

Universities Innovation Fund

ROYAL CONSERVATOIRE OF SCOTLAND

January 2017

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland warmly welcomed the Universities Innovation Fund (UIF) initiative and the wider aim of achieving a step change in Scotland's performance in innovation and knowledge exchange. Halfway through the first operational year of the UIF, there is no doubt that the increased investment is already resulting in a significant change of gear in innovation and knowledge exchange at the Royal Conservatoire. The strategic value of this development is clear when we consider the economic significance of the sector in which the Royal Conservatoire operates: Scotland's Creative Industries generate a GVA of over £3bn and depend on a highly-skilled, degree-educated workforce.

Last year, we noted our researchers' close relationships with the professions and their audiences: for us, impact and engagement are not supplementary activities, but part of the ethos of our research and professional practice: artists want to make a difference in the world. Likewise, our curriculum is specifically designed to develop effective performing arts professionals with the entrepreneurial skills they need to innovate in the creative and cultural context – an ever-evolving operating environment.

Innovation is, therefore, foundational for the Conservatoire. The investment of the UIF has increased our operational effectiveness in supporting innovation, and our ability to pursue strategic initiatives across and beyond the Conservatoire. We are contributing more effectively to the shared sectoral effort, and are more able to reflect sectoral expectations for innovation and KE support.

We will provide a full report on the first year of the UIF in September 2017.

In the meantime, we would like to note our appointment in November 2016 of a KE Manager who comes to the Conservatoire with skills that complement and extend our existing expertise. Specifically, she brings experience of developing and supporting creative entrepreneurship and business start-up, and experience of managing Intellectual Property Rights (identified in our 2016 submission as a skill deficit at the Conservatoire). The UIF has, then, already brought new skillsets and fresh perspectives to the Conservatoire.

PROPOSED USE OF THE UIF IN SUMMARY

In 2017-18, the Conservatoire proposes to use the UIF to support two broad initiatives:

- 1) To use our increased capacity for KE within the Conservatoire to extend existing work and pursue new strategic actions to **enhance our innovation support** and make it work better for researchers and external partners alike.
- 2) To work in partnership with other HEIs to make an effective **contribution the agreed Strategic Outcomes** commensurate with our scale and expertise and to build on the foundations of the work we have started to put in place with partners to address the full range of Priority Actions for 16/17.

ENHANCING OUR INNOVATION SUPPORT

The Conservatoire's central KE team is small and has diverse responsibilities but the appointment of a Knowledge Exchange Manager (November 2016) has significantly extended our skills and knowledge base, and improved our operational effectiveness. The core team now comprises:

- Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange (Grade 10, FT)
- Knowledge Exchange Manager (Grade 7, 0.8 FTE)
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Officer (Grade 5, 0.6 FTE)
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Administrator (Grade 4, 0.6 FTE)

We offer a range of staff incentives and direct a number of strategic KE projects; in 2017-18, we will allocate a proportion of the UIF to sustain existing strategic projects and expand our staff incentives to address particular strategic needs. Specifically, we will:

- 1) Continue to extend the reach and significance of our impact across Scotland through engagement with audiences furth of the central belt. In doing so, we will build on work undertaken in 2016-17 and supported by the UIF, to ensure that rich audience and community engagement are built into the projects we pursue.
- 2) Develop two new strands within our existing 'Athenaeum Award' branding, to support staff in developing new and innovative partnerships with external companies, and to support specific entrepreneurial initiatives from staff. This approach will not only support new activity, but also help us to further develop our understanding of the person-to-person networks that are the foundation of innovative practice and KE in the performing arts, production and screen.
- 3) Draw on the developing evidence base provided by our Research Information System (which we are using to capture outputs and collaborations across the full range of research and professional practice pursued by Conservatoire staff) to develop a new strategy for KE and innovation that properly reflects our scale, context and expertise.
- 4) Commission a scoping project to explore the potential for a performing arts Innovation Exchange space at the Royal Conservatoire's Renfrew Street campus. We know anecdotally of the importance of our campus as a meeting place that facilitates innovative work (by, for example, permitting part time staff to meet and discuss creative projects that they will pursue externally), and we believe there may be scope for a specific space and support structure that would be shared by these professional artists, our dedicated research staff (academic and support), doctoral students and, crucially, recent graduates. The scoping project will explore demand, potential parameters of, and partners for, such a resource.

CONTRIBUTING TO STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The Royal Conservatoire can make a clear contribution to the agreed Strategic Outcomes (SOs), commensurate with our scale and expertise, building on initial insights and discussions around Priority Actions for 16/17. Some of these contributions will be made in partnership, either with individual institutions or consortia, or through our working more effectively with agencies and groups such as Interface or the Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors Group (RCDG); others will require specific work within the Conservatoire.

