

University of the West of Scotland
2023-24 Outcome Agreement



November 2023

Introduction and Context

This document provides the intended action that UWS will commit to through the outcome agreement with the Scottish Funding Council for 2023-24. It details the institution's actions to achieve the key priorities set out by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in its guidance document for 2023-24.

As well as strong local impact and recognition, we have continued to build our global reach through our learning, teaching and research and from our five campuses across the UK. During 2023-24, students from over 130 countries are studying at UWS and benefit from the outstanding learning opportunities to build their skills and make a lasting contribution. UWS' international activity has grown considerably through time and UWS now has the third-largest international student community in Scotland, bringing valuable diversity and contribution to the University.

This success globally is against a much more challenging domestic environment, one faced by the majority of Scottish universities, with reducing real-time government funding for universities and competing issues in student recruitment for the sector of a reducing school-leaver population due to demographic changes, the reduced recruitment to colleges during Covid-19, the removal of funding for EU students and the ongoing impact the pandemic had on student's preparedness for study. Despite great efforts across the university, this has meant that student recruitment and student retention for Scottish students has not met the population target – and the University now has a laser-like focus on recovering this position– noting that full recovery may be a multi-year process.

These challenges were exacerbated with a significant cyber incident in July 2023 which completely decimated the University's digital infrastructure. This has led to the requirement for an extensive rebuild of data, systems, applications and networks while seeking to maintain continuity in the student experience and core functions during 2023-24. The incident has had an inevitable impact on student and staff, through lack of connectivity, a requirement to pivot to business continuity plans, and processes which can take longer or feel more cumbersome to achieve. This incident is leading into a 'recovery phase' through 2024 as we seek to build new processes and establish new systems; and this provides the backdrop for our commitments through 2023-24 to build back stronger, with student success at the core.

UWS has significant educational, social and economic impact and is an important contributor to the regions in which it is based. The University strives to make a positive contribution and sees value as a civic institution in showing leadership on important topics. Recognising the importance of fair work and support for staff, UWS launched its People Priorities – outlining ambitions across strengthening the employee voice, promoting wellbeing, supporting a culture of change, developing people and enhancing performance, and ensuring sustainable reward and recognition. Two significant developments in 2022-23 underpin this commitment; the appointment of Dr Khadija Mohammed to the Senior Leadership Group as Associate Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and the confirmation that UWS was an accredited living wage employer in 2023. These structural commitments to fair work inform a suite of further activities through 2023-24 including submission for Athena SWAN institutional award, review of academic career development pathways, and enhance staff development and support.

UWS continues to be a financially sustainable university in 2023-24. The approach adopted ensures financial resources are directed towards strategic priorities, that risks are effectively managed and that value for money is achieved. The key performance indicators (KPIs) included in Strategy 2025 inform the financial forecasts of the University. Practical measures such as maintaining cash coverage levels at a minimum of 90 days, and budgeting to ensure operating surpluses are

generated have been implemented. These are monitored closely and provide reassurance to the Executive and Court as to the financial resilience of the University.

Priority Area 1: Fair Access and Transitions

UWS already exceeds the 2030 COWA target as Scotland's leading widening participation university. This success is significantly enabled through the effective deployment of Widening Access and Retention Funding, resulting in positive impact on students' lives across the South and West of Scotland.

UWS will continue to lead the sector in fair access and supported transitions in 2023-24, building on recognised impact on access and in reducing inequalities, as evidenced below:

- Ranked 1st for social inclusion in Scotland, placing 1st in Scotland for the number of students from state schools and 2nd the UK (Times/ Sunday Times Social Inclusion Ranking),
- 1st in Scotland for percentage of students from low participation areas and 1st in the UK (Times/Sunday Times Social Inclusion Ranking),
- Recognised as 2nd in Scotland and =25th in the world for reducing inequalities (THE Impact Rankings).

The 2023-24 Outcome Agreement maintains the target for 25% of Scottish-domiciled full-time first-degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes; building on the most recently published data which showed UWS achieved 30.7% in 2021/22 (CoWA measure), an increase of 0.8 percentage points from the previous year. UWS has continued to exceed its target to maintain the proportion of students from SIMD20 postcodes above 25%, which substantially increases the Scottish sector's overall proportion and UWS commits to playing the leading role in the sector meeting the 2026 target.

The UWS Foundation Academy, which works with pupils in local communities to open up the opportunity of Higher Education, is a critical factor in enabling access to and progression with the University and will be rolled-out in 2023-24, following a pilot in 2022-23. The programme supports senior pupils on their journey into Higher Education through a range of university learning methodologies including on campus, online and in school. Completing the UWS Foundation Academy enables pupils to gain 20 credits at SCQF 7. UWS also makes an adjusted contextualised offer on entry requirements, recognising their evidenced learning success. The pilot year (2022-23) saw 426 participants successfully complete the programme (97% success rate) and were awarded the equivalent of a B at Higher and it enabled 114 who would not have been able to secure a place at university prior to completing the academy, to apply to UWS for an undergraduate programme for 2023-24. Of those applicants, 66 are utilising their Foundation Academy award in order to gain entry. The Academy was recently shortlisted for the Herald HE Awards 2023.

In addition to the UWS Foundation Academy, UWS works as part of the national school's programme as an institutional partner in FOCUS West to deliver the Routes for All Programme to approximately 30 schools in the South West of Scotland. Routes for All has worked for a number of years with S5 and S6 pupils to raise awareness of the articulation pathways that exist and the different routes into university. This links with UWS being a sector leader in articulation with over 90% of the University's courses offering articulated entry routes.

UWS is the sector leader in supporting care experienced students, estranged students and student carers and will continue to provide sector-leading support for these students in 2023-24. The University has critical support structures in place to enable this continuing support in 2023-24. The UWS WeCare Team supports students who are care experienced, student carers and estranged students, from pre-entry through to graduation. The team works to identify students pre-entry, and to notify them of the support available from the moment they declare their status through their

application, for example, transition support and events, as well as one-to-one counselling appointments, assistance with SAAS applications and access to discretionary and childcare funds. UWS provides financial support for students in these categories. For example, this academic year the University is currently match funding twenty new intake students who are Robertson Trust Scholars in financial need, many of whom are care experienced or estranged. In 2022-23 UWS allocated £1m in Discretionary Funds to help students meet basic cost of living needs with a high proportion of these in care experienced, student carer or estranged categories. The University is externally recognised by The Stand Alone Pledge and Aiming Higher for Student Carers Award in recognition of the wide range of support services it offers to care experienced and estranged students. Between 2019-22 the University supported over 600 Scottish domiciled undergraduate students who were care experienced.

UWS is a dynamic leader in the tertiary sector, with deep and embedded partnerships across its college network. Building on closer partnerships developed during 2022-23, UWS will continue to drive the work of the South of Scotland Tertiary Pathfinder in joined-up approaches to curriculum planning, alongside Dumfries and Galloway College, and will capitalise on the recent co-locating to shared space within the college building to extend the partnership to shared services and dynamic interactions.

Priority Area 2: Quality Learning and Teaching

The UWS Focus Programme – delivering transformational change in learning and teaching

UWS adopts a structured approach to managing change – and 2023-24 will continue to have an emphasis on transformational change of the student experience. The programme of change – established in 2021 – has led to curricular development (ASPIRE), development of learner engagement analytics, and a focus on retention. The Student Experience Programme sits alongside transformational changes as part of the UWS Focus Programme: Student Experience, Organisational Effectiveness and Digital Transformation. The joint management of these three projects reflects learning and teaching interdependencies between, for example, UWS curricula principles; staff capability and confidence in delivery; support for students; and delivery of an underpinning digital learning ecosystem. The sections below outline focus for the 2023-24 Student Experience Programme and systematic enhancement.

Student Experience: embedding the UWS model of student success

A key focus of 2023-24 will be supporting student retention and progression and a continued roll-out of the UWS model of student success, approved for phased implementation in 2022.

The UWS model aligns the implementation of a UWS Student Success Hub and the introduction of the Academic, Professional and Personal Development curriculum through ASPIRE modules, representing a multi-layered approach to supporting student success. The Student Success Hub is premised on early intervention, providing a technology-rich first point of contact for UWS students, connecting learner analytics to enabled proactive support and providing an integrated and coherent support service across Schools and departments. The ASPIRE modules, as a form of academic advising within the curriculum, have been implemented in a selection of Level 7 modules in 2022/23 and with continuation of a phased pilot of Level 8 modules underway for 2023/4. These activities have been supported through engagement with the QAA Enhancement Theme of Resilient Learning Communities and have been foundational to the new Retention Task Forces comprising School and professional services expertise. In a further phased enhancement, a data-informed Retention Task Force for each School will be rolled out in 2023-24 supporting the embedding of the integrated model of student support.

The UWS Curriculum Framework: principles for a high-quality learning and teaching experience

UWS launched its Curriculum Framework in 2021, articulating the key pedagogical and design principles to align the Strategy 2025 ambitions and the environment immediately post-Covid. The framework will be reviewed in autumn/winter 2023 to ensure its further evolution, recognizing that there has been significant change in the learning and teaching environment since its inception. The review will recognise feedback through institution-led review that the Curriculum Framework alignment remains a focus for programme teams, enabling identification and sharing of good practice in relation to learning, teaching and assessment; and informs enhancement through ILR conditions and areas for development and assess the extent to which the six core principles: student-centred; flexible and hybrid; simple and coherent; authentic; inclusive; and sustainable, remain valid. The framework will remain an essential vehicle for enhancement: now embedded within quality assurance and enhancement processes, for example, programme validation events, institution-led review (ILR) and Enhancement and Annual Monitoring.

Organisational effectiveness: supporting staff development

Supporting staff development will be a key element of the Organisational Effectiveness Focus Programme, building on commitments made by the University in 2022 and feedback through the QESR exercise in 2023.

Since summer 2022, the Organisational Effectiveness Focus Area has a workstream on the development of an Academic Career Development Framework fit for purpose for UWS as the University develops its post-pandemic learning and teaching strategy. To support learning and teaching ambitions, Advance HE reaccreditation has been achieved for two key elements of continuing professional development for UWS staff: the taught Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) and sALTiRE, the university's experiential route to recognition for academic and professional services. UWS is one of the first institutions to be accredited against Advance HE's new Professional Standards Framework (PSF) 2023 – a globally-recognised framework for benchmarking success within higher education teaching and learning which underpins both the PgCAP and sALTiRE.

The new Academic Development Framework is an ongoing focus, and as part of the UWS QESR Action Plan for 2023-24, there is emphasis on the development of policy and forms of support to ensure that all staff and students complete appropriate training before undertaking teaching and/or assessment responsibilities.

Quality Enhancement

The University effectively monitors, reviews and enhances the provision with effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the quality of the student experience. This was externally validated by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) panel via its Quality Enhancement & Standards Review (QESR) methodology. The report from QAA forms the basis of the UWS QESR Action Plan which will be instructive in action for 2023-24, which includes review of assessment and a holistic whole-university approach to student academic integrity – reflecting the QAA's Academic Integrity Charter (2020) – which will include assessment design and support. The broader QESR action plan includes enhanced training for student representatives, and training for students and staff who teach, aligned with the institutional development of an Academic Career Development Framework. 2023-24 will also see continued development of the areas of good practice which the review team recognised in institutional progress on authentic learning, teaching and assessment practices, aligned with the Curriculum Framework and with opportunity for ongoing enhancement.

In 2023-24, UWS will also progress membership of the Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK TNE (QE-TNE) scheme, in-line with institutional ambitions to grow our transnational provision. This will sit alongside the University's core quality enhancement mechanisms as a valuable collaborative and evaluative tool.

Strengthening Student Partnership in Learning and Teaching

During 2023/24, the Student Experience Committee is being reconstituted and will sit alongside the Student Partnership Forum and utilised to strengthen broad representative engagement with key issues. This will seek to strengthen the partnership between the University and students, which is a firm commitment set out in the UWS Strategy 2025 and Learning and Teaching Thematic Plan. This will seek to build on the existing formal approaches between the University and the Students' Union; an effective Memorandum of Understanding which sets out how the two organisations work together, and the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA).

A monthly Student Partnership Forum (SPF) has senior student representatives (including Division level representatives) leading the agenda. This is embedded and monitored via the university committee structure and now embedded into the Students' Union. This forum, and the attendance of the Student Representation and Communications Team Leader, provides a space which enables senior leaders to hear directly from student representatives and answer their questions regarding learning, teaching and the student experience. There are several areas in which this partnership activity has seen progress: through Enhancement Theme supported activities on student representation; sabbatical officer leadership of working groups to reduce dissertation stress and

assessment deadline clashes; and also, in the partnership work with Careers and Skills. Volunteering fairs are held to support all students' opportunities to engage with volunteering and strengthen their employability skills.

Student Feedback: action-focused approach

UWS marginally exceeded the institutional benchmark figure for NSS this year. Results were, however, still below the Scottish average. A schedule of work is ongoing to embed progress plans within academic schools, starting with programme-level discussions focusing on areas of improvement based on both the quantitative satisfaction scores and qualitative student feedback, supplemented by the internal Student Experience Surveys (at UG, PGT, and PGR level) and Module Evaluation Questionnaires. Plans will be regularly reviewed at both Divisional and School Boards, with the Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate overseeing the reporting process.. A UWS Short Life Working Group (SLWG) has been established in early 2023-24 to consider sectoral and institutional best practice; provide recommendations on improving student engagement; and offer guidance on evolving cultures of feedback and partnership across programmes.

Priority Area 3: Coherent Learning Provision

The University's learning and teaching provision is informed by its extensive knowledge and awareness of the needs of industry, regional/national and student stakeholders. The suite of activities for 2023-24 outlined below align closely with the Scottish Government Programme for Government and take cognisance of sector-wide reviews, such as the Withers Review.

For 2023-24, UWS has created a UWS Workplace Learning Team who will lead consultation activities and events with employers, industry, colleges, accreditation bodies, and representatives from local, regional and national skills groups. This new team will be a catalyst for a series of actions through 2023-24.

Industry engagement plays a critical part in the development and growth of long-standing relationship building, through a wide range of sectors and organisations across Scotland and beyond. In 2023-24 UWS commit to a minimum of 75 engagement activities that UWS colleagues attend/are part of, or organise each academic year. The purpose of these activities will be to drive the following:

- Increase the number of industry contacts UWS has within workplaces, aligning work across upskilling, CPD, work-based learning to provide a myriad of opportunities for skills development.
- Gathering primary qualitative and quantitative industry data from a range of organisations to enhance existing programmes and to co-create new ones

This will greatly enhance the network and evidence-base for developing new, or redeveloping existing, programmes and opportunities for diverse programmes of upskilling, short-course, undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

One such opportunity – being rolled out in 2023-24 - is a new postgraduate taught programme in Professional Practice, which will be the first of its kind in the Scottish Higher Education sector. The programme targets professionals looking to upskill, reskill or expand the boundaries of their practice through applied opportunities. This aligns with Scottish Government Policy (Protecting Scotland Renewing Scotland, SFC upskilling fund) and the staff development aspirations of many employers seeking to invest in people and grow their workforce. Through the core modules, learners will focus on a range of skills to support their own professional development. A key feature of this programme is the opportunity to work with a Personal Academic Advisor in order to identify an area of focus that will support the individual learner in developing their own professional practice, cognisant of the rapid developments and changes which may be emerging in their field.

