

ABERTAY UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION FUND STRATEGY



2025 - 2030



**Abertay
University**

#BeAbertay

Section A: Overview

1. Institutional context

Abertay University is a small, focussed, interdisciplinary institution, with ~215 academic staff, ~245 professional support staff and ~4,840 students. We have an established reputation for working across traditional research boundaries and in emerging disciplines and sectors. We deliver vocationally relevant degrees and have pioneered development of innovative programmes such as Pluralistic Counselling, Ethical Hacking and Computer Games. We are the only European university listed in the ‘Princeton Review World Top 25 Games Universities’.

We have notable Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (RKE&I) strengths involving key sectors that contribute to economic prosperity, social and cultural impact, and inclusive growth. These include: the Abertay **cyberQuarter** (£18m cybersecurity R&D centre bringing students, academics, and organisations together to solve global cybersecurity challenges); **CoSTAR Realtime Lab** lead and a partner in the **CoSTAR National Lab** (part of £75.6m AHRC funded R&D national network of laboratories developing new technology to maintain the UK’s world-leading position in gaming, TV, film, performance, and digital entertainment sectors); and **Abertay Food & Drink Innovation Laboratories** (£3.5m state of the art R&D facilities including a world leading a ISO9000 sensory and consumer science laboratory that have supported >85 food and drink businesses/projects to date).

2. Overview of strategic ambitions

Our approach to RKE&I is defined in our **University Strategic Plan (2020-25)**:

1. We are committed to producing quality RKE that is aligned with international, national and local priorities and delivers real impact for society.
2. We will invest in research and increase our reputation for RKE in areas that enhance our academic programmes, thereby ensuring a sustainable, vibrant and collaborative researcher community.
3. We will support staff to deliver quality research output, knowledge exchange and impact; we will clearly articulate our expectations and standards to staff.

Our vision is **focused collaborative research and interdisciplinary innovation for impact**, driven through implementation of our **RKE Strategy (2020-25)**, supported by a university- wide Research Executive responsible for enhancing the development of a sustainable RKE&I environment through strategic investment and cross-cutting support, and a central **Research, Innovation and Enterprise Support (RIES)** service which facilitates the RKE&I pipeline.

Abertay is a signatory of the **Knowledge Exchange Concordat**. Our **Knowledge Exchange Policy** states our strategic objectives for KE:

1. We are committed to maintaining a portfolio of KE activities to help drive economic, social, and cultural recovery and growth.
2. Our mechanisms for connecting academic knowledge with external users include large-scale RKE projects designed to operate in partnership with industry, consultancy, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Innovation Vouchers, UKRI innovation awards, contract RKE, secondments, commercialisation, CPD Courses, outreach and public engagement activities.
3. We provide a supportive environment for KE activities.
4. We are committed to recognising, developing, and improving our KE activity.
5. We value external partnerships and meeting the needs of our partners is central in our KE activities.
6. We are committed to managing our knowledge exchange activities sustainably.

Our University Strategic Plan, RKE Strategy, and IP Policy are currently under review for 2025-30; we will thereafter adapt our 5-year KEIF strategy accordingly.

3. Alignment to Scottish Government priorities

Abertay is well placed to contribute to delivery of the **National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET)** and **Scotland's National Innovation Strategy (NIS)**. Our KEIF Strategy represents continued proactive engagement with the innovation and enterprise agenda. We have built upon our strengths and within the funding framework have focused our engagement on the most appropriate priorities.

We will deepen our existing collaborations and develop new strategic relationships with industry, the public and third sector, locally, nationally and internationally, and grow our position as an open innovation ecosystem for accelerated research translation.

Our activities are aligned with **NSET** programmes of action:

- stimulating entrepreneurship;
- opening new markets;
- increasing productivity;
- developing the skills we need for the decade ahead; and
- ensuring fairer and more equal economic opportunities.

Through our KEIF strategy and associated funding, Abertay is able to prioritise targeted interventions, building on our established expertise (e.g. in the creative industries; food and drink), while pioneering new opportunities (e.g. in digital technologies). By collaborating with businesses and strategic partners, universities beyond the central belt are pivotal to tackling local and regional inequalities and driving inclusive growth outcomes across Scotland.

Our RKE&I activities align with **Scotland's NIS**. We are already well aligned with some areas and are keen to be involved with the programmes of action:

1. Innovation Clusters – in **Digital Health, Food and Drink, Data & Digital Technologies** (including **AI, Cybersecurity, Computer Games, AR/VR and Digital Production/Entertainment**).
2. Opportunities through the Innovation Investment Programme.
3. Innovation-led Entrepreneurship and Commercialisation Programme. For example, a funded shared **Commercialisation/Technology Transfer Office**.
4. National Productivity Programme – by supporting key industrial sectors to innovate for productivity gains.

