

Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund Strategy



Approved: 09 December 2024

Introduction

The Edinburgh Napier University Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) Strategy is published in response to a Scottish Funding Council (SFC) requirement for universities to develop five-year KEIF strategies (for Academic Year 2025/26 to 2029/30). This strategy seeks to be a bold, ambitious, and forward-looking response to the challenges of delivering meaningful and impactful KE and innovation in a rapidly changing World. Our KEIF strategy is articulated around four pillars which will drive our activities, and these support alignment to local and national objectives, including those within Scotland's National Performance Framework, the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, the National Innovation Strategy for Scotland and the themes of the Entrepreneurial Campuses review. Our vision is to catalyse and support regