

Our strategy is based on our mission to transform people and communities by providing demand-led teaching and research to contribute to economic, social and cultural development regionally, nationally and internationally. We support the regional and national public and private sectors through the provision of highly skilled graduates, a range of research services and activities to facilitate economic development.

There is a natural alignment between our mission and strategic aims and the Outcome Agreement priorities, for example:

- **Student Experience:** We have sustained high performance against benchmark, rising to 9.72% above benchmark in NSS 2021. This results in maintenance of our position as the top modern University in the UK (*excluding small, specialist and private providers) with an overall satisfaction score of 83.5%. It was particularly rewarding to have evidence of the impact of our continued commitment to a student-centred approach in the very positive responses to the NSS 2021 Covid-19 specific questions. The University scored at least 10% above the UK average for each of these questions. This is a key priority moving forward and areas of enhancement have been identified and action plans are in place.
- **Graduate Employability:** Our Graduate Employability scores continue to reflect our sector-leading status in supporting learners to gain employment and thrive in their professional career. The Graduate Outcomes Survey 2018/19 results show that 92.7% of the University's graduates were in employment and/or further study 15 months after graduation. Although this is fall from last year, this in line with the performance of the majority of UK institutions due to the complex effects of the pandemic. In recognition of the continuing employment challenges in the North East region and beyond, the University has prioritised additional support including; extension of the 33% discount to graduates of 2020/21 for taught post-graduate study at RGU; extended Careers support for graduates six months post-graduation; and entrepreneurship summer schools. Enhancement of support for students to gain employability skills and employment is part of the second phase of the future of learning, teaching and assessment (Curriculum Content) project. The recent ELIR outcome gave specific commendation to the University's work on employability and employment.
- **Student Mental Health & Wellbeing:** We have continued to provide all support services online throughout the pandemic, with a high uptake for online counselling provision. In response to this demand the counselling service hours were extended and additional staff employed to ensure that students requiring support would have their needs met. Recognising the very clear link between mental and physical health, the University made access to RGU: Sport free of charge for all students in 2020/21 and 2021/22. This has been highly valued, and the use of the facilities has risen significantly in this Semester, above pre-pandemic levels.
- **Quality Assurance:** Following the Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) in 2020/21, we are delighted to have been awarded a very positive outcome. The overarching judgement of effectiveness was that the University has effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience and this was coupled with specific commendations about Employability and entrepreneurship, our strategic approach to working with industry and key stakeholders, partnership working and the student voice, and our institutional approach to gathering and using data.
- **Workforce development:** We remain a sector-leading provider of Graduate Apprenticeships, with high-levels of recruitment continuing in to 2021/22, with 158 recruited in Semester 1, with a Semester 2 intake planned for 3 courses. We have also continued to grow short course provision, with a total award of over £1.1m from SFC fee waiver support, the National Transition Training Fund and new funding from the North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund. There has been significant demand and the range of courses continues to be extended in line with industry demand.

- **Supporting the Scottish Economy:** Throughout the pandemic we have continued focus on the importance of innovation and knowledge exchange and in 2020/21 our target for KE awards was exceeded by £1.4m and demanding targets for innovation vouchers (IVs) and advanced IVs were exceeded. These activities received national recognition through the National Knowledge Exchange Awards where the University was shortlisted for three of the eight available categories and won the award for Innovation of the Year between Scotmas Group Ltd and the School of Engineering. This was another area of commendation arising from the recent ELIR.
- **Partnerships:** We have renewed and strengthened our sector-leading partnership with the North East Scotland College (NESCol) which enables one of Scotland's largest cohorts of articulating students to enrol with advanced standing each year in the University. A proposal for strategic funding to support the development of the partnership in key areas has been submitted to SFC. The University is exploring ways in which it may participate in a regional pathfinder. Our approach to and success in partnership working was commended in the outcome of the recent ELIR.
- **Research Excellence:** We made our submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 in Spring 2021. The strength and breadth of the research submitted to this exercise will now inform the ongoing development of a revised research strategy, which will be considered by the Board in December 2021.

The University is proud that its achievements maintain the performance that led to accolades won in 2020/21 such as the Scottish University of the Year (The Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021) and Business School of the Year (Times Higher Education Awards 2020) and continue its established track record these areas. Evidence of our response to the impact of the pandemic and the steps taken to support recovery with the easing of restrictions is woven throughout the sections below.

Fair Access & Transitions

We have a long-standing commitment to access, articulated through our firmly rooted approach in delivering credible, high-quality interventions which work by inspiring, support and enabling people and their families to be confident and to engage in higher education. This approach is expressed in our Access Aims to:

- Build ambition: raise aspirations and develop ambitions.
- Enable access: mitigate barriers and create student-centred access pathways.
- Support achievement: support the development of skills-enriched graduates with the confidence and capacity to achieve their ambitions whatever their circumstances.

People from deprived areas and with care-experience have fair access and are supported to succeed

Year on year we have enhanced and refined our outreach activity to MD20 students and annually recruit over 100 such students. In the last year the University recovered and grew its MD20 numbers, and although the 10% participation target remains challenging this improvement is a step in the right direction. This accounted in the last year for almost 160 individuals, for whom the University is making a real difference, this figure is significantly more than for some institutions that have achieved the 10% participation target. Following this positive growth in 2020/21, early indications for 2021/22 show that the number of MD20 students enrolled has declined as a result of an increasingly competitive recruiting environment.

A key measure to provide fair access has been the implementation of access thresholds across the full range of undergraduate provision for applicants from MD20/MD40 areas, those who are care experienced and those who are at or have attended a SHEP school. The access thresholds are publicised both online and in our prospectus.

The University has implemented a range of measures to support our students, tailored to their needs. MD20 students are provided with financial support to attend applicant days, access to targeted scholarships, the

provision of welcome packs including items such as a laptop, grocery vouchers, book vouchers and stationery and for those living out-with Aberdeen City a year of free accommodation in University managed halls offered to enable an easier transition to higher education. This support is extended to our care-experienced learners, with the addition of a guaranteed place on their chosen course if they meet advertised minimum entry requirements, and eligibility for full-time annual accommodation with a 20% discount in the first year. Our support for care-experienced students begins at applicant stage as each enquirer or applicant who declares they are care-experienced is contacted by the Wider Access Team to form a link with the University pre-enrolment, along with the Personal Tutor as a dedicated contact for the duration of study. Our commitment to supporting care-experienced students is outlined in full within our [Corporate Parenting Plan](#).

Our commitment to widening access goes beyond these two characteristics, and as in previous years a significant proportion of our Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants are disabled or come from the BME communities. We have also committed to supporting our estranged students throughout the student journey by providing tailored access and outreach opportunities, and delivering personalised support to enhance retention and outcomes, as outlined in our [Stand Alone Pledge](#).