Section B. KE&I Capacity

4. Platform Grant

Abertay will continue to **match-fund the Platform Grant**.

Abertay completes the **HESA HE-Business and Community Interaction** survey annually and the **SFC KE metric return**.

The Platform Grant is essential and enables Abertay to support and enhance capacity and improve performance in RKE&I through the provision of an efficient and supportive **Research Innovation and Enterprise Support** service (through contribution to staff salaries, information management systems, legal and governance support costs), **Pump Priming** funding (for innovation projects), **Bell Street Ventures** (Abertay's Enterprise Centre), and **University- wide leadership** roles (including the **Head of Research Knowledge Mobilisation**, and the **Head of Research for Civic Engagement**).

5. Overall capacity for KE&I

Estimated number of staff (FTE) directly supported by KEIF: 5.5 FTE

Estimated number of staff who have KE&I as a significant part of their role: 29 FTE

Section C: Outcome Grant activities

6. KE metric activity

Abertay aims to be a key contributor to Scotland's ambition to be a world-class entrepreneurial nation, aligning its activities with the **Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation** and the broader goals of developing "**Entrepreneurial Campuses**". In particular, our reputation for working in partnership with and delivering for industry has facilitated our engagement with UKRI ambitions and funding opportunities. We will continue to build upon our strengths and will focus our engagement on some, rather than all, opportunities and initiatives to leverage additional competitive funding for RKE&I nationally and internationally (see sections 1-3, 7-10). For example, we will continue to focus effort on outreach activity such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, and in delivering innovation through the Co-STAR National and Realtime Labs.

Abertay's **five-year forecast for KE&I metrics** reflects institutional aspirations, external operating and funding contexts. Abertay's annual RKE&I income has more than doubled since the last REF period. However, HEIs in Scotland and throughout the UK continue to face an extremely challenging funding environment. Abertay is taking action to ensure long term financial sustainability by reducing reliance on Scottish Government funding, diversifying our income streams, and generating operational efficiencies. Nevertheless, the persistent uncertainty and operational pressures caused by real-terms funding cuts and other external factors are likely to impact any further upward trajectory of our RKE&I funding success. This is reflected in our five-year forecast RKE&I metrics. Performance will be reviewed and projections modified annually.

As Abertay develops a revised RKE Strategy for 2025-30, we will consider the value of including appropriate institutional KPIs that reflect the number of RKE&I collaborations in place. We will thereafter adapt our 5-year forecast RKE&I metrics accordingly.

7. Graduate start-ups and spin-outs/Entrepreneurial Support

Abertay is committed to fostering an **entrepreneurial mindset** amongst its students and staff, recognising the vital role of enterprise in driving economic growth and societal impact. Abertay's activities will be prioritised to align with Scottish Government ambitions, as outlined in the **National Strategy for Economic Transformation**, with a focus on creating more new businesses, increasing the proportion of start-ups that scale, and building entrepreneurial mindsets across all sectors but also linking to national initiatives such as TechScaler, Business Gateway and Scottish Enterprise.

Abertay's approach is multi-faceted, aiming to inspire, educate, and support individuals at all stages of their entrepreneurial journey. This includes embedding entrepreneurial thinking across the curriculum and providing a range of extracurricular activities, such as workshops, mentoring, and supporting access to funding.

Abertay enables and embeds entrepreneurial agency through:

- our portfolio of **taught UG and PG programmes** (e.g. *Professional Masters in Games Development MProf*; *Food Quality and Safety with Industrial Practise MSc*) many of which are developed and delivered with industry and practitioner support;
- **microcredentials** available to all UG students (e.g. *Social Enterprise: What, How and Why?* - which gives an overview of social enterprises and their role in the economy and society);
- **Bell Street Ventures** (Abertay's Enterprise Centre)* which makes best use of existing enterprise development support frameworks, provision and competitions e.g. Converge, Santander, Royal Society of Edinburgh, Interface, TechScaler/Codebase, ICURe, KTP North etc)
- Abertay's **Research Innovation and Enterprise Support** Service (RIES)*;
- researcher development opportunities and training provided by the Abertay **Graduate School**;
- Abertay **RKE&I centres** such as cyberQuarter, Co-STAR Realtime Lab, and the Abertay Food & Drink Innovation Laboratories, which bring students, academics, and organisations together to develop innovative solutions, supporting spin-outs and start-ups as well as existing companies and organisations;

- support provided through the University **RKE strategy** (funding and support framework)*; and
- **University-wide leadership** including dedicated roles e.g. the **Head of Research Knowledge Mobilisation**, and the **Head of Research for Civic Engagement***.