Through a combination of informal and formal engagement, a diverse group of external stakeholders were consulted during the development of the programme. This included representatives from various industry sectors, previous and current customers of the Centre for Continuing Professional Development, college FE partners, and relevant postgraduate alumni (including graduates from the PgCert Academic Practice, primarily from the NHS). Employer groups, such as the Federation of Small Businesses, North Lanarkshire and Falkirk Local Education Authority, and industry executives from organisations such as The Weir Group, Compost Creative, and Russell Reynolds Associates, were also consulted. Additionally, employee representatives' organisations such as the STUC provided valuable input during the scoping of the programme and qualification at an early stage of programme development to ensure the flexibility of offer met the requirements from industry and partners.

Coherent learning provision is not just about partnership with industry, but also partnership with other providers. UWS will also continue to be a committed tertiary partner in 2023-24.

The University will continue to build on existing college partnerships and co-create key projects which will increase the number of learners in work accessing accredited workplace learning and agreeing “programmes of work” which reflect the unique strengths of each partner e.g. in terms of geographical location, subject specialism, entrepreneurialism. For example, work is underway with college partners to facilitate seamless pathways for learners completing Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships and relevant HNC/D programmes, increasing progression into UWS Graduate Apprenticeship programmes and supporting learners to continue their learning journeys.

UWS is a dynamic leader in the tertiary sector, with deep and embedded partnerships across its educational pathways including selected regional authorities, college partners and the Scottish secondary school estate. The work with regional authorities seeks to change the landscape of the tertiary offer, with certain FE and HE provision being embedded within the school timetable to enable seamless transition from secondary through to tertiary education. This is evidenced in the post-16 project in North Lanarkshire which in 2023-24 sees the first cohort of fast-tracked North Lanarkshire school pupils now in their degree year of a UWS degree based in Lanarkshire.

The South of Scotland Tertiary Pathfinder project also seeks to disrupt the traditional tertiary model, with UWS driving joined-up approaches in curriculum planning and service delivery with Dumfries & Galloway College, with 2023-24 seeing the initial provision of the delivery of academic programmes delivered jointly on the co-located shared space within the college building. UWS has also been working closely with Dumfries & Galloway College, supported by the SFC, to further develop tertiary progression routes, using the UWS Foundation Academy as an early onboarding opportunity for relevant participants during the 2023-24 academic year.

In addition, UWS has some very strong partnerships within the Scottish college network, with embedded partnerships with a number of key college partners to support students in articulation pathways. Over 90% of UWS courses offer articulation routes and a third of students typically come to UWS from college. For entry into the 2023-24 academic year, UWS also provided extensive support to articulating students who were unable to access their college results due to the marking boycott.

Priority Area 4: Work-based Learning and Skills

Work-based learning is a key strategic priority for UWS, and the University is fully committed to growing provision as part of its wider curriculum offer in 2023-24. The University's place-based approach positions UWS as an anchor institution in each of the communities it serves; UWS will continue to flex the work-based learning offering to ensure that it meets the needs of learners and industry in each region.

As outlined in priority area 3, the new UWS Workplace Learning Team will help build a knowledge and evidence-based for activity and enable a number of actions through 2023-24.

UWS will review and refresh the Graduate Apprenticeship portfolio to ensure that the content remains industry focused and relevant, for example, supporting Industry 4.0 priorities such as IoT, Big Data, AI, robotics and sustainability. UWS is also creating a new, sector leading Business Management: Project Management GA pathway which has been well-received by industry partners and will go to market in 2024.

Working collaboratively with industry partners, UWS will develop "UWS Graduate Traineeships" offering work-based learning pathways, at undergraduate and post graduate level, in subjects that assist organisations to fill skills gaps and support existing staff to upskill in line with industry and professional standards. For example, the University is currently partnering with voluntary sector stakeholders, to develop a new work-based learning social work undergraduate degree programme. It is anticipated that these will be rolled out in 2024.

The new activity will build on the other significant opportunities for work experience across our UG and PGT portfolios, through work-based learning, work-related learning (WRL), placements and sandwich placements. There are variations across subject disciplines but some examples include:

- Within the Health and Life Sciences portfolio, approximately 75% of UWS UG provision has placement activity ranging from 200 hours for pre-registration programmes to 10 credit long, thin WBL modules within UWS Sport programmes. Degree programmes also offer a range of WRL and WBL as well as sandwich options. Currently, 50% of UWS PGT provision has placement opportunities with the other 50% of programmes delivered to students already working in practice and completing their studies as CPD/Upskilling through SLAs with local Health Boards. 100% of UWS professional practice provision (CertHe/DipHE/GradCert/GradDip) is delivered to those already in practice.
- Within the Computing Engineering and Physical Sciences portfolio, 81% of programmes offer WBL, sandwich placements or placements. For example, the BEng Hons Cyber Security, BEng Hons Civil, Mechanical and Chemical Engineering programmes and MEng Mechanical and Chemical Engineering programmes offer sandwich placements and/or WBL placement modules.

