INTRODUCTION
The University of Aberdeen’s Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council 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. Our Research and Knowledge Outcomes are included in the Outcome Agreement and will not be restated in this proposal.

We confirm our ability to utilise and match the Platform Grant (PG) as well as putting forward our proposals of how we will contribute to the nationally agreed priorities for 16/17, indicating the collaborative nature of each of the proposals.

The University welcomes the proposal that the activities for the UIF will become part of the Outcome Agreement process and the opportunity to be a key partner in the ongoing dialogue to support an improved innovation landscape and to enhance efficiencies.

PLATFORM GRANT
The existing Platform grant element of the Knowledge Transfer grant has been a contribution to supporting core staff in a number of areas including our Public Engagement with Research Unit which supports University public events and various festivals to promote cultural and social engagement. The key annual public engagement event is the May Festival, which plays host to around 120 events. It has increased visitor and attendance numbers by 42% since 2013. The University published a review of the Festival (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/mayfestival/documents/mayfest-report-2015-0508.pdf) which highlights some of the successes and the new additions to the festival. The festival is now firmly embedded within the “Aberdeen Festivals Collection” and highlights artistic excellence together with a vast array of opportunities to engage with contemporary themes and societal issues, providing valuable opportunities to showcase our research excellence to the public and promote engagement with research users, and for academic engagement to promote the research excellence at the University. The British Science Week is holding their annual event for the second time in Aberdeen in March 2016.

We remain committed to mechanisms that support SME access to university expertise and facilities. We have developed programmes for internships and student placements into SMEs, both as part of Making Most of Masters and as part of being a Santander University.

We have the ability to utilise £250K contribution from the Platform Grant and to match the funding, through our support functions in Professional Services for public cultural and societal engagement, our relationship with the NHS, staff development and development of new policies and practice. Specifically, we will maintain our calendar of events, with significant support for the May Festival, our series of Café Scientifique and will support Tech Fest. We will be reviewing our IP and Company spin-out policy and as part of the UIF will be seeking opportunities to collaborate with the sector to develop standard key principles.

Embedding innovative thinking and an entrepreneurial culture throughout the organisation is one of key aims under our new Strategic Plan. During 15/16, the University has put in place a new academic line-management structure creating 140 new line managers. The training and development programme for them has focused on research and innovation support. In 16/17 we will maintain and expand the development programme, including sessions on “Embedding innovation and developing strategic partners for research and commercialisation”.

As part of our industry engagement strategy we have created key points of contact for student placements/internships, an Interface dedicated contact point, and have tasked individuals with responsibility for engaging with the Innovation Centres. The NHS is a key partner for the University, for local delivery of shared vision and practice (e.g. developing the new Cancer Centre and agreeing a Master plan for the Foresterhill Health Campus), but also for the opportunities for joint posts, enhancing practitioner led teaching and assisting in the assessment of new innovations for the health service.

UNIVERSITY INNOVATION FUND
1. **Promote entrepreneurial opportunities to students during their studies.**

As part of creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem within the university a number of the support mechanisms are aimed at providing students with the widest experience possible and fostering innovation during their studies; we will promote a range of opportunities of which some will be delivered collaboratively:
• A number of courses (undergraduate and post-graduate taught) contain credit bearing modules for enterprise and entrepreneurship. Some of our Bio-Business modules are also delivered as part of the joint MSc programme with University of Glasgow to support the Stratified Medicine Scotland (SMS) Innovation Centre. We are leading on the proposal with partnership with OGIC to SFC for the delivering of a joint MSc supporting the demand from oil and gas industry.
• Membership of SIE and hosting of SIE student interns aimed at the UG population
• Delivering Enterprise Campus North (hub institution) as part of the collaboration and supporting the relevant spokes, including regional roadshow events and mentoring
• Full and active participation in Converge Challenge, including board membership, providing judging expertise and capacity for the competition
• Provision of the ABVenture Zone incubator for student entrepreneurs, for innovation space and high performance computing and a focus for events and training in enterprise and entrepreneurship.
• Working collaboratively with innovation facilities at RGU and Elevator, we will provide high quality space and support for start-ups and entrepreneurs, referring clients amongst facilities and delivering combined training utilising Enterprise Campus
• Provision of business plan competition opportunities through our membership of SIE and as a Santander University.
• Supporting the University of Aberdeen Student’s Association Leadership Academy – a student led activity aimed at promoting a range of skills development, training and workshops in collaboration with Enterprise Campus and SIE.
• Our involvement with the international network of universities - Coneeeect (www.coneeect.eu) and the next phase of this initiative for supporting entrepreneurship education across Europe.