Institutions work with Schools, SFC funded programmes and local communities to support successful pathways and effective transitions for students

Engagement with school pupils is a core strand of our activity to widen access. Over the last year the University has undertaken significant activity to refocus our school engagement programme to ensure that it provides the most effective support and transitions for students. As part of our school engagement the University has several well-established bridging programmes, created with SHEP and other partner schools to ease learner journeys and provide a supportive transition to higher education. This provision has been provided online in recent years and now with the easing of restrictions has shifted to a hybrid model. This blended approach has already seen an increase in attendance with 27 on-campus ACES participants and 140 participants in our virtual Access To programmes.

The most significant change that the University is implementing this year in its Schools Engagement work is the offer of an 'RGU Hub' for all Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire SHEP Schools. This scheme offers a dedicated RGU staff member one day every fortnight to undertake information sessions on topics such as writing a personal statement, how to choose a university and what university life is like, and how to apply to UCAS as well as workshops on access offers and education pathways and a guest lecture series linked to the school curriculum. This offer has been very well received to date with 6 schools taking up the offer to date, and further development of the scheme is underway for implementation this year.

As part of a drive to redevelop our Schools Engagement activity the University has this year partnered with Aberdeen Football Club as a local employer to deliver sessions in Schools on how university courses can link to jobs at AFC, as a means of raising aspirations and showcasing clear career opportunities. This resource will be deployed this year to pupils in S3 as an early engagement programme. To guide our blended joint engagement work with Schools in the local area and across the country, the University has refreshed its school engagement Strategy for 2021/22 and will implement an advisory group to continue to shape this programme. Another example of our commitment to broader engagement with disenfranchised communities is our partnership with the Denis Law Foundation to deliver the long-running Streetsport initiative. Streetsport delivers free weekly sports and creative activity sessions for young people across Aberdeen City to enhance wellness and contribute to healthier urban communities.

Prior learning is considered, and students are offered the best pathway for them

Articulation pathways are central to the Scottish education sector's contribution to the Scottish Government's inclusion agenda. The University has a longstanding history of high performance in this area as a result of a

strategic commitment to widening access to courses and continuous development and enhancement of partnerships with colleges.

The University has a close and long-established relationship with NESCol, with over 75 articulation routes between the two institutions. We are now undertaking concerted activity to grow our articulation pathways with a wider number of colleges, currently we have guaranteed articulation routes with six college partners, and this activity will also seek to increase the volume of articulation pathways that the University offers. This planned growth will be guided by a refreshed college engagement strategy which seeks to extend articulation opportunities through 5 strategic priorities:

- i. Consolidation of our long-standing regional partnership with NESCol;
- ii. Further development of articulation arrangements and relationships with colleges out-with our local region;
- iii. Increased engagement with students through our marketing and recruitment activities for articulating students;
- iv. Further development of transition arrangements to facilitate a positive student experience and support retention;
- v. Monitoring and evaluation to ensure college partnerships are effective and to inform recruitment and planning.

Building on significant experience in articulation from engagement with colleges, the University further recognises prior experiential learning through the Graduate Apprenticeship programme offerings applicants the opportunity to enter the University with advanced standing where appropriate, while continuing in employment.

Transitions and pathways for students are supported and signposted

Information about pathways to the University from our partner colleges is publicised on our website through the Degree Link programme which provides a full list of pathways. These pathways are fully supported through the Associate Student Scheme, to help prepare students for university life while still at college, and the Degree Prep programme. Degree Link sessions are provided online and are a valuable opportunity for students who are currently at college in Scotland and interested in study at the University to learn about topics such as study skills, employability, inclusion, finance and across each of the Academic Schools.

In recognition of the potential for increased anxieties and challenges around the transition to higher education the University this year further developed its redesigned and restructured Student Welcome to be delivered online with a small number of in-person ticketed events. In-person events included a ticketed in-person freshers fair, in line with Scottish Government guidance, to ensure that students were able to have a safe in-person opportunity to meet peers and staff. Our approach to a blended welcome allowed the University to provide new and returning students a safe welcome experience, minimise anxiety and establish a strong connection with our students. Additionally, the University has developed a transitions track of regular emails to welcome students to the University and provide useful guidance and tips for students starting out at the University. Finally, a transitions survey has been established with responses being used to inform support needs for this academic session, as well as preparations for our student welcome in January and September 2022. The delivery of this welcome in 2021/22 continues to build on our established experience of providing accessible transitions and pathways to learning.

High quality learning, teaching and support

A high-quality student experience is vital to our mission to transform people and communities. A student-centred approach to teaching and learning and our inclusive and supportive learning environment has resulted in us significantly exceeding our benchmark for overall satisfaction in the National Student Survey 2021, placing us as the top modern institution in the UK and Scotland (excluding small specialist and private providers).

Arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement support standards expected by students

In 2020/21 the University participated in the Quality Assurance Agency, Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR). The findings of this review were extremely positive with confirmation that the University has effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. The review specifically commended the University for good practice in the following areas:

- Employability and entrepreneurship
- Strategic approach to working with industry and key stakeholders
- Partnership working and the student voice
- Institutional approach to gathering and using data

These extremely positive commendations reflect a genuine partnership with the student body and our stakeholders and high-quality academic and enhancement standards. The recommendations of the ELIR around the implementation of policy and practice, embedding equality diversity & inclusion, a criterion reference grading scheme and training for postgraduate students who teach are now being addressed and will be implemented in the current academic year.

The student experience of learning, teaching and support is protected in the ongoing health context

From the start of the pandemic the University has remained agile and responsive to ensure the integrity and quality of the student experience. As pandemic restrictions are eased our approach continues to be to deliver a safe and supportive learning environment through the provision of a blended learning experience, offering face to face teaching to those who need it to qualify or progress and creating opportunities for those students who are isolated to have some face-to-face contact. The success of this approach is reflected in the result of the NSS 2021 Covid-19 specific questions for which we were consistently 10% above the sector average. For 2021/22 we delivered a revised student welcome with the majority of events online and crucially an in-person, ticketed freshers fair to ensure new students had the opportunity to meet peers and staff face-to-face. To ensure that our on-campus provision is safe for our student and staff population we have implemented health and safety measures that exceed the baseline for beyond level zero guidance including social distancing, wearing of masks and fresh air ventilation. With the success of the return to campus in semester one, plans for semester two include a carefully planned gradual return to teaching time on campus, retaining core health and safety measures and always aligning with Scottish Government guidance. All of our support services continue to be available in a blended way to ensure that students are able to access the full range of support at the point of need to enhance their student experience.

There is rigour and quality in learning and teaching processes

The University's approach to learning and teaching processes is informed by our Learning & Teaching framework, further detailed below. With the continued requirement for online and blended learning in 2021/22 we have developed a timetable that seeks to prioritise practical experience while maximising teaching within the Covid-19 guidelines. Building on our successful approach last year, we continue to engage closely with the Students' Union and invest in our online services to deliver quality blended learning, teaching and support.