The Upskilling Fund is an important lever to engage with industry and partners, and UWS has demonstrated diversity and flexibility in delivering 42 upskilling courses, across all terms, across all SCQF levels from UG to PGT, with a range of delivery models from in-person, to blended, to wholly online, with courses last from one to sixteen weeks.

By engaging with the HEI Upskilling Fund Network, UWS have been able to differentiate the offer, identifying niche opportunities and delivering provision with a regional focus on those geographical areas where UWS has a footprint.

A number of courses successfully piloted in AY22-23 will also be delivered in AY23-24. For example, the University successfully launched two new SCQF Level 8 short courses aimed at supervisor level operatives in the resource and waste sector, which were developed in partnership with the Scottish Waste Industry Training, Competency, Health & Safety Forum (SWITCH). These programmes are both now accredited by the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management.

Priority area 5: Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response

UWS has made considerable progress in advancing net zero and environmental responsibilities, and the focus for 2023-24 will be to consolidate and formalise some of the structures and process to ensure continued progress.

During 2023-24, UWS will prepare a suite of organisation-wide sustainability commitments, refreshing and updating the structured and considered approach taken to sustainability. The first is a high-level Institutional Sustainability Statement that contextualises the university's commitments in relation to the primary UWS strategy. The statement details numerous action areas, from sustainable energy to procurement, with a fuller Sustainability Plan to follow, outlining in detail the targets, timelines, and stakeholders responsible for achieving each of these. The statement and plan place the UN Sustainable Development Goals accord at its centre with an aim to provide detail of how learning, teaching and research embody the university's commitment.

A series of practical developments, including progressing with the intention to purchase only zero emission cars and light vehicles, development of proposals for a Solar PV project to allow more local energy production, with funding request anticipated to the Scottish Decarbonisation Fund in 2023-24, will help to significantly reduce scope 2 carbon emissions.

Finally, the UWS Net Zero Deliverables (Decarbonisation) plan is in development and aims to inform the activities and investment required in delivering the university's 2040 Net Zero goal.

These developments through 2023-24 will build on success in its strategic commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2040. The table below details the university's scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions from the baseline to the past two published annual reporting periods. Current performance stands at a 27% annual reduction and a 77% overall reduction.

Year	2012/13	2020/21	2021/22
Scope 1	4150	1872	748
Scope 2	5131	1441	1372
Scope 3	1794	73	384
Total footprint	11075	3386	2504

These specific net zero and environmental developments are part of the University's broader commitments to the UN SDGs, as outlined in Strategy 2025 and as signatories to the UN SDG Accord.

UWS ranks in the top 300 universities globally for the Times Higher Education Impact rankings 2024. UWS ranked for six SDGs, ranking 2nd in Scotland, 11th in the UK and joint 25th globally for SDG 10: Reducing Inequalities Continued recognition for world-leading impact on inequalities is an institutional key performance indicator and will be a priority for 2023-24.

Priority Area 6 (Universities only): High-quality Research and Innovation

The University recently launched the strategy for Research Excellent Framework 2028, setting out the actions intended to improve overall performance in REF 2028. The actions will build on the successful REF2021 outcomes but 2023-24 will see a step-change in the focus, through the new REF2028 strategy. This section outlines how SFC funding will be deployed during 2023-24 to deliver impact.

Effective use of SFC core research grants in AY 2023-24

The University will continue to hold the REG funding centrally and will prioritise and invest locally through the various research groupings and Units of Assessment (UoAs). This reflects the distinct needs of both, and takes cognisance of the fact that a blanket distribution would not address the diversity of needs and ensure the achievement of the goal of bringing all UoAs closer to the University's world-leading research aspirations

UWS will deploy the £2.2m REG funding to support structured progress in three different aspects:

- 'Arenas' of research activity – recognising UWS strengths in delivering research in hard-to-reach places, with global impact, across our desired 10 units of assessment
- 'Vehicles' to achieve the desired outcomes including research leadership, funded PhD studentships, academic career development frameworks, and REF preparation exercises
- 'Differentiations' to position the university as a distinctive player within the higher education landscape, with success in public involvement, knowledge transfer, spin-outs and a place-making focus.

The REG funding will enable the above through shared professional services and the specific needs of individual REF Units of Assessment (UoA) based on REF scores and through the formally recognised research groupings, and overseen by academic schools with funding prioritised to enable:

- niche equipment/facilities, strategic secondments, dissemination of research and development of research collaboration;
- Cross-institutional support for people, enhancement of the UWS research culture and environment, including research development training for academic and research support staff, grant writing support, public engagement and public involvement in research, industry match-funded PhD studentships, strategic secondments as well as strategic collaborations across the Scottish higher education system
- Pledged support for large collaborative projects in order to provide additional financial resources to support equipment purchases, staff time and utilisation of shared facilities with other higher education institutions, colleges and companies.

How RPG funding will be used and distributed in AY 2023-24

The aim for 2023-24 will be to continue the successful UWS Vice Chancellor's PhD studentships, maintaining the commitment achieved in 2022-23 of funding for twenty 3-year PhD studentships. This continuity will see sustained and continued growth in the university's vibrant postgraduate research (PGR) community, underpinning the development of future talent for UWS and the economy.

