Universities Innovation Fund: Response to the UIF priorities for 2016/17

Institutions are invited to submit their individual responses by 1 February 2015. Submissions should detail the contribution each HEI will make towards delivering the national priorities, individually and in collaboration, and should not exceed four sides of A4 in length.

Abertay is well placed to contribute to Scotland’s priority economic sectors and the national programme (innovation improvement agenda) of structural change, process improvement and or university cultural change both individually and in collaboration.

As a modern, business facing University we deliver local, national and international research and knowledge exchange which focuses on the needs of businesses and other end users. We build upon our expertise in food technology, environmental management and computer games and apply it to a broad range of industries (e.g. through visualisation technology).

Establishing the Graduate School

To support long-term vitality of the University research culture, in 2014 Abertay introduced ambitious plans and investment into a pan-University Graduate School (GS) as part of our R-LINCS (Research-Led Innovation Nodes for Contemporary Society) strategy to grow our RKE capacity and excellence. All PG (taught and research) students and research/ academic staff, have access to the GS which provides a comprehensive researcher development programme within a central location of flexible working spaces, open to the entire research community to promote integration and an inter-disciplinary ethos. Research students and early-career researchers are supported through a range of opportunities to enhance their research and professional skills. The GS provides training and professional development opportunities to both staff and students through seminars, workshops (e.g. statistics, programming, supervisor training, grant writing), intensive courses (e.g. preparing to teach in HEI), retreats, and an on-line Research Skills Master Programme (18 modules on research, planning, management and entrepreneurship skills). PG students develop communication skills through presenting at our PG Conference and internal seminar series, and have access to discipline-specific seminars and training via our on-line GS Events Calendar. Personal development planning is supported through the VITAE Researcher Development Framework tool and app.

PGR students and academics can apply to dedicated University funds for: researcher training support (conference/meeting attendance and specific training needs); support for Open Access Publication; Pump-Priming to drive enterprise and innovation through small-scale RKE projects (up to £5K vouchers); R-LINCS studentships (RCUK level stipend, fees plus support fund); and have secured facilities and equipment support via R-LINCS Theme Leaders and the GS. RKE support is provided to research/academic staff and students alike, thereby promoting integration, mentoring and a vibrant research culture. Given our small size, we make best use of regional and national development opportunities (e.g. courses provided by Dundee and St Andrews Universities, VITAE and the Leadership Foundation). Our membership of the inter-University Scottish Research Pools (SAGES, SICSA and SIPR) and Scottish Graduate Schools (SGSAH and SGSSS) also supports researcher development and provides opportunities to share research expertise, new discoveries across traditional discipline boundaries, and access to development programmes, networking and facilities. Staff may apply for sabbatical leave to pursue various development opportunities.

The GS is still relatively new, and will continue to establish and develop in 2016.

Developing the R-LINCS Strategy
Collaboration is the ethos of our R-LINCS RKE strategy which aims to bridge conventional boundaries between disciplines to devise innovative approaches to address societal challenges. Building on existing areas of expertise and our industry facing heritage, strategic research activity is focused around themes to address key local, national and international priorities. Our four R-LINCS Themes (Creative Industries, Environment, Security and Society) serve as a focus for interaction and development and are led by experienced research academics committed to fostering and supporting RKE activity and excellence. Our Outreach and Public Engagement Network (OPEN) fosters staff and student engagement with the local, national and international community, making Abertay an accessible and open community asset.

R-LINCS will continue to embed. We will conduct an impact assessment in 2016 and make further staff investment to support its development.

**Sector-wide ambitions for the new UIF.**

Our priorities have been grouped under the 12 actions agreed at RKEC:

**To promote entrepreneurial opportunities to students**
- Enterprise Business Incubator (Nov-15): £1.6m project in collaboration with Dundee & Angus College to support students in developing their business plan, provide facilities and in-house resources.
- Intellectual Property Policy (Jan-16): transformed to expedite and enable students to turn their ideas into business opportunities. The inventor (staff and / or student) will now own the IP.
- Access to early stage funding: we partnered with Mercia Technologies capital investment fund (Sep-15) to give our student entrepreneurs access to early stage funding. Discussions have started for computer game students and we are looking to expand this to life sciences and cyber security.
- Enterprise Campus: Our students have access to workshops, mentoring and funding to support business start-ups through our membership (Jul-2015).
- EBMC European business challenge – Entrepreneurial Brains Made on Campus: Students will take part for the seventh year running (Feb-16). It involves developing their own business ideas in response to a real problem; taking what they’ve learnt from their studies and applying it in a safe environment to develop business skills.