With the shift to online and blended learning, the University recognises the vital role of accessibility in online education to ensure that we teach and assess students in ways which embrace the diversity of learners and their varying needs. To meet this need, the University has undertaken significant enhancement activity and made investments to develop guidance and provide tools for staff to enhance the accessibility of our online learning materials to enable all students to engage with the opportunities offered by their course.

Staff have the skills and support to deliver a high-quality learning, teaching and support experience for students

Immediately following the first Covid-19 lockdown and the subsequent shift to online and blended learning, we placed a strong emphasis on staff development to enable a smooth transition to high quality online learning, teaching and support. To achieve this digital learning and the use of relevant technologies is now a core focus of our staff CPD programme. Regular guidance and support is provided to staff, as well as the provision of bespoke online resources designed to further support digital learning. This training has been delivered to over 300 academic staff to date including for new users and for those wishing to advance their practice.

Enhancement and improvement of learning, teaching and support is informed by data and evidence – including the outcomes of quality assurance

Our institutional approach to gathering and using data was recognised as a core strength of the University in the recent ELIR. Business intelligence is used across the institution to inform and enhance our academic and support offer to students through the annual undertaking of both the Institutional Appraisal exercise and course appraisal. The annual institutional appraisal exercise reviews a wide range of institutional performance measures including a full review of the student journey across equality characteristics to identify key trends. These key messages inform and measure our equality outcomes to ensure we are taking an evidence-based and measurable approach to reducing institutional inequalities amongst our student population. Following institutional appraisal, the University undertakes an annual course appraisal exercise that is focussed at a more granular level on performance measures across courses and school to inform enhancement plans. Evidence of the impact of these processes are the actions taken at course, School, and institutional level to implement changes in light of the insights presented.

Students are supported in their mental health and wellbeing

Providing appropriate support for students to succeed in their studies and grow as individuals is a cornerstone of the University's strategy. The University strives to sustain a culture that promotes and supports positive wellbeing and is committed to ensuring that students thrive throughout their course and graduate with a positive outcome. Our sustained commitment to support student's mental health and wellbeing is carried out in partnership with the Students' Union and underpinned by the joint Student Mental Health Partnership Agreement. This sets out the University and the Union's commitment to improving the mental wellbeing of all students and staff, aims to change perceptions of mental health among the student community, challenge negative attitudes, promote positive outcomes and support strategies to maximise the student and staff experience. Alongside this, we have invested in online resources, such as Silver-cloud (offering free and anonymous cognitive behavioural therapy across a range of areas such as depression, anxiety, stress, body image) and Lifeworks (offering resources and advice to those experiencing mental health issues along with resources to enable individuals to start conversations about their feelings with family and friends). These tools are available to staff, students, and alumni.

The University has a comprehensive range of support services available for all students. The Counselling & Wellbeing service provides a safe space for students to access counsellors and wellbeing advisors for support on any issues or concerns The Inclusion Centre provides information and advice to support students with dyslexia, sensory and mobility impairments, mental health difficulties, medical conditions, autism spectrum disorders and temporary impairments on a range of issues including application's for disabled students' allowance, support in

organising in-class support and an in-house assessment of needs. These services are provided as blended provision, in line with the University's approach to blended learning and teaching. In addition, the RGU Nightline is a student-led peer to peer helpline, run by the Student Union with the support of the University, to offer non-judgemental, confidential and anonymous listening and support services to our students outside of usual academic hours.

A review of student enhancement services will be undertaken in 2021/22 to ensure equity of access to the range of support services for the diversity of our learners, whether on campus, blended, or online.

Student Voice and Partnership

The University aims to continually enhance its student experience through partnerships with students and in particular, the Students' Union. Our commitment to ensuring a culture of effective collaboration and actively seeking the student voice was one of the key commendations identified by the recent ELIR exercise. Student representatives are invited as full members of a number of our governance committees, including our Equality & Diversity Sub-Committee to ensure that the student voice is heard and acted upon. There are close links between the University Executive and the Student Union Presidents, with regular meetings and direct contact with the Principal for any issues that arise. The Student Union Presidents have also played a very critical role in the University's internal Covid Action Group throughout the pandemic. Our partnership with the Students' Union has been further referenced above, specifically in relation to health and wellbeing and mental health.

Continued support is provided to the Student Union from the University, for example, the IT team provided the digital solution to ensure that Executive elections and recruitment of school officers, class reps, student leaders of clubs & societies and other student positions are able to continue to take place in the changed circumstances.

Learning with Impact and embedding graduate attributes.

Throughout the student journey we aim to extend the reach and relevance of learners' opportunities to gain employment and provide them with the skills to thrive in their professional career. Our performance in this area is evidenced by our longstanding exemplary employability record, with the University remaining well above both the Scottish and UK average for both employment/further study and graduate level employment/graduate level study in the 2018/19 Graduate Outcomes results. Our approach to ensuring our graduates are equipped to gain or create employment and thrive is driven by our Learning & Teaching Framework which aims to ensure a whole person education that prepare graduates for the future evolution of work by focussing on lifelong learning, collaborative practice, authentic learning, flexibility & inclusion and technology enabled learning. The deliberate steps taken by the University to enhance employability and entrepreneurship skills across the whole student population was recognised as a core strength in the recent ELIR exercise.

Public Health Emergency

Over the last 18 months as the public health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has evolved we have remained proactive in our response to ensure that high quality learning, teaching and assessments are able to continue, and that students and staff are supported appropriately. This year we have undertaken the following activities:

- Worked with NHS Grampian to deliver a vaccination clinic for our international students situated on campus in recognition that our International Students come from all over the world to study in Scotland and may not have a mature Covid-19 vaccination programme in their home country;
- We have provided additional support to our international students recognising the costs involved with the requirement to quarantine, with the University covering the costs of mandatory quarantine accommodation.

- Sought to minimise the risk of Covid-19 transmission across our student and staff population with the implementation of two LFG collection sites on campus to allow staff and students to collect testing kits as they require.
- We are leading a £294k study to understand the impact of the longer-term effects of Covid-19 on the lived experiences, health and wellbeing of NHS workers in Scotland. Funded by the Scottish Government's Chief Scientist Office this study will explore the effects of Covid-19 on the personal and working lives of NHS staff, their self-management strategies, use of healthcare resources, and seek to uncover any unmet health care needs.
- We further collaborated with NHS Grampian on the development of a bespoke module to support senior managers to navigate and lead through a time of massive change and challenge, delivered through our upskilling programme.
- The University is hosting a PCR testing site on our campus as a local testing site for our community.

Equalities and Inclusion

Inclusivity sits at the core of the University's purpose and the University has a significant track record of fostering equality and diversity best practice which extends to every stage of the student journey and throughout the whole University community. The University's commitment to meeting the SFC's ambitious plans for gender balance are aligned with the ethos that access to the University's provision should be widened to address issues of under-representation. Continuing previous strong performance, the University continues to have a high proportion of BME and disabled Scottish domiciled entrants with retention for both groups above the overall University average and target.