Supporting sustainability and future research excellence

The new REF2028 strategy will enable investment, commencing in 2023-24, through the identified strategic vehicles. Primarily, this will be through the recently launched five research institutes, nine

research centres, all of which include nested research groups, as well as five standalone research groups.

The revised research groupings and institutes will provide clear 'homes' for research-active staff, and through well-established and robust recruitment and then performance review approach, UWS establishes expectations and relevant development needs across the university's diverse staff. UWS recognises the importance of continuous professional and career development, with REG funding utilised to support the professional and career development of research staff. Furthermore, to help UWS researchers succeed, a range of programmes, courses, seminars, resources and events are planned each year via the university's internal planning processes and detail as actions in the three-year plan.

Enabling an excellent research environment and positive cultures

In 2023-24, UWS will develop and implement the Research Culture Action Plan, including mapping of the current range of research outputs, research-enabling staff and engagement activities and establishing good practice guidelines and training for open research and reproducibility. Engaging within the Community of Practice of the Open and Responsible Researcher Reward and Recognition project (OR4) UWS will pilot its maturity framework/self-assessment tool.

UWS is committed to HR Excellence in Research and the University's most recent Excellence Review report was published in March 2023¹, highlighting commitment and progression towards the Excellence in HR in research award. Following a review of the University's work to support this Concordat, the institution was advised by Vitae to create a three-year action plan based on the Principles of the revised Concordat which will be the focus for delivery in 2023-4 with an emphasis on internal engagement through research get-togethers and meet-ups within research groupings, academic divisions and academic schools, providing a multi-layered platform for students and staff to share research outcomes and good practice. The University is aware that there is now a separate process to commit to the Concordat which involves re-signing with Universities UK. A paper is currently being prepared for the Executive, outlining the actions required and will be approved shortly. While HR Excellence Reviews have now moved to 3-year cycles, this is in contrast to UUK who require an annual review which UWS is committed to providing in 2024.

The University will promote open research through providing guidance to researchers the open access publishing landscape and providing access to a range of open access publishing routes. Staff from across professional services will provide dedicated support and guidance to researchers in developing the skills and awareness needed for high quality research, including advanced literature searching, managing references, research data management, copyright & intellectual property, academic integrity² and research benchmarking.

¹ [HR Excellence in Research 6-Year Review Summary - January 2023 \(uws.ac.uk\)](https://www.uws.ac.uk/research/academic-integrity-ethics/)

² <https://www.uws.ac.uk/research/academic-integrity-ethics/>

Priority area 7 (Universities only): University Innovation Fund (UIF)

UWS is an innovative university, recognised for its impact across society and our communities. The strategic ambitions of the university recognise and support the objectives and outcomes of the UIF. During 2023-24, the University's commitment to fostering entrepreneurship will support the National Innovation Strategy, specifically the development of innovation clusters; and will help achieve the aims of the new Commercialisation Framework, particularly the promotion of innovation-led entrepreneurship and commercialisation. The University's work in promoting and encouraging entrepreneurship, commercialisation and innovation through partnership working, tailored programming and research and development is explored, as well as its role as a key economic driver across the region.

Outcome one (demand stimulation)

UWS' close partnership with business and industry ensures that 2023-24 will see the continued deployment of UIF to continue the growth of the University's sector-leading KTP programme and of the UWS KTP centre, and will work through the extensive business partnerships to expand the remit of the UWS CPD Centre to include regulated CPD as well increased International and UK-based income from unregulated CPD. The approach will be characterized by collaboration, with continued prominent engagement with Interface and the Innovation Centres as they both evolve into the next generation.

Outcome two (simplification/commercialisation)

In 2023-24, the focus for simplification will be to invest in its Place Making mission through regional partnerships. These partnerships with business, industry, third sector and local authorities will focus for the year on:

- Renfrewshire – UWS will pursue its goal to turn Paisley into a University Town
- Ayrshire – UWS will maintain its memberships of the Ayrshire Economic partnership Board and leadership of three of its workstreams in order to promote clean growth, digital transformation and skills development
- Lanarkshire – UWS will continue to lead the Lanarkshire Economic Forum and plans to extend the Elevator Academic Incubator programme across the region
- Dumfries – UWS has co-located the UWS campus with Dumfries & Galloway college and will host a new Converge Challenge executive there to expand the University's student enterprise programmes in the region
- London – UWS will extend its Demola programme to include its London students. Again, UWS' approach will be informed by the University's commitment to collaboration with UWS playing a leading role across the sector as co-chair RCDG and will lead its efforts to help design a new Research Commercialisation Framework for Scotland.

Outcome three (simplification/greater innovation)

The University has a growing reputation for successful innovation and for 2023-24 the investment will seek to grow spin outs and industry engagement.

The University will continue to invest in its established spin out companies and will launch one new high growth spin out company in 2023-24 focused on Artificial Intelligence and will support at least two new spin out development projects.