By leveraging KEIF support, Abertay will continue to offer and further develop its entrepreneurial programmes and facilities. Ambitions include:

- Support the creation of a robust pipeline of talent and ideas by integrating opportunities for students to apply their learning practically through class-based projects, internships and competitions in the form of industry-based challenges and professional projects.
- Enhance incubation and acceleration support for student and staff start-ups and spin-outs.
- Increase access to mentoring and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs, graduate and staff start-ups and spin-outs, by providing not only initial support but also ongoing guidance and resources. This is essential for improving the survival rates of ventures, acknowledging that the early stages of a company's life are often the most challenging.
- Develop targeted initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in entrepreneurship.
- Expand capacity to support the commercialisation of research outputs through technology transfer (including engagement with a funded **Shared Commercialisation/ Technology Transfer Office** in Scotland for Small Modern Universities and Specialist Institutions).
- Invest in staff development to build expertise in enterprise and entrepreneurship education.
- Improve systematic data collection and monitoring processes to track **IP, technology transfer, spin-out and start-up progress and outcomes**.

By focusing on these activities and leveraging external funding effectively, Abertay aims to contribute significantly to the growth and vibrancy of **Scotland's entrepreneurial ecosystem** and achieve an improvement in graduate start-up and spin-out survival rates. Abertay also aims to work collaboratively with other institutions and organisations within the region, building upon and leveraging the existing local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

** KEIF support contributes directly to this innovation support.*

Section D: Wider KE&I activities

8. Wider Societal Impact

Abertay recognises the importance of **public engagement and KE activities that benefit society and support sustainable development**. Although such activity may not always generate income for the University, it remains central to Abertay's wider mission and academic reputation.

Abertay's **RKE Strategy** encourages research that addresses societal challenges and directly benefits communities in areas such as public health, environmental sustainability, and cultural and digital development. University-wide leadership and support is provided by the **Head of Research for Civic Engagement**. Our Graduate School provides training and development opportunities for staff to build skills to engage in meaningful public engagement through RKE&I, including workshops on effective communication with the public, outreach activities, and collaborative project design. Staff development discussions with line managers and a workload points model facilitates dedicated KE&I time without compromising other academic duties. Academics are encouraged to promote their public engagement activities, ensuring that their efforts are recognised for their contribution to the university's purpose, where appropriate.

As part of **Abertay's Civic Engagement Strategy**, researchers are further enabled to 'work to make a difference in the civic life in our communities' for shared benefits through activities such as public lectures, exhibitions, and workshops to disseminate research findings and foster public understanding. In support of this commitment Abertay offers staff a 'volunteering' day annually to collaborate with local communities and institutions to support RKE&I partnerships that address societal needs.

Funded and unfunded RKE&I activities remain subject to Abertay approval processes to ensure alignment with Abertay's strategic priorities, ethical guidelines, and regulatory frameworks. Projects that involve public engagement with non-academic groups require ethical review by Abertay's Research Ethics Committee to ensure responsible and respectful KE&I activities with our communities whether in receipt of external funding or not. Abertay's RIES service assists researchers in activities, including outreach events, workshops, and collaborative community research projects. While these activities may not always generate income directly, they contribute to the university's public values and help embed Abertay as an anchor institution in our local communities, shaping our impact on public awareness through community and stakeholder engagement, as well as helping to effect wider social, economic and cultural change for the public good.

Abertay's RKE strategy and policies align with national and international frameworks that promote public engagement and KE, with social, cultural, or policy-related impact.

Abertay is committed to the principles of the **Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research** and embraces its institutional commitment to foster RKE&I that designs public engagement projects that are inclusive, transparent, and focused on creating mutual benefit for both researchers and the public. Our **Knowledge Exchange Policy** consolidates the integration of non-income generating activities into Abertay's research culture.

Researchers share their expertise and findings with a broad range of stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, business, and non-governmental organisations, to create positive social change.

9. Collaboration

See sections 6 & 7.

Abertay will continue to collaborate with the Universities Scotland Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (**US RKEC**), the Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group (**US RCDG**), and the Researcher Development and Culture Committee (**US RDCC**), to support our RKE&I ambition and development of new ways of working. As a small university, Abertay will continue to work collaboratively across the sector by working alongside SFC supported innovation infrastructure, including Innovation Centres, Interface, and Converge.