All students are supported to achieve their full potential

To ensure that all students are supported to achieve their full potential, the University undertakes an annual equality monitoring exercise which provides analysis of the student population across protected characteristics. This analysis examines the student journey across access, retention, achievement, satisfaction, and employability to inform detailed considerations at course and school level as part of the annual course appraisal.

Key issues highlighted through the 2021 monitoring exercise include: a continued inequality in the overall gender balance of the student population, and that male, Asian and students with a declared disability have lower achievement rates across a number of measures. At course and school level action and enhancement plans are prepared which are monitored through the School Academic Boards and reported through to Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, and University actions are reported through Equality and Diversity Sub Committee also to QAEC. This annual exercise has seen continual enhancement with refined reporting mechanisms to ensure that inequalities can be identified and addressed appropriately.

In line with our Public Sector Equality Duties of the Equality Act (2010) the University has developed a refreshed set of Equality Outcomes which aim to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build good relations between different individuals and groups. These outcomes were directly informed by the equality monitoring findings, noted above, to ensure that the outcomes are based on the areas of greatest inequalities with SMART targets to achieve real change. Progress on implementing these outcomes is monitored through Equality and Diversity Sub Committee.

Our committee structure for Equality & Diversity has been revised, creating an Equality & Diversity sub-committee and an Equality & Diversity Forum to ensure that initiatives, issues and campaigns to promote equality and diversity are within the decision-making structures of the University. The membership of our forum strives to have a diverse and representative membership and includes equality champions for each protected

characteristic among the staff and student population to provide those with lived experiences a voice in the process of implementing improvements to enhance the inclusivity of our University community. To further drive and enhance this work, the University recently appointed an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Advisor and is now seeking volunteers for seven new staff equality champions.

Our approach to Equality & Diversity is embedded across our policy framework with a requirement for each policy to undergo an impact assessment on the basis of equality and human rights, sustainability, and privacy. There are two core policies in this area, the Equality & Diversity Policy and the Dignity at RGU Policy. The latter has been revised to align with best practice and to ensure that the recommendations of the Equality & Human Rights Commission report on tackling racial harassment are implemented along with best practice in relation to GBV. The University is now actively considering applying for national chartermarks as part of its enhancement activity.

Learning with impact and creating work-ready graduates

We aim to extend the reach and relevance of learners' opportunities to gain employment and thrive in their professional career and to ensure a high-quality student experience. Our performance in this area is evidenced by our longstanding exemplary employability record, with the University remaining well above both the Scottish and UK average for both employment/further study and graduate level employment/graduate level study in the 2018/19 Graduate Outcomes results. Our approach to ensuring our graduates are equipped to gain or create employment and thrive is driven by our recently launched Learning & Teaching Framework which aims to ensure a high-quality student experience in order to prepare graduates for the future evolution of work by focussing on lifelong learning, collaborative practice, authentic learning, flexibility & inclusion and technology enabled learning. The deliberate steps taken by the University to enhance employability and entrepreneurship skills across the whole student population was recognised as a core strength in the recent ELIR exercise

Current and relevant portfolio, based on labour market intelligence and aligned to industry engagement

We deliver a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Employability skills are embedded throughout the curriculum – a successful RGU graduate should be an experienced professional, creative innovator, confident life-long learner and global citizen.

Our receptiveness and responsiveness to industry needs is reflected in our portfolio development. Labour market intelligence (LMI) and our employer network inform the development, delivery and assessment of courses to ensure that the curriculum is current, an approach that was praised as a defining strength of the University in the ELIR. To mitigate the impact of the pandemic on placement opportunities the University has developed digital placements by working with employers to offer students virtual and hybrid placements across a range of industry sectors.

Highly skilled graduates supported to succeed

The strong demand for our graduates is testament to the range of skills, experience and knowledge that they are able to demonstrate. Our teaching and learning framework emphasises the need for all of our courses to embed skills such as digital, critical thinking, complex problem solving, leadership, team working and innovation to allow our students to transition into work seamlessly.

Our employability hub has continually enhanced their service to provide our students with the best support to plan and understand their career options. This includes careers consultants that can help students to explore career options, source opportunities and understand and develop their own employability, alongside year-

round events and course specific employer events to ensure that students have the opportunity to engage with employers relevant to their chosen industry. We have also developed a suite of online tools on our eHub which includes learning programmes and tools covering all stages of career planning and resources to support and enhance professional development throughout career. Additional support for graduates has been driven by our Employability Enhancement Award programme, through the extension of our alumni mentors network, and an Entrepreneurship Summer school to provide new graduates support and guidance about start-ups and freelancing.

Given the ongoing challenging economic circumstances, both in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and the regional impact of the oil and gas downturn a series of further improvement activities in our teaching and learning portfolio are planned for 2021/22. Graduate employability and future proofing skills is a key consideration of the University-wide Future of Teaching, Learning & Assessment review which will be undertaken this year. Finally, in recognition of the importance of the skills developed from student exchange programmes, the University will this year implement the Turing Scheme and develop a strategy for incoming and outgoing student exchanges.

Upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce and supporting people in to work

The closeness of RGU's relationship with professional bodies and employers allows the University to develop a curriculum that addresses specific skills needs, extending the reach and relevance of its provision to drive employability and support individuals to thrive throughout their careers. Our flexible, accessible curriculum and work-based learning opportunities support the upskilling and reskilling of both individuals and workforces. The strength of our offer in matching skills demand with individuals' desire to change career path or upskill is reflected in a growth in the number of mature (over 21) individuals accessing our courses particularly in the subjects relating to health and social care and in the Graduate Apprenticeships.

The University continues to directly address skills needs for the changing world of work particularly through our upskilling provision which has been developed to meet the immediate need to upskill the existing national workforce, alongside those who are unemployed or at risk of redundancy. We have secured significant funding in 2021/22 from the SFC Upskilling Fund, the North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund and the National Transition Training Fund to further our activities in upskilling and support people in to work. This funding will enable the University to offer twenty-three courses, with over 1200 fee-waiver places this year. These short-courses were determined by consultation with industry and to align with the University's priority sectors of energy and health & social care and cross-sectoral themes of digital and data; leadership, including entrepreneurship; and net zero. Through our upskilling provision the University has made a step-change in its short course infrastructure and now provides even more flexible solutions and additional pathways to individuals and businesses.

We take a solutions-focussed approach with companies, illustrated by the innovative method of delivery and the range of courses in the Graduate Apprenticeship programme, including approving the first Graduate Apprenticeship Masters Course, which also plays a critical role in support of economic recovery. We have secured 204 Graduate Apprenticeship places this year and recruitment is progressing well with plans for a February intake for three courses including data science, cyber security and business management. A further example of workforce development is the joint work with Skills Development Scotland and the region's health & social care providers to create a career development pathway which includes opportunities for direct care providers through to managers to upskill and broaden their skills base to respond to service requirements as well as encourage those out-with the sector to consider a career in care. This will be developed through the course of 2021/22.