Innovation will be driven through partnership working and during 2023-24, UWS will invest in a new industry engagement structure in order to simplify the process for industry partners, and work with the network of Research/Business Development Managers convened by the KE&I Collaboration

Manager to enable peer-to-peer support, initiate new collaborations, engage with funders, and facilitate horizon scanning for the next big opportunities.

Outcome four (entrepreneurialism)

Funding will be deployed through 2023-24 to boost entrepreneurialism both on-campus and through the region.

UWS will grow entrepreneurial opportunities for students, staff, and businesses by investing in the expansion of UWS' **Student Innovation Hub** [Student Enterprise](#) | [StudentInnovationHub \(i3uws.co.uk\)](#) to include more students and more programmes than ever including ongoing provision of seed corn funding of £25k for student start up ideas. UWS will use the £47k uplift in UIF funding to support the delivery of key strategic drivers in the Scottish Government's Innovation Strategy and Entrepreneurial Campus. This will include continuing to develop the infrastructure and ecosystem the campus demands such as programmes to foster entrepreneurship amongst students and regional commercial partners, and demonstration projects/activities which highlight the knowledge, skills and talent fostered by the University specifically designed to promote positive change and build alternative futures.

Working with others to bring challenge and innovation and new thinking will equally be a focus. In 2023-24, Regional Innovation Partnerships will be critical and the University will work more closely with key stakeholders in the regions where it has a presence (Colleges, Local Authorities, Ceed, Chambers and other industry groups) to grow the absorptive capacity for innovation in each region. As part of this, UWS will grow the number of students participating in this co-creation and innovation programme [Demola Scotland](#) and extend the mix of participants out to the tertiary sector in the Glasgow City Region including University of Strathclyde and City of Glasgow College.

Outcome five (international)

Strategy 2025 recognises that UWS is an 'anchor institution within the communities in which it is based, with impact that reaches beyond our campus regions.' In 2023-24, UWS will extend the reach of its KE&I work internationally following the same thematic approaches taken across the innovation work: providing opportunities for students, structured partnership with business and industry, and collaboration.

UWS will extend the successful Demola programme, which has run from Scottish campuses in prior years, to the London campus meaning international students there can grow their innovation mindset and extend their creative solution developments into their post-graduation careers in the UK or back to their home countries.

In 2023-24, UWS will look to expand the structured CPD and knowledge transfer partnership with partners around the globe, with a key focus on further African Agriculture KTPs. and delivering further CPD activities in China under its accreditation from The State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs.

Through RCDG, UWS will influence the new Research Commercialisation Framework for Scotland, as proposed in Scottish Government's Innovation Strategy (June 2023), which 'will include exploring options for developing consistent approaches to, and guidance for, handling the intellectual property that arises from both publicly funded research and inward investment, as set out in our Inward Investment Plan (2020).'

Outcome six (inclusive growth and social impact) –

UWS is recognised as a university with social impact, ranking 1st for social inclusion in Scotland (Times/Sunday Times Social Inclusion Rankings) and recognised as 2nd in Scotland and =25th in the world for reducing inequalities (THE Impact Rankings). This impact is driven through learning, teaching, research and innovation.

In 2023-24, UWS will grow its support for the Scottish Government's ambitions for inclusive growth through expanding engagement of SMEs in the South of Scotland to include them in the Digital Dairy project, and investing in prizes for the best Social Enterprises developed by its students via the Student Innovation Hub, and will seek to ensure demonstrable impact through engaging with local authorities in relevant City/Region Deals to focus on benefits realization, regional economic strategies, and community engagement.

Outcome seven (equality and diversity)

UWS is firmly committed to equality and diversity and in 2022-23 appointed a dedicated Associate Dean Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to the Senior Leadership Group. Under the steer of the Associate Dean in 2023-24, UWS will continue to embed EDI across the suite of functions supporting innovation and will work collaboratively with RCDG to widen participation and engagement with university innovation.

In support of the University's equality, diversity and inclusion commitments, UWS will submit an application to retain the Athena SWAN institutional award in March 2024 evidencing the progress and intended actions to support gender equality across the core functions of excellent learning and teaching and distinctive research and innovation.

UWS can confirm its ongoing capability to match the UIF platform fund and meet SFC requirements in this area. . Institutional support for innovation-led entrepreneurship is a key priority and resources are allocated accordingly to support the University's work in this area.

Additional Funding Reporting

Institutions should also use available evidence to report on the use and impact of any additional in-year funding allocated by SFC.

Joint Funding

UWS is in receipt of joint funding for Crichton Campus infrastructure and Campus library modernisation. This funding contributes towards the cost of various services to support the delivery of higher education on the Dumfries Campuses of UWS and the University of Glasgow. The funding has been fundamental in enabling both partners to deliver a range of HE pathways for learners in the region, however, it is important to note that this funding is not UWS specific but allocated across the Crichton partnership. This year, the institutions collaborated to enhance fitness and wellbeing facilities for students and staff of all three institutions. The fitness facility is now open for extended periods of time with free access for students and staff – enhancing the attractiveness of the campus and contributing to improved mental and physical wellbeing. The partners also worked collaboratively to reshape the physical presence of the library on campus. Funding enabled the creation of a quiet study room as well as the move and storage of a number of textbooks. Dumfries and Galloway College extended the facility's opening hours, and use of the facility in those extended evening periods will be monitored to inform future developments. Work will continue over the coming months to add a number of new "study pods" as University of Glasgow students, in particular, are keen to have enhanced access to this type of facility.