Abertay will continue its successful collaboration with **Interface** (e.g. through Innovation Vouchers and also as a partner within our **CoSTAR Realtime Lab**). To date we have had limited/ patchy successful engagement with **Converge Challenge** which aims to support enterprise and company creation within Scottish HEIs, and with the **Innovation Centres** whose purpose is to connect Scotland's academic expertise with industry, public and third sector organisations, to create economic and societal benefits. We have engaged with, and received varying levels of support from, the **Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre**, **Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre** (IBIOIC), and **DataLab**. Abertay also subscribes to the Scottish Alliance for Geoscience, Environment and Society (**SAGES**) and the Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance (**SICSA**) research pools, the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (**SIPR**), the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities (**SGSAH**) and the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences (**SGSSSS**). Going forward we aim to improve engagement with, and support from, Converge and the Innovation Centres, to support Abertay's RKE&I ambitions.

Abertay will continue to **monitor engagement with, and assess the value of**, all RKE&I related network subscription memberships, before confirming continued involvement on an annual basis.

10. Regional approaches

See previous sections 1-3, 7-10.

Abertay RKE&I is driving our innovation and partnerships with private, public and the third sector and in key industry areas including sectors identified in **Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation** and the **Tay Cities Regional Economic Strategy** (2017-2037).

Abertay are keen to engage with any future funded pilot for a **Shared Commercialisation/ Technology Transfer Office** in Scotland for Small Modern Universities and Specialist Institutions, which will help expand capacity to support the commercialisation of research outputs through technology transfer.

Section E: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

11. Embedding and promoting EDI

Our **University Strategic Plan** (2020-25) confirms our intention to **mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion** across all our activities including those related to KEIF. Our Equality Action Plan, which contains detailed actions, is routinely monitored and updated. We hold an **Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze** award and were the first Scottish University to be awarded a **Race Equality Chartermark Bronze** award. We are committed to the responsible use of metrics in research evaluation and are a signatory of the **San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)**.

Abertay is fully engaged with/ are a signatory of the principles of: the **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**, the **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**, the **Concordat on Open Research Data**, the **Knowledge Exchange Concordat**, and the **Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research**. We use these principles to guide development of supportive RKE&I related policies, practices and structures, contributing to the advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The three central pillars of our RKE Strategy vision are:

- To achieve research of the highest quality.
- To have an impact beyond academia which yields economic, social and cultural benefits.
- To support and develop excellent researchers.

We are achieving our vision by focusing inclusive activity, strategic investment and innovative structures and policies into five key priorities:

- Research leadership, recruitment and management.
- Sustainable research environment.
- Researcher development.
- Quality output and impact.
- Informed decision making.

Through these, we **support quality RKE&I wherever it arises** and promote **equality of opportunity in the career progression** of all researchers, whatever their background or community.

12. EIA

We confirm that an EIA has been undertaken and submit this with the KEIF strategy.

Section F: KE&I Culture

13. Promoting positive KE&I culture

RKE&I culture is integrated into everything we do as a university. Abertay's **RKE Strategy** is central to our long-term plan to embed a research-led culture right across Abertay that underpins everything we do in research, knowledge exchange, innovation, enterprise, and teaching. Our strategy highlights that **developing an ambitious, resourced, supportive and collaborative research culture is critical to the vitality and sustainability of the academic community**. Abertay is creating a dynamic academic ecosystem which stimulates a virtuous circle where maximising the use of research excellence helps drive innovation, economic and social impact through partnership working with key stakeholders, which in turn feeds back to expand and enrich our own RKE and teaching excellence, relevance, capacity and capability. Almost all our RKE staff are involved in teaching and learning. Indeed, based on our REF2021 performance, Abertay ranks 3rd among UK moderns for research intensity (Complete University Guide, 2024).

All staff, students and visiting researchers must adhere to the highest standards of research integrity in the conduct of their research as specified in the **Abertay Research Code of Conduct** and engage in mandatory research integrity training. Abertay will continue to support the development of a positive KE&I culture and will, in consultation with the Abertay academic community, develop an **RKE Culture and Environment Action Plan** for 2025-30.

14. Knowledge Exchange Concordat principles

Abertay are a signatory of and are committed to the principles of the **Knowledge Exchange Concordat** (<https://www.abertay.ac.uk/research-overview/research-governance/>).

H: Court/Board approval

We confirm that this KEIF strategy has been agreed at the Abertay University Court on 19th February 2025.

ABERTAY UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION FUND STRATEGY



2025 - 2030

Stage 1: Rapid Impact Checklist

Document title: Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) Strategy

Author & School/Service: Dean of Research and the Graduate School

Reason for the Equality Impact Assessment:

Proposed new document	x
Proposed change to existing document	
Review of existing document	
Other (please state):	

Could any protected characteristics be affected by this proposal?¹

Yes	No
x	

Not directly, but indirectly through embedding and promulgating good equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) practice.