Research Excellence

Following the arrival of a new Vice Principal (Research) in March 2021, the University is in the process of revising its research strategy which describes the need to support the development of a strong research culture and invest in our research community of academic and professional services staff and doctoral students to create a vibrant, collaborative and inclusive research environment that can deliver high quality outputs and public value. This will enable us to deliver on the strategic aims of the research elements of the Outcome Agreement, supporting impactful research through, for example, RGU Orkney and the National Subsea Centre.

To mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on research excellence the University funded twelve projects with pump-priming from our share of the sector's £75m allocation. One of these projects was a study into student experiences of university during the Covid-19 pandemic, their own responses and coping strategies, and their understanding of what universities need to do to support them, led by Dr Alice Butler-Warke from the School of Applied Social Studies. The research highlights how students felt they were perceived societally during the pandemic and lockdowns. The team of researchers conducted 124 surveys and three focus groups, between March and June 2021, to better understand the effects of Covid-19 and lockdown on students at Scottish universities. There are two key documents from this research: a student-facing toolkit designed to help students address the key challenges they have faced and continue to face as a result of the pandemic and lockdown conditions, and an institutional report that highlights the same challenges and presents the voices of students to institutions.

In addition to the pump-priming grants, the University has secured six externally funded projects, including three projects from the Chief Scientists' Office (CSO), and will this year undertake research into Health and Social care students' mental health, wellbeing, and health care workers' experience of long Covid.

As well as these critical projects, the University is undertaking a significant research investment through the National Subsea Centre. This multi-million-pound partnership with the Net Zero Technology Centre (NZTC) is a central component of the innovation strand of the Aberdeen City Region Deal and seeks to harness the University's academic expertise and facilities to establish a world-class research and development centre, focused on tackling the underwater challenges faced by industry. The focus of the NSC's research activity is shaped by close collaboration with industry partners and involves mobilizing our capabilities in AI and Machine Learning; Image Analysis and Machine Vision; and Engineering. The NSC's aim is to realise the full potential of our oceans through high impact and high-value solutions for underwater challenges faced by all marine sectors engaged in delivering sustainable economic development. It will do this through three main programmes of work on Net Zero Operations, the Transparent Ocean, and Integrated Energy. The Centre will increase regional and national recognition of our capabilities in innovation and marine research and help to secure increased private sector investment in demand-led research for industry. To date c.£1m of funding has been secured for research aligned to the NSC. Further development of the NSC is planned for 2021/22 including implementing a strategic relationship with the University of Strathclyde.

Case Study: Increased high-quality research and improved PPE provision

RGU's School of Engineering increased its research outputs by 50% for publications and improved its research environment thanks to efficient use of the Scottish Funding Council's Research Excellence Grant. The funding allowed the release of 20% of three Readers' time to mentor a large volume of early career researchers within the school. The early career researchers were allocated to thematic areas under a theme's lead and supported to produce high-quality publications and engage with research projects alongside senior researchers and Co-Project Investigators.

Early career researchers also benefitted from having their PhD studentship fees waived alongside further support for the PhD students' lab activities. The Research Excellence Grant also supported the maintenance of key research equipment, such as high-temperature membrane reactors, multiphase flow-loop, membranes labs, a well lab mastersizer, and a dynamic universal testing machine, and ensured their annual regulatory compliance.

As a result of this funding, our researchers and technicians were better equipped to contribute to national emergencies during throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. They directed resources into the manufacturing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face shielding for NHS Grampian region in response to the pandemic, as well as completing the design of advanced PPE to help reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Case Study: Augmented Fashion – Immersive interactions for sustainable heritage in fashion & textiles

Augmented Fashion is a 48-month collaborative research project that runs until 2024, funded by the AHRC “UK-China Research-Industry Creative Partnerships” program. The project is led by a multi-disciplinary team across three schools: School of Computing, School of Creative and Cultural Business and Gray's School of Art, in partnership with Donghua University, Shanghai. The research embodies the growing slow fashion movement, encouraging a sustainable future for designers, makers, consumers and the world we live in. The overall aim of the project is to promote the use of immersive technologies such as simulated reality and Human-Computer Interactions to preserve cultural heritage and artisan craftsmanship in the fashion and textiles industry. It aims to promote sustainable methods of design, production, consumption and disposal of fashion and textile products as a 'slow' fashion alternative.

The project is unique in that it generates an interdisciplinary approach and UK-China cross-cultural knowledge exchange across fashion and textiles and computing science with both industry and academia. This has been achieved in a number of ways including through a series of highly successful, multi-disciplinary business and commercialisation workshops between Shanghai academics and industry partners in Scotland that have greatly enhanced international connectivity and collaboration.

Another success of the project is a 24-month Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) 'Embedding sustainable business practices & a culture of innovation-led design', between Harris Tweed Hebrides and RGU. This joint business partnership is exploring sustainable, year-round products and new international markets whilst promoting the home weaver industry on the isles of Lewis and Harris. Knowledge exchange has also been enhanced across Scotland through a multi-disciplinary 'Immersive Scotland Network', set up in March 2021 as part of a 24-month project. The network has successfully brought together academics, industries, micro and SMEs and cultural organisations and promoted Scottish Immersive technology. Three PhD students are also being fully funded by RGU specially on the Augmented Fashion to explore how new technology can support sustainable international fashion and textiles.

Looking ahead, an International Fashion Conference takes place in November 2022. This will widen the global impact of the project and reach out to policy makers, cultural organisations, creative businesses and international fashion brands alongside academics from fashion, textiles and computer sciences.

Research sustainability (protect against impact of Covid-19)

The University is committed to delivering greater research sustainability, an aim that is prioritised through our revised research strategy. This seeks to increase the size and diversity of our PGR community through a range of marketing initiatives, reinvigorating the professional doctorate programme, and developing the PhD 'by publication' pathway.

We have supported our postdoctoral staff through the pandemic, using an element of our share of the £75m SFC allocation to provide contract extensions where work was interrupted by Covid-19 – a total of five postdoctoral staff (from three academic schools) were supported in this way. For the one member of staff who returned to front line NHS duties, funding was provided to cover her salary to enable her to extend her research project work and retain the research assistant involved. In addition, we have continued the extension of three fixed term staff contracts as part of the further funding provided.

All postgraduate research students were offered a six-month break in their studies, coupled with an equivalent tuition fee free period to allow them to take a break in their studies if required. An element of our share of the £75m funding allocation has been used to fund industry-focussed collaborative PhD studentships in the area of energy transition. Further funding from this allocation supported students who were obliged to postpone their studies or who were no longer able to find employment or had suffered digital poverty through being unable to access on campus services during lockdown. A total of 27 students were supported in this way along with three PhD students supported with UKRI Phase 2 funding.