Upskilling Fund

For 2022-23, UWS has curated its extensive range of short courses across four key skills areas: digital & IT, business growth, green, and wellbeing, and have relaunched its dedicated website: [Home page – UWS Centre for Continuing Professional Development](#). Through the Upskilling Fund, the University has supported over 395 short course registrations with delegates coming from a broad range of career backgrounds representing a variety of industries, and ~140 organisations across the public, private and third sectors. This year saw the successful launch of two new SCQF Level 8 short courses aimed at supervisor level operatives in the resource and waste sector, which were developed in partnership with the Scottish Waste Industry Training, Competency, Health & Safety Forum (SWITCH). These are both now accredited by the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management.

To continue to raise the profile of the UWS CPD Centre and its short course offering available via the Upskilling Fund, the University has undertaken extensive external engagement activities including: collaborating with local Chambers of Commerce and other relevant stakeholders/agencies including Skills Development Scotland and South of Scotland Enterprise; attending/exhibiting at networking events and cascading the business offer to UWS partners; and delivering a series of online 'taster' sessions.

Digital Poverty

UWS is allocated funding under the Digital Poverty Fund. The fund is managed internally by the Student Success Team (SST) in partnership with colleagues in IT and the UWS Funding and Advice Team. During 2022-3 funding was used to purchase hardware and software including laptops, laptop bags, docking stations and wifi dongles. As a multicampus organisation with multiple intakes, SST sought to ensure access to support for eligible students regardless of campus location or entry point. UWS offers three entry points across the academic year and the budget was split across the three terms with the largest proportion being spent in T1 to align with student numbers and anticipated recruitment figures. Following purchase of items for T1, it was agreed amongst the team that stock would be monitored and regularly reviewed. It was also agreed that a smaller allocation should be apportioned for T3 and that there should be a dedicated budget to support specific

requests on a programmatic basis. To publicise the fund, the University ran a targeted campaign to alert key groups of students to the 'Digital Hardship Support offer' (using the terminology of hardship rather than poverty) in the first instance, with a wider campaign cascaded through academic schools and the student information app. At the start of each term new students were sent the targeted campaign with continuing students also being sent reminders about the fund.

Period Poverty

UWS delivers access to free sanitary products to support equality, dignity and rights for those who menstruate and to ensure that lack of access to sanitary products does not prevent any individual from accessing and engaging in their studies. The funding received enables the University to purchase a range of products and distribute these across all four Scottish campuses, as well as provide an online home delivery service. More recently, UWS has expanded the product range on offer to include reusable and more environmentally sustainable products, in line with student demand.

Widening Access and Retention Funding (WARF)

UWS exceeds the 2030 target as Scotland's leading widening participation university. This success is significantly enabled through the effective deployment of WARF, resulting in positive impact on students' lives across the South and West of Scotland. The University will continue to be committed to widening access to education, developing targeted mechanisms and strategies to identify and support students to successfully complete their studies.

UWS has implemented an Early Intervention and Transitional support model since January 2023 designed to anticipate any barriers to student retention and progression, and provide coordinated and proactive support. To this end, UWS recruited 4 Student Success and Early Intervention Specialists in the spring of 2023, one for each School. They are a key part of the newly established Retention Task Force (RTF) which is designed to adopt a collaborative approach to supporting student success. The RTF will identify trends and design proactive conversations, with the Early Intervention Specialists being at the forefront of contacting students and providing information and signposting to relevant support. A resit plan aimed at students with resits in Term 1 and 2, has been developed and operationalised, which includes intensive support from colleagues in academic skills and the library. The Early Intervention Specialists are working with data-led insights to prioritise and support high-risk students. Additionally, dialogue has commenced with Schools about implementation of the latest elements of the Early Intervention model, specifically arrangements for: establishing the Retention Task Forces, implementing the new Student Attendance and Engagement Procedure, confirming arrangements for induction and academic skills diagnostics.

WARF funding has enabled the University to continue the development of the UWS Foundation Academy during the 2022/23 session. The UWS Foundation Academy is a widening access initiative that seeks to raise attainment and skills for learning, life and work regardless of background or personal circumstances. The 2022/23 delivery year of the UWS Foundation Academy has allowed over 800 participating pupils free access to an extensive programme of higher educational transitional support, embedding aspiration into their educational journey. The UWS WARF funding supports this 12-month programme, specifically covering the cost of a 10-week module delivered by UWS academics in the school setting, together with a range of on-campus activities including subject taster sessions, mock lectures, interactive labs and workshops, and a range of online resources. Additionally, WARF supports the cost of all transport to and from UWS campuses as well as catering, ensuring travel and subsistence cost is not a barrier to participation.

Outcome Agreement between the University of the West of Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2023-24

On behalf of the University of the West of Scotland

Signed: 

Print name: James A. Miller

Position: Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 27.11.23

Signed: 

Print name: Kate Allum

Position: Chair

Date: 27/11/23

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed: 

Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 15 January 2024