**To increase development opportunities and uptake of entrepreneurial training and education**
- Increase the number of Enterprise Fellowships: Abertay is currently hosting a Royal Society of Edinburgh Enterprise Fellowship. We want to build on this and encourage other students to use this funding opportunity. We will run a series of programmes to raise awareness amongst our graduate students and support the translation from idea to proposal.
- GS to host a programme of workshops delivered by the Scottish Institute for Enterprise and Enterprise Campus to develop researchers understanding of pathways to impact and stimulate innovation and KT.
- Make use of opportunities for enterprise arising from the refocused strategies of SAGES, SICSA, SIPR.

**Encourage mobility of staff between business and universities.**
- Intellectual Property Policy (Jan-16): Goes further than any other Scottish University as the IP will be owned by the inventor rather than the University. A driving factor in the change of policy was to encourage and enable our staff to “spin out” their inventions. It will remove a barrier to working with businesses who have long argued that negotiation of IP rights with the sector slows down and / or prevents collaboration.
• Staff Secondments and Mobility: We are reviewing our policy to promote the hosting of secondments and to support staff that want a secondment into industry. We will explore SIPR funding.

**Commitment to the professional development of our Enterprise & Innovation officers**
• Professionalise E&I administration: officers to undertake ARMA’s Certificate in Research Administration (2016), the Head of E&I has been appointed as Quality Assessor for ARMA Certificate and Diploma in Leadership of Research Management (Dec-15) and will undertake a LLM in International Business Law as part of his CPD to develop in-house capability of contract management and IP legislation (2016).

**Enhanced skills for effective collaboration within the academic and SME business base**
• Roll-out E&I strategic partnering to existing collaborations (e.g. KTP Management Committees), tailor promotion of appropriate RKE funding streams and progression (e.g. Innovation Voucher to KTP) and support to academics depending upon their career-stage (early, mid, expert).
• Review of front and back office support to identify barriers to effective collaboration: We have simplified our internal processes for Innovation Vouchers (Nov-15) to streamline the academic application process and to accelerate the start of (funded) projects. We will look to extend this further for consultancy.

**Support the transition from transactional to strategic relationships between universities and business/industry**
• Recruitment of a Director of External Relations (Spring 2016) to coordinate our interactions with businesses and to develop long term strategic relationships.
• Appointment of an Academic Enterprise lead to work with the Research Theme Leaders to drive and facilitate opportunities for external liaison with industry and external networks. This will ensure that enterprise / pathways to impact activities are not treated as an addition to research activity but are embedded within the research process itself at every stage.
• Increased participation in Industry Leadership Groups and development of workshops with key sectors. Abertay will host an OGIC workshop (Apr-16) to identify how Universities’ can support companies working on environmental remediation. We are planning a further workshop on how human resources and information technology can to drive innovation in the oil and gas industry (summer 2016).

**Implement enhanced template contract arrangements for SME’s in all Scottish universities**
• We have started the process of harmonising and simplifying contract negotiations by adopting a standard set of terms and conditions for small value consultancy projects (summer 2015).
• We actively input into and will be an early adopter of the RCDG suite of simple publicly available contracts.

**Work with others to implement “post-project referral protocol” in all individual HEIs and Innovation Centres.**
• We will use Innovation Vouchers as a “spring board” for KTPs. There are 5 KTP projects, either submitted for approval or funded with companies that we initially worked with through Innovation Vouchers.
• We will contribute actively to, and be early adopters of the protocol.

**Contribute to the development of a Framework to monitor and evaluate the success of the new approach**
• Development of a balanced scorecard for internal monitoring of initiatives.
• Active engagement into sector discussions using expertise in key economic sectors, particularly food and drink and computer games, to evaluate the success of the new approach (to the sectors and their supply chains).
**Strengthen our connections with social and cultural beneficiaries;**

Build upon our existing links with social and cultural organisations through:

- The Dundee Academy of Sport; a partnership with Dundee & Angus College to engage with students at school, college and university level and supporting the delivery of community sport across Tayside.
- The V&A Museum of Design Dundee, where we are participating in the development of the museum including providing interns.
- Dundee Waterfront where our visualisation technology is used to inform the planning process and consult with stakeholders.
- We are also working on collaborative projects with National Theatre of Scotland, Scottish Dance Theatre, Dundee Rep Theatre and Perth Museum and Art Gallery.

**We will provide more effective support for Scottish businesses to trade on a European and global stage**

- Develop our external business portal to signpost sources of funding (collaborative research and knowledge transfer), our staff expertise, and facilities.
- Capital investment (£3.5m summer 2016) in facilities and the creation of a Consumer Experience laboratory to enhance the range of services that we can offer to the Scottish food and drink industry.
- Develop our internal management information to better understand who we are engaging with and how we can further that offering.

**Contribute to the thinking the innovation support ecosystem of Scotland.**

- Actively engage in a further stream of sector wide work with the goals of how to stimulate the demand for R&D in Scotland and challenge businesses to think longer term, develop student driven initiatives and build upon successful mechanisms such as KTPs, Enterprise Fellowships and student business challenges.