The University has provided ongoing support to early career research staff and our graduate community through our Researcher Development programme of training and informal events throughout 2020 and 2021. The 2020/21 Programme, which is mapped to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, offered a range of over fifty masterclasses, workshops and informal sessions designed to broaden knowledge and skills as well as foster interdisciplinary dialogue and strengthen research culture at RGU. We have used some of our allocation from the £75m to fund external speakers in wellbeing and happiness as well as funding for a writing retreat. Some of this allocation has been put toward internal development costs for a tailored online booking hub to support the Researcher Development programme – both to improve ease of access for staff/students to all sessions as well as asynchronous materials available through our subscription to EPIGEUM this academic year. It will also enable management reporting of attendees to demonstrate levels of interest in our current provision and to recognise staff/students for their commitment to this Programme as part of our drive to build research culture. Alongside this a digital newsletter will enable us to disseminate information about upcoming training and events for students and staff in a more efficient manner. Finally, the University used a portion of our funding to support open access costs for female staff across all our academic schools to recognise and in some way mitigate the impact of the pandemic on publications from this group of staff.

Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

Since 2018, the University has had a strategic aim to stimulate economic development and support organisations to be more successful and one way that the University does this is through knowledge exchange. This approach is in line with the recent view from the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery that the role of education in the recovery of the economy post pandemic is paramount.

Recognising the challenges faced by the business community as a result of the pandemic, RGU's approach was to use government funded mechanisms to support business and organisations to diversify, innovate and adapt. Our approach to stimulating economic development and supporting organisations has been recognised nationally, and successful recent examples include:

- Exceeding our ambitions for Innovation Vouchers, Advanced Innovation Vouchers and Innovation Centre Funding last year and developing a healthy pipeline for this year. This continued growth is reflective of a

drive to encourage longer-term collaboration as a follow on from initial engagement through the Innovation Voucher Scheme;

- National recognition for our Knowledge Exchange activities through the 2021 Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards where we won Innovation of the Year in partnership with Scotmas Group Limited and were shortlisted for three categories. As well as this, two RGU start-ups were winners in the 2021 Converge Awards for Creative Challenge, and the SSE Net Zero categories;
- Sustained success in securing Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, a very positive development given the long-term commitments and high financial contributions from companies in challenging economic circumstances.

In 2021/22, RGU will continue to use government supported mechanisms to support individual organisations as they tackle the impact of the pandemic, Brexit, net zero and energy transition. Recognising the importance of entrepreneurship and innovation in economic recovery, RGU's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group (EIG) reports into the Vice Principal Economic Development, a member of the University Executive. Our entrepreneurship activity will this year focus on developing entrepreneurship skills across Aberdeen City and Shire and is funded by the Scottish Government through the North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund. This includes a regional Accelerator programme; entrepreneurship upskilling courses, supporting nano and micro businesses in the Creative, Tourism and Food & Drink sectors; and an Enterprise School for recent graduates in the region.

Collaboration

Institutions consider and pursue meaningful opportunities for collaboration which fit with their mission and vision and supports the delivery of coherent, sustainable provision and research

We have a longstanding relationship with NESCol, and last year committed to extending the breadth and impact of this partnership. This has resulted in the implementation of a Joint Strategy and Delivery Board, and a series of joint enabling groups to focus on joint recruitment activity, enhanced support for articulation, and examining alternative qualifications and transition routes between college and university. This relationship is founded on a joint commitment to improving the regional learner journey, enhancing skills alignment and furthering social and economic development within the region.

Aside from our own focus on innovation support for economic recovery, we will continue to develop our involvement in the Research & Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG) activities and working with other universities to jointly consider national opportunities and initiatives. This strategic partnership approach will be a key element in our drive to create significantly greater impact and is exemplified through:

- the creation of the National Subsea Centre with the Net Zero Technology Centre;
- the ONE TechHub with Opportunity North East and CodeBase;
- the success of the joint regional bid for Economic Recovery and Skills Funding, from Scottish Government, in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Skills Development Scotland, University of Aberdeen, ONE, Energy Transition Zone Ltd, and Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce;
- the establishment of the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) with University of Aberdeen, NESCol, ETZ Ltd and Skills Development Scotland; and
- leading on an entrepreneurship work package, in collaboration with the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland as part of the Island's Deal TalentEd initiative.

A further example of RGU's collaboration with business is the partnership with Wood which aims to tackle key challenges facing the transitioning energy sector through a mix of research, skills development, academic/industry discourse and new initiatives.

Institutions consider collaboration on estates assets that could: improve local coherence and sustainability or provision; reduce carbon emissions and be a part of place-based approach to economic recovery

This year we will undertake a review and develop our Estates and Digital strategies to address post-pandemic business requirements, and considerations around sustainability. This includes a new Campus Strategy, subject to staff and student consultation, that aims to deliver a campus that is vibrant, dynamic and provides a welcoming environment to our students, staff and our community.

Climate Emergency

Our strategy recognises the importance of our responsibility to reduce the environmental impact of our operations, understanding that the pace of climate change will continue to accelerate without urgent interventions across all aspects of society. At RGU sustainability goes beyond simply reducing our own carbon emissions, it is about shaping and influencing thought leadership on energy transition (as recognised through RGU's leading expertise in workforce dynamics which has been featured in over 100 media pieces), helping the brightest minds access higher education so that they can solve complex global energy issues, and collaborating with industry to find innovative solutions to achieve net zero targets.

The University has signed the 'Race to Zero' global campaign which encourages all universities and colleges to reach net zero as soon as possible. Our own plans to reduce the impact of our operations have been accelerated with dedicated resource of an Energy & Sustainability Manager to drive a new vision, action plan and operational standards to meet our Net Zero ambition for 2045. A range of energy reduction programmes are now planned for this year.

As well as undertaking internal activities to address our own ambitions to meet net zero we are proactively supporting regional efforts to address the climate emergency and to move towards net zero, mindful of the local economic reliance on fossil fuel industries. Between February and November 2021, RGU developed and delivered a "Runway to COP26" which will be followed by a "COP26 Launch Pad" from November 2021 onwards. This includes a series of events, media coverage, thought leadership activities and symposia. The University is chairing the first year of the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA), a joint initiative with University of Aberdeen and NESCol to offer access to skills, training, applied learning programmes, workforce analysis and community assessments for the energy sector. NESA was established as part of the Aberdeen Energy Transition Zone, a key initiative to support regional efforts to address the climate emergency.

The University recognises the importance of the UN sustainable development goals and much of the work we are undertaking in response to the climate emergency accords with the goals. This year a key aim will be to more explicitly align our activities with both the UN sustainable developments goals and the Scottish Government National Performance Framework, which draws on the UN goals.

