University Innovation Fund
Robert Gordon University

The University is committed to supporting the Innovation Scotland Forum’s action plan and Universities Scotland’s 5-point action plan and to work collaboratively to support the design and adoption of innovative new approaches to exploiting the research base.

This paper details the contribution that RGU will make towards delivering the national priorities and how it will collaborate with the sector to assist step change both regionally and nationally.

RGU commits to provide match the funding it receives through the Platform Grant to enable a supporting infrastructure in business development and research and enterprise support.

UIF Priority Actions

1. Promote entrepreneurial opportunities to students during their studies.

   The programme of support managed by the Scottish Institute for Enterprise provides our main channel to identify and nurture student entrepreneurial ideas and RGU actively engages in the events and competitions organised by them.

   In 2015 RGU launched two new initiatives to support students considering or engaged in start-up companies, the Digital Innovation incubator and MAKE.

   The Digital Innovation Incubator was launched in collaboration with University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Council and is supported by Enterprise Campus. The incubator is kitted out with a range of cutting edge technology and business support to help entrepreneurial students, graduates and small businesses develop and progress their ideas.

   MAKE Aberdeen is a digital fabrication studio based on Belmont Street Aberdeen. The facility is run by RGU on behalf of Aberdeen City Council.

   In 2016/17 we will:
   - Assign an Internal Enterprise Champion within RGU who will coordinate the range of entrepreneurial activities across the campus in schools, faculties and collaborative projects to define and develop our north east enterprise ecosystem.
   - Capture and Grow Student Start-up Activity from our undergraduate and postgraduate student community. We will continue to implement the Digital Innovation Incubator and MAKE, making it more accessible to students across the campus. We will support other initiatives such as CityLab! Aberdeen where University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen City Council and Elevator support student “skunkworks” to build sustainable projects for the city.
   - Promote a Student Entrepreneurship Society
   
   These activities support RGU’s ambition to play a leading role, alongside others in the private and public sectors to further develop the North East’s enterprise ecosystem.

2. Increase development opportunities for and uptake of entrepreneurial training and education, and develop institutions’ practitioner-led entrepreneurial training.

   Student entrepreneurial training is led by the Centre for Entrepreneurship within the Aberdeen Business School, the Centre is well networked with links to business and entrepreneurs, The Centre hosts an annual public Entrepreneurship Lecture and support delivery on various taught entrepreneurship modules. While there is a greater focus on students within Aberdeen Business School some modules are available for all students.
In 2016/17 we will:-

- **Extend available Entrepreneurship Training** by reviewing programmes offered by the sector and by enterprise agencies with a view to widening engagement.
- **Promote Converge Challenge**: RGU has had limited engagement with Converge Challenge but will be participating in the Converge Challenge Roadshow on 9th February here in Aberdeen. By raising awareness of the opportunity provided by Converge Challenge RGU aims to secure greater participation and to contribute to the delivery of the 30% plus incorporation rate within Converge Challenge top 30 based on this increased outreach into staff and student populations.

3. **Encouraging mobility of staff between business and universities.**

RGU has for many years engaged with a body of associate tutors from business to support teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. Successful secondments from the University to business have supported the development of programmes such as the Petroleum Data Management course which has brought together research expertise and industry requirements to provide a highly tailored collaborative programme to upskill the sector.

In 2016/17 we will:-

- **Review our sabbatical arrangements** to provide an explicit mechanism to promote and enable industry secondments that provide benefit to both parties.
- **Review and promote funding opportunities** that support industry exchanges
- **Explore ways that we can engage** with those exiting the oil and gas industry to provide support as mentors.

4. **Set out breadth and depth of professional development available to University Enterprise & Innovation officers; identify any gaps.**

Research and Enterprise Services makes full use of training provided through PraxisUnico and participates in training throughout the sales cycle for its business development managers. Training needs are reviewed as part of personal development planning.

In 2016/17 we will:-

- Working with RCDG we will support the development of a **Scottish Training Programme** utilising existing providers and creating an extended network for staff engaged in the academic and business interface and to explore the potential of **Staff Exchanges** within the sector.
- Introduce the **AURIL Professional Development Framework** to further assess development requirements.