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

We are developing an entrepreneurship pathway which would be available across our MBA and Energy MBA programmes, to enable entrepreneurs to study MBAs at the same time as building businesses. We piloted a scheme in collaboration with Aberdeen based Elevator in 2015 working with their accelerator programme and the Energy Task Force, and we aim to build on its success by exploring whether accelerator participants could receive academic credits for their work with the Energy MBA students who were matched to the accelerator participant. Collaborating with industry partners on these programmes will assist in the development of further examples of practitioner-led entrepreneurial training. The MSc being developed in collaboration with OGIC and partner universities will combine practical elements of entrepreneurship and skills development for the commercialisation of oil and gas innovations. The University will review its Reward mechanisms with the appointment of a new post.

Whilst our current promotion criteria include knowledge exchange and commercialisation, the project will allow us to develop a framework for rewarding KE activities more consistently. We will pilot within the university and share with our sector Human Resources colleagues.

Enterprise Campus has been universally welcomed for addressing a gap in entrepreneurial training and boosting student start ups. The partners see opportunities for expanding the programme to undergraduates, staff and non-university based entrepreneurs. There will also be a capacity issue for the existing teams, as the spoke activity continues to increase, and we would welcome the opportunity to bring forward to SFC future proposals for an expanded Enterprise Campus programme.

3. Encouraging mobility of staff between business and universities.

The University has encouraged mobility of staff between business and universities, and previously we have used the KTG award to fund such proposals. We will promote and support proposal development to enable mobility through applications to Research Councils schemes (e.g. BBSRC FLIP) and Horizon2020 (Marie Curie mobility scheme and ITN). We will devote dedicated business development resource to improve the quality of proposals and have provided internal funds to facilitate partnership development for EU projects. Many ITNs require secondments between the academic and industrial partners and we facilitate these activities. We have developed a strategy to enhance our European activity, including an increase in the number of mobility awards we host. The European Business development officers in Scotland network informally to share good practice.

We operate a consultancy policy which enables staff to undertake assignments with industry and use these projects to build relations where possible.

An element of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) award ensures that the academic PI spends a proportion of their time with the industry partner. Aberdeen is the one of the founding members of the North East KTP Centre which we will continue to support. We will implement a new marketing campaign to promote the benefits of KTPs to industry and academia as part of growing the centre and develop a standard contract template across Scotland to improve efficiency of the process.
Most of our spin-outs rely on the continuing involvement of the academic team to support the knowledge transfer process to the new business. We have encouraged and facilitated staff mobility and involvement in such activities and recognise this activity in our promotion criteria for academic staff. We have a suite of arrangements which operates well. We will be able to inform the development of consistent key principles for the sector with our experience and examples of good practice.

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

The University has set out a development programme for Research and Innovation Staff, recognising that skills need to be developed and maintained as part of the ongoing training needs of the organisation, and to ensure new staff coming into the profession gain the knowledge and skills required quickly. Our development programme uses the expertise of our external advisors as well as in house capacity. The programme for 15/16 includes: refresher contract law, software licensing, international tax and State Aid issues.

We will work with the sector through RCDG to develop a combined programme and to identify further gaps to ensure consistency of training. We would wish to explore the opportunities for mobility and secondments of Research and Innovation offices' staff (in the same way as academic staff are encouraged to innovate through mobility) with third parties such as funding bodies, enterprise agencies, UK Patent office, and company based business development departments and bring forward further proposals. We have piloted the use of Erasmus networks with two individuals in 14/15 to visit other universities and institutes and will be encouraging further applications for 16/17. In addition, individual R&I staff maintain their own training log and on a case by case basis identify relevant events and courses provided by PraxisUnico and ARMA.

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

The Skills development programme outlined in sections 1 and 2 will contribute to enhancing the skills for effective collaboration with industry. We will deliver the enhanced line management training to embed and promote a culture change at all levels. Additionally, we will promote successful examples of collaboration through case studies and continue to submit applications to award opportunities (e.g. Knowledge Exchange Awards).

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**

The recently announced City Deal will address a number of proposals from the NE region including a new energy innovation centre, supporting the industry to exploit remaining North Sea reserves, as well as the expansion of Aberdeen harbour, enabling the city to compete for decommissioning work. The City Deal also sets out how the region will grow the biopharmaceutical and agri-food industries, diversifying the area’s economy and creating new jobs and export opportunities, as well as commitments to improve digital connectivity across the area. The ambition which the Aberdeen City Region deal can help unlock is for the region to be a Beacon of Innovation.

This proposed step change in collaborative working between the region’s universities and industry, and between companies, will significantly support and develop the investment already made in Scotland through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC)-funded Innovation Centres and UK-funded Industry Catapult centres, as well as other publicly funded research. The new investment announced will allow companies to benefit and help lever more from the already significant innovation support provided through Scottish Enterprise, Interface and other agencies... It will ensure the potential contribution of this region to the wider Scottish and UK innovation agenda is maximised and will add value to the wider industry innovation eco-system.

The proposal is for an integrated cross sectoral approach to innovation and recognises that innovation does not normally come from closed laboratories. Instead it is interdisciplinary collaborations – among and between industry and academia – that hold out the promise of decisive successes in innovative discovery. The proposal will provide the access, scale, resources, focus and impact that is needed to ensure support through various stages of research to exploitation in the market place.

The work so far demonstrates successful collaborative working across the agencies, industry and academia to achieve the common goal. This will continue as we develop the detailed business plans for the Innovations hubs. We have nominated individuals to work with each of the work streams being led by ONE – a key industry partner of the City Deal. Having our Energy Institute already working towards building sustainable and longer terms partnerships with the oil and gas industry for research and training, the institute has already delivered a number of programmes assisting clients address their capacity building needs in new markets.
Aberdeen, Dundee and RGU have set up the Offshore Renewables Institute with Industrial partners – its aim is to develop strategic relationships in the Offshore Renewables sector. Our commitment for this initiative will continue and complement the work in the oil and gas sector.

7. **Implement enhanced template contract arrangements for SME’s in all Scottish universities**
   The University is a strong supporter of the use of template contracts, as a means to reduce the contracting time and will continue to be an active member of the group supported by RCDG. We will be exploring further improvements in 16/17 made possible through recent changes in legislation with Scotland recognising counterpart completion of contracts and the Digital acceptance of contracts. We will work collaboratively with the RCDG group to ensure such improvements have a wider benefit.

8. **Implement “post-project referral protocol” in all individual HEIs and Innovation Centres.**
   Through our collaborations involving the KTP Centres, Encompass and Enterprise Campus, we have demonstrated our willingness to develop referral protocols with our partners. We have volunteered to participate with Interface to implement a post-project referral protocol and the lessons learned from our previous projects.

9. **The development of a Framework for monitoring and evaluation of the success of the new UIF approach**
   We would welcome the opportunity to assist in the development of the monitoring and evaluation of the new process, working towards monitoring the effectiveness of the measures enabled by UIF in conjunction with our performance indicators in our strategic plan.

10. **(Development of the structures and mechanisms to give) more ambitious and effective connection of universities to social and cultural beneficiaries; and**
    We have already been working on extending outreach audiences that are less actively engaged with our cultural and social activities. The University has acted as hub institution for Scotland for European Researcher Night and Explorathon, which took engagement activities into shopping and community centres. PERU facilitate a weekly radio programme on ShmuFM, a radio station operating from the City’s seven regeneration areas and are involved in the Tillydrone Summer Festival. In addition, PERU have focused on the public engagement of researchers in the arts and social sciences, hosting the ESRC funded Festival of Social Sciences and the AHRC funded Being Human festival which aim to increase social and cultural engagement. This will remain a focus for 2016/17.

11. **(Development of the structures and mechanisms to give) more effective support for Scottish businesses to trade on a European and global stage.**
    We see two main opportunities to support Scottish Business to increase their European and global Trade in collaboration with universities. The first is through increased interaction with the Horizon2020 programme. We have had some discussion with the Enterprise Innovation Network which is delivered by SE and we will explore opportunities to be a partner in the future tendering process. The second is through the University’s international strategy which outlines our ambition for international research partnerships and the creation of international campuses.

12. **Fundamentally re-thinking the innovation support ecosystem of Scotland.**
    The key elements required for a successful innovation ecosystem are well documented throughout the literature and Scotland continues to aspire to creating a knowledge based economy. There is an opportunity for the universities, the economic development agencies and government to work together to consider improvements to the support system to deliver a successful ecosystem. The regional City Deals for Glasgow and Aberdeen could provide some useful insight for this theme of UIF and the University would welcome being an active partner.

1 February 2016