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
A Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	2,261	2,239	2,308	2,425	2,377	2,389	2,885	2303*
B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes		669	734	802	705	655	644	606
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		429	513	532	457	432	448	343
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		64.1%	69.9%	66.3%	64.8%	66.0%	69.6%	56.6%*, **
C COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	136	132	136	142	146	117	160	2,148
COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	7.0%	6.7%	6.4%	6.5%	6.7%	5.2%	6.1%	131
D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	16	16	18	22	20	29	34	6.1%*
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	1.2%	1.2%	39
E Total number of full-time first year SDUE	1,974	1,919	1,952	2,101	2,183	2,190	2,248	1.7%*
Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	1,818	1,779	1,813	1,962	2,016	1,999	2,071	
Proportion of full-time first year SDUE retained	92.1%	92.7%	92.9%	93.4%	92.3%	91.3%	92.1%	1
F The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey	1	1	3	2	5.5	8.25	9.72	1000.0%
G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey				1029	1142			
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				1010	1084			
The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				98.2%	94.9%			97%
G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment				780	805			
The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				585	575			
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				75.0%	71.4%			
H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers	1948	2080	1982	1939	2089	1973	2093	70.4%

Please note that 2018-19 and 2019-20 figures for measures G1 and G2, 2019-20 figures for measures F and H and all 2020-21 figures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years.

Notes:

* Figures for Measures A - D do not include Additional Funded Places for 2021/22

** The methodology for Measure B now counts only those who articulate within 3 years of their HN award.

*** The 2020/21 figure for Measure H is an estimate based on the 2020/21 HESA Student Return

ANNEX B

Introduction

Through 2020/21, RGU collaborated with other universities to consider new approaches to exploiting research and innovation capabilities to aid Scotland's economic recovery, including through pan-HEI groups addressing mission and challenge-based funding, entrepreneurialism, city and region deals, research skills for business engagement, internationalisation and KE Concordat. This active engagement will continue in 2021/22.

Based in Aberdeen, RGU is acutely aware of the need for business, society and the University to transition in response to the climate emergency and this will be incorporated in all UIF outcome priorities in 2021/22. From February 2021, RGU developed and delivered a "Runway to COP26" which will continue to November 2021, followed by a "COP26 Launch Pad" from November 2021 onwards. This includes a series of events, media coverage, thought leadership activities and symposia.

RGU has leveraged its UIF funds, partnered purposefully and allocated its own resources to deliver on its 2020/21 UIF plan, as demonstrated below. The University Board and Executive have stated their commitment to accelerating and widening impact through further investment and focus in the year ahead. The University confirms that in 2021/22, it will fully utilise the UIF Platform Grant to support its UIF activities. Given the importance of UIF, RGU provides its own additional resource contribution towards UIF activities, in terms of funding and other resource, and this will include match funding the Platform Grant.

Outcome 1 (Demand Stimulation)

Working with Enterprise Agencies, Scottish Government and Business Networks, Interface and others helping increase the demand and quality of engagement for business and the public sector for university services.

In 20/21, RGU significantly increased its focus on regional and national engagement, working with enterprise agencies and other key organisations to maximise opportunities for local business and public organisations. Key priorities 20/21 were: develop the National Subsea Centre (dedicated staff appointed and research facility build completed); secure £1m of knowledge exchange awards (£2.48m awards secured); and secure 2000 individual engagements from over 20 countries through RGU's Knowledge Bites for Business (41 resources developed, 1,948 individuals registered from 22 countries).

Key priorities 21/22 will be:

- Secure and deliver as appropriate, projects through the North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund (NEERSF) – working with regional and national stakeholders to support economic recovery in the North East of Scotland in light of the pandemic, oil and gas downturn, energy transition and Brexit.
- Grow the University's National Subsea Centre (NSC) – working in partnership with the Net Zero Technology Centre, industry and other stakeholders, grow the NSC's impact and reputation for world-class subsea research, addressing the demands of energy transition and growing the university's industry relevant research capability.
- Maximise opportunities from RGU's Energy Workforce Transferability Review – the Review has attracted international media coverage and has been featured in over 100 media pieces.

In 21/22, RGU will use the findings to inform future development at a Government, regional and University level in relation to upskilling and reskilling the oil and gas workforce to maximise opportunities from energy transition.

- Secure £1.5m of knowledge exchange awards – working with Interface, the Innovation Centres, Innovate UK and others to promote and deliver KE to support economic recovery and to build on the pipeline of businesses engaged through the use of Government funded mechanisms in 20/21 (142 agreements secured in 20/21 between the University and businesses).

Outcome 2 (Simplification/Commercialisation)

In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface and others demonstrably simplify business access to knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities.

The university simplifies access to knowledge and expertise by aligning with key government supported initiatives and mechanisms and in the way it conducts business directly with industry. Key priorities 20/21 were: increase the breadth of knowledge exchange awards with 20 Innovation Vouchers and 2 Advanced Vouchers (21 Innovation Vouchers and 7 Advanced Innovation Vouchers awarded, 38% of the total Advanced Innovation Vouchers awarded in Scotland); increase the depth through increased follow-on activity (18 follow-on projects delivered); and develop the RGU website to become a resource rich portal (remedial action undertaken on RGU website and 41 RGU Knowledge Bites for Business resources developed, including one with Interface to promote their services to businesses and the academic community).

Key priorities 21/22 will be:

- Invest in the business section of the RGU website and increase social media engagement – significant work will be undertaken to ensure ease of access for businesses and other organisations to University services
- Roll out of commercialisation resources and processes – a key focus for 20/21 was the development of RGU's new IP Commercialisation Policy and to ensure that back-room systems and processes were streamlined to support successful interface with industry, the focus for 21/22 will be roll-out and staff development to maximise impact and ensure consistency across the University.
- Implement good practice from the KE Concordat – in 20/21 RGU undertook a formal review of its KE approach against the KE Concordat Principles, identifying development needs and recognising good practice. In 21/22, RGU will undertake these developments and sign up to the full development year.
- Continue to host and work with staff from both Interface and the North of Scotland KTP Office, helping to raise the profile of these as support mechanisms for business, ensuring consistency of approach across the University and to purposefully build relationships with other HEIs.
- Continue to take a sectoral based approach to business development, with dedicated business development managers who can identify and support the challenges faced by different sectors, particularly post pandemic and those arising from the climate emergency, and underpinned by RGU's sectoral plans.

Outcome 3 (Simplification/Greater Innovation)

In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface at a national level make use of their sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy (including beyond non-STEM)

The university continues to deliver a national agenda, through active participation in collaborative regional initiatives in areas such as energy transition, entrepreneurship and health.

Key priorities 20/21 were: work in partnership with ONE, the Councils and the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) to encourage greater innovation in the region as it transitions from oil and gas (significantly increased engagement including VP on Policy Council AGCC, local committee SCDI, establishment of National Energy Skills Accelerator, co-design of NEERSF proposal for Scottish Government); deliver LINA and promote innovation to the wider community (LINA delivered; enterprise booster for 16-24 year olds and business programme for women with caring responsibilities established with Aberdeenshire Council); and partner with the NHS, Councils and third-sector to address the impacts of the pandemic on service users and providers (in addition to general partnership approach, working with regional partners such as VSA, Torry Development Trust and Dennis Law Legacy Trust to directly address immediate pandemic impacts and plan for recovery).

