to deliver increased diversity of income streams and encourage and support our researchers to lead research and knowledge exchange initiatives that enable our growth and build our external reputation locally, nationally and internationally.
- 5.4 Through the societal and cultural impact of our research, we aim to help improve the lives of people world-wide, from informing new policies and practice to the delivery of public services, health and well-being. We will promote the societal and cultural impact of our research by increased engagement with policy-makers, public bodies, foundations and the private sector.
- 5.5 We will strengthen the economic and technological impact of our research through increased engagement with business and commercial partners, and by knowledge exchange and technology transfer activities.
- 5.6 We will develop and support student and staff public engagement and enterprise activities and will work with local partners to promote engagement with social enterprise.
- 5.7 We will actively engage with our local communities to ensure the impact of our research and knowledge exchange is beneficial to the city and region, its people and organisations.
- 5.8 We will ensure that the outputs of our research are disseminated for the benefit of all our communities and that we proactively communicate the impact of our research and knowledge exchange activities externally using a range of media sources.

6 Implementation of our research and knowledge exchange strategy

- 6.1 This strategy will inform faculty and departmental research strategies and will be implemented through faculty, departmental, research group and individual research plans (Appendix 2), which will be monitored annually to review progress against goals (Appendix 1).
- 6.2 The strategy will inform faculty and directorate strategic plans to ensure our ambitions for research are integral to university short, medium and long-term development and planning activities (Appendix 2).
- 6.3 Implementation of the strategy will be underpinned by a series of cross-university action plans, research policies and Codes of Practice (Appendix 2), and by targeted and selective investment of faculty and central research funds.

Professor Linda King, PVC Research & Global Partnerships
with Associate Deans for RKE, November 2015

Approved at RKEC 01 December 2015
Approved at Executive Board 07 December 2015

Appendix 1

The RKE Strategy will be monitored annually through:

- Key Performance Indicators that include at the present time:
 - Research allocations to academic staff
 - Research and Knowledge Exchange externally funded income
 - Research student numbers and progression
- Review of Faculty Research & Knowledge Exchange activities
- Audit in preparation for any future Assessment of Research Excellence.

Appendix 2

The RKE Strategy will be underpinned by supporting strategies that include:

- Faculty and Departmental RKE
- Communication
- Research & Knowledge Exchange Partnerships
- Impact
- Learning Resources, IT, HR, Finance and Estates
- Staff experience including Researcher Development Framework and externally assessed initiatives such as the HR Excellence in Research Award and Athena SWAN.

Supporting policies and procedures that include:

- Consultancy
- Intellectual Property
- Ethics
- Research Data Management
- Open Access

All will be, or are being, reviewed and updated, as needed, in 2015-16.

Supporting Codes of Practice with relevant procedures that include:

- Academic Integrity
- Career management and development of researchers
- Ethical standards for research involving human participants

All will be, or are being, reviewed and updated, as needed, in 2015-16.

Implementation of the RKE Strategy will be enabled by a number of cross-university action plans, including but not limited to:

- Researcher Development Framework
- Research students
- Partnerships and collaborative research
- Increasing externally funded income streams
- Knowledge exchange
- Research Centres
- Impact, Communication and Public Engagement
- Improving performance in REF 2020/2021