SO 1: Demand Stimulation

We will work directly with Interface and other partners to drive demand stimulation in the distinctive context of the Creative Industries and develop a strong project pipeline. Increasing the demand for HEI services in this sector may require specially-tailored approaches that take account of the particular features of the Creative Industries, such as the significant role of sole traders in this sector, or the tendency for partnerships to build over time. We will also contribute through our membership of RCDG to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by Glasgow University. The KE Manager will lead on this work. This relates directly to PA5 in 16/17 and exploratory meetings between Interface and Conservatoire staff which have helped to highlight the specific challenges facing the CI sector as well as the breadth of research solutions that the Conservatoire could potentially facilitate.

SO 2&3: Simplification and commercialisation; simplification and greater innovation

Our proposal to scope a performing arts Innovation Exchange space speaks directly to these outcomes.

In the short term, we will also seek a partner HEI (or HEIs) to assist us in maximising the effectiveness of our innovation support, including the development of an effective 'shop window' for KE at the Conservatoire. The KE Manager will lead on this work.

As noted above, we will develop a new strategy for KE and innovation, drawing on insights from the data generated by our new Research Information System. This strategy will give particular attention, from the institutional perspective, to Strategic Outcomes 2 & 3. The Head of Research and KE will lead on this work.

Finally, we will also contribute, through our membership of RCDG, to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by the universities of Aberdeen and St Andrews. The KE Manager will lead on this and shape our contribution tying together the commitments we made on 16/17 PA's 3, 4, 6, 7 & 8. PA7 is particularly beneficial for a small specialist institution like the Conservatoire in terms of industry backed templates for contracts and collaborative partnerships. Efforts around PA3 are also timely in terms of our new KE Manager having an opportunity to learn from other university teams with regard to visibility of KE offers, and routes of engagement.

SO 4: Entrepreneurialism

Again, our proposal to scope a performing arts Innovation Exchange space is made in the light of this strategic outcome. We will also work with Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and others including Queen Margaret University in developing an approach to entrepreneurialism that is tailored to the Creative Industries, and look particularly at how we can enhance the current ladder of support for the sector. GSA will lead the sectoral work in this area, with the KE Manager leading on the Conservatoire's contribution and ensuring that the insights generated are fed back into our curriculum whenever relevant. This relates directly to the work we are currently putting in place at the Conservatoire around PA1 and 2, where we seek to make stronger connections with the Enterprise ecology already in place across the universities as well as looking to develop relationships that will deliver more practitioner-led entrepreneurial training.

SO 5: International

We will contribute through our membership of RCDG to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by Heriot Watt University. In parallel with this, we will explore with colleagues at Scottish Development International (SDI) and Connected Scotland whether the Royal Conservatoire can take a role in the shared work of promoting and engaging Scotland internationally, contributing to the cultural diplomatic effort to

ensure that Scotland's voice is distinctive internationally. This is related to PA11 for 16/17 where RCS has committed to continued participation in sectoral initiatives commensurate with the Conservatoire's perspective and expertise.

SO 6: Inclusive growth and social impact

We will contribute through our membership of RCDG to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by Stirling University. As part of our contribution to this, we will lead discussions across the sector on inclusive growth in the cultural sector, facilitating a workshop series with HEI and industry partners and linked specifically to PA10, and to the contribution the Conservatoire can make to this work stream, facilitating discussion and insights around achieving cultural and social impact.

SO 7: Equality and diversity

We will contribute through our membership of RCDG to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by the Open University in Scotland, feeding in our particular experience of innovation in this context (our unique BA Performance in British Sign Language and English, for example, was an outcome of an Innovation Voucher with d/Deaf theatre company Solar Bear).

MATCH FUNDING

The Royal Conservatoire is not in a position to provide match funding in cash terms. However, as noted in 2016, the Conservatoire invests considerable resources in professional teams devoted to effective public and cultural engagement – these teams were not funded by UIF in 2016-17 (or by its predecessor, the KTG), and so their staff costs in 2015-16 offer indicative match funding in kind for the UIF, as follows:

Team	Staff costs*
Artistic Planning	£137,277
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for management of all aspects of the Conservatoire's performance programmes and other public engagement. 	
Front of House and Box Office	£297,602
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-facing staff supporting performance programmes and public engagement 	
Lifelong Learning	£306,045
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses for adults and young people (staff related to SFC-funded T20/40 initiative are not included, nor are Junior Conservatoire staff) 	
TOTAL	£740,924

*Including superannuation and NI. Staff in these teams with a student-facing remit have been omitted