5. **Enhance skills for effective collaboration within the academic and SME business base.**

RGU engages with the SME community through a wide variety of mechanisms including Interface. Each faculty has academic leads for supporting engagement with business. Talent Exchange provides flexible solutions tailored to business needs including one-off challenges, short term projects, or a placement with business. Talent Exchange works across all faculties with both undergraduate and postgraduate students, it was funded by SFC and supported by AGCC and SCDI

In 2016/17 we will:-

- Review our **Internal Staff Development** provision to raise awareness of good practice and close collaboration between academic and support staff who interact with business.
• Implement a revised strategy to engage both staff and students in early engagement with SME’s utilising Innovation Vouchers where appropriate.

6. Examine partners current strategies/initiatives, and the government actions, to ascertain how to best support the transition from transactional to strategic relationships between universities and business/industry sectors.

RGU’s research activities focus on the delivery of industry-relevant research in several of Scotland’s key economic sectors notably Oil & Gas, Smart Data, Health & Wellbeing and the Creative Industries – these form key strategic statements. As an example of the regular engagement with business and industry RGU hosted a highly successful ‘Economic Summit’ in 2015.

RGU have worked closely with a broad range of stakeholders to deliver a ‘City and Region Deal’ which shares the same priority areas and has innovation as a key driver.

In 2016/17 we will:-
• Continue to sustain our success in securing and delivering successful Knowledge Transfer Partnerships to build mature relationships with a number of companies.
• As part of the City Region Deal to engage in the development of an Oil and Gas Technology Hub which will deliver timely technology deployment solutions to maximise economic recovery and total value added from the UKCS; support the internationalisation of the oil and gas supply chain; sustain high value jobs in the UK and the North East of Scotland; cement the UK and its supply chain as the world leader in mature basin exploitation and enhance export opportunity.
• Broaden research and innovation opportunities aligned with the key themes and City Region Deal to increase incubator space, broaden research opportunities and increase the volume of start-ups in the big data, biopharmaceuticals and food science and drink sectors. This will build on the existing expertise currently in the Aberdeen City Region and beyond.
• Through continued implementation of our Strategic Statements to ensure that we have a planned approach to supporting the research, development and skills needs for our chosen sectors.
• Consider follow on activities arising from the Economic Summit in support of the region.

7. Implement enhanced template contract arrangements for SME’s in all Scottish universities.

RGU has already adopted the standard contracts and guidance for Scottish Funding Council’s Innovation Vouchers Programme.

RGU has already adopted the ‘Glasgow’ model for Easy Access IP and will work with the Research and Commercialisation Directors to further simplify the contracting arrangements.

In 2016/17 we will:-
• Continue to actively engage with the RCDG Contracts Group
• Publish and Promote the use of contracts templates

8. Implement “post-project referral protocol” in all individual HEIs and Innovation Centres.

RGU works closely with the North of Scotland KTP Centre on project referrals to ensure both continuity of support with businesses and selection of the most appropriate academic partners.
In 2016/17 we will:-

- Through RCDG engage with the development of a National Post Referral Protocol
- Work closely with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to ensure that we are Aware of Business Support from the Enterprise Agencies so that we can refer businesses seeking to innovate.


In 2016/17 we will:-

- Delegate representatives to a Working Party led by RCDG.

10. (Development of the structures and mechanisms to give) more ambitious and effective connection of universities to social and cultural beneficiaries;

RGU has continued to develop its published report on Regenerating Aberdeen and Creating a New North through its engagement work as a stakeholder in City Region Deal project looking at the infrastructure needs for a thriving North East of Scotland.

Through our Centre for Northern Culture and Design we are actively engaged in supporting the regions cultural heritage, provenance and identity. Working collaboratively with local councils, Creative Scotland; Energetica and other stakeholders.

In 2016/17 we will:-

- Continue to support the implementation of City Region Deal
- Continue our focus of working with stakeholders through the Centre for Northern Culture, to develop cultural strategies and place-making within our region.

11. (Development of the structures and mechanisms to give) more effective support for Scottish businesses to trade on a European and global stage.

In 2016/17 we will:-

- Through multi-partner workshops raise business awareness of and demand for innovation and plan further action, in particular to promote European Funding Opportunities such as Horizon 2020 to businesses.

12. Fundamentally re-thinking the innovation support ecosystem of Scotland.

In 2016/17 we will:-

- Through RCDG contribute towards thinking towards an improved ecosystem
- Host an Event at RGU to bring stakeholders together to inform the debate.