If yes, which protected characteristic groups could be affected? There are no particular groups affected, but there is potential for indirect positive impact through specific projects.

Age		Disability	
Gender reassignment		Pregnancy and maternity	
Race/ethnicity		Religion or belief (including lack of belief)	
Sex		Sexual orientation	

Will the proposal have any impact on:

No – other than potentially, indirectly (and positively) through specific projects	Yes	No
Discrimination?		X
Equality of opportunity?		x
Relations between groups?		x

Will the proposal have an impact on the physical environment? For example, will there be impacts on:

Living conditions?	No
Working conditions?	No
Pollution or climate change?	No
Accidental injuries or public safety?	No
No – other than potentially, indirectly (and positively) through specific projects	

If the answer to any of the above is 'yes', please proceed to complete the Comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment, overleaf.

¹ 'Proposal' is used as shorthand for any policy, procedure, strategy or proposal that might be assessed.

Stage 2: Comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA)

Details of document

Document title	Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund Strategy
Document owner	Dean of Research and the Graduate School
School/Service	Graduate School

Aim of the document

What are the aims and objectives of the document?
KEIF strategy 2025-2030 for Abertay University for submission to SFC

How important is the document in terms of equality in the University? Does it relate to an area with known inequalities or where equality objectives have been set by the University?
The KEIF strategy does not have any direct equality impact, but may potentially have positive impact through projects.

Who is affected by the document and how have they been involved in the development of it?
The academic staff and students of the University, where they are involved in KEI. Deans, Research Executive, RKE Committee, SMT and Senate have been involved in developing the document and recommending it to Court for approval. The University's Lead Voices for EDI have been consulted on equality impact.
Others affected are those affected by KEI projects under the auspices of this strategy.

Are any persons affected by the document likely to benefit from it and in what way?
Yes, positively, by having a clear framework for KEI.

Is there any evidence or concern that any of the protected characteristic groups have different experiences, issues or needs in relation to this document? (Please provide details in the box below)			
Age	no	Race	no
Disability	no	Religion or Belief	no
Gender Reassignment	no	Sex	no
Pregnancy & Maternity	no	Sexual Orientation	no
Marriage & Civil Partnership	no		no
Further details:			

How does the document fit into the broader strategic aims of the University?
--

It aligns with the University's Strategic Plan and RKE Strategy.
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Consideration of available data

(Consider what data is available. Data can include surveys, focus groups, analysis of complaints made, feedback received, consultations, etc.)

What do we know from existing data already held by the University?
The data comprises feedback from those involved in development and KEI. This has raised no EDI issues. No other data are available because this is a high-level strategy.

What do we know from existing data which is available externally?
N/A

Are there any apparent gaps in knowledge?
EDI is addressed within specific projects as they arise, under the RKE strategy and University policy.

Impact of document

Could this document lead to any positive, negative, intended or unintended impact on the University or any of its stakeholders?
Only positive through reinforcing the University's mainstreamed approach to promoting EDI.

Could there be a differential ² impact on any protected characteristics? Could any differential impact be adverse?
No.

PLEASE CONSIDER:

Is this policy directly discriminatory? If yes, is it intended to increase equality? If no, this is unlawful discrimination.

Is this policy indirectly discriminatory? If yes, is this justifiable or proportionate? If no, this is unlawful discrimination.

If this policy is not indirectly discriminatory, but could have an adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics, you must provide details of how the University will act to address this.

Is this policy unlawfully discriminatory? If you find that it is, you must decide how the University will act lawfully.

Consultation

² Differential impact = where the positive or negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

What did this equality analysis conclude?
No discrimination or negative equality impact.

Is any action required to be taken in response to the findings from the consultation?
No.

What is the recommendation for this document following consultation?			
Reject the document		Approve and publish the document	x
Amendment required		Other (please provide details below)	

Declaration

I confirm that this equality analysis represents a fair and reasonable view of the implications of the document for all protected characteristic groups, and that appropriate actions have been identified to address the findings.

Dean of Research and the Graduate School	CEIA owner
Deputy Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor	Line manager (if appropriate)

Committee approval

Which Committee has this document gone before for approval?
Senate
Date of Committee meeting: 29/01/25

Following Committee consultation, what is the decision for this document?			
Reject the document		Approve and publish the document	X
Amend the document		Other (please give details below)	

If the Committee requires that the document be amended, please list amendments below.