Key priorities 21/22 will be:

- Continue to build and chair the National Energy Skills Accelerator, working with University of Aberdeen, NESCoL, SDS and Energy Transition Zone Limited to provide a one-stop shop for companies seeking to transition skills to renewable energies.
- Working with regional and national partners, develop the NEERSF proposal and implement, depending on funding secured, to ensure that the region and its constituent communities recover and prosper.
- Ensure that RGU plays its full part to support regional economic development through active participation and contribution to relevant groups, committees and boards such as Aberdeen Prospers and the AGCC Policy Group.

Outcome 4 (Entrepreneurialism)

Sector will have made significant positive change in the way entrepreneurial opportunities are promoted and delivered to students, staff and businesses

RGU will continue to stimulate and foster entrepreneurship within the University and will use its experience (recognised through: only Scottish University shortlisted for Outstanding Entrepreneurial University, Times Higher Education Awards 2020; Winner of University Team Award; Scottish Institute for Enterprise Imaginative Educator Awards 2020; and Winner of Outstanding Business Engagement Award) to widen its scope and stimulate entrepreneurialism and innovation within the region thereby supporting economic recovery. Key priorities 20/21 were: deliver the 2021 Innovation Accelerator (delivered to 12 teams focussed on solutions to three global societal challenges as identified by Public Health Scotland and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals); continue to support 2019 and 2020 accelerator start-ups to thrive (significant increase in applications to Converge and over £1.5m investment secured in two years, 260% return on seed fund investment); deliver two further cohorts of the Creative Entrepreneurship programme (delivered to 24 creatives); and deliver LINA+ Enterprise Boosters, one for women with caring responsibilities and one for 16-24 year olds through the Young Persons Guarantee (both delivered successfully).

Key priorities 21/22 will be:

- Continue to embed entrepreneurship and innovation within the University through the delivery of expert Masterclasses for staff, students and businesses – sessions scheduled for 21/22 include Mark Logan, author of the Logan Review and Josh Quigley, cycling world record holder.
- Work with regional partners, potentially through NEERSF, to significantly increase entrepreneurship activities within the region, resulting in significant community and business impact, particularly with SMEs.

- Work with ONE and Codebase to support the re-launch of the ONE TechHub, post-pandemic, as a city centre base for entrepreneurship and digital innovation and with the support of a developed Mentor Network, maximise the impact of RGU's contribution to the Hub.

Outcome 5 (International)

In partnership with SDI, Connected Scotland and others pool knowledge and networks and shared good practice to promote and engage Scotland internationally

In 20/21, the University adapted its approach to international engagement, in light of the restrictions on travel, focussing on maintaining existing international relationships and adapting its delivery models. Key priorities 20/21 were: develop a new international plan (curtailed due to pandemic but currently under development); develop a new model of conducting business internationally (successfully trialled in February 2021 with Kobe City Government); convert an opportunity in one country where RGU has established relationships (programmes delivered for Governments of Trinidad and Guyana, Kobe City Government, and the British Council Mexico); build relations and secure new opportunities in a country where RGU already does business (opportunities built in Algeria and Guyana) and build prospects within countries new to business engagement (prospects developed in Nigeria and Iraq).

Key priorities 21/22 will be:

- Develop the new international model for scale and replication and deliver in conjunction with Scottish national agencies.
- Develop a new international plan reflecting the reduced opportunity to travel, the climate emergency, geopolitics and energy transition and aligning business development, alumni presence and student mobility.
- Build relationships and secure three opportunities in either a country where RGU already does business or from a new country market identified above.

Outcome 6 (Inclusive Growth and Social Impact)

Scale up support of the Scottish Government's ambitions for inclusive growth

In 20/21, RGU increased its support of economic development, addressing the relationships between health, wellbeing, social resilience, culture and prosperity. Key priorities 20/21 were: deliver on Streetsport, Torry Development Trust and Look Again community initiatives (initiatives delivered throughout 20/21 and RGU's collaboration with StreetSport was shortlisted for the Making a Difference category at the 2021 Interface KE Awards in recognition of its social impact); support the TalentED aspects of the Islands Deal (business case for RGU led work packages drafted); and attract investment to increase the impact of RGU's engagement in the community and society (grant secured with University of Aberdeen from Aberdeen City Council in support of Community Wealth Generation and a bid submitted as part of the region's NEERSF).

Key priorities 21/22 will be:

- Develop a community engagement plan.
- Grow initiatives started in previous years including submission of the Outline Business Case to Government for the TalentED work package of the Islands Deal.
- Build on successful programmes delivered by the RGU Look Again team (supported by UIF), to support regeneration of the Aberdeen city centre and to engage with new audiences, thereby encouraging inclusive growth and social impact.
- Support the Torry community, an area on RGU's doorstep which suffers from multiple deprivations, further exacerbated by the pandemic through:

- Support of the Victoria Road School project as a community hub, drawing on staff and students through a salutogenic approach.
- Work with the Torry Development Trust and Aberdeen City Council to develop an embodied carbon plan for the Trust, in support of community wealth generation.
- Working with University of Aberdeen to roll-out best practice in relation to net-zero planning for community wealth creation.

Outcome 7 (Equality and Diversity):

Ensure positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of UIF

The University is committed to building an inclusive environment and to promoting the importance of equality and diversity through actions. This is underpinned by the University's annual equality monitoring exercise, Equality and Diversity Sub Committee and Equality and Diversity Forum, and Equality & Diversity Policies. Key priorities 20/21 were: increase unconscious bias training to more staff to deliver a fair and equal recruitment process (embedded in all staff training); and deliver two major diversity and inclusion studies with external partners (delivered for offshore energy sector through OGUK and Student Innovation Challenge event focussed on D&I with Wood executives to help develop Company strategy).

Key priorities 21/22 will be:

- Appoint an equality, diversity and inclusion adviser and recruit 7 new Equality Champions to advance equality of opportunity and build good relations between different individuals and groups
- Disseminate, to all staff and students, the revised Dignity at RGU Policy which has been revised to align with best practice and to reflect the recommendations of the Equality & Human Rights Commission report on tackling racial harassment along with best practice in relation to Gender Based Violence
- Consider RGU's application for national equality chartermarks, recognising the University's commitment to, and progress on, equality and diversity.



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

Outcome Agreement between Robert Gordon University and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2021-22

On behalf of Robert Gordon University:

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Olivier'.

Print name: Steve Olivier

Position: Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 12 July 2022

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Hunter'.

Print name: Colin Hunter

Position: Chair

Date: 12 July 2022

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'K. Watt'.

Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 28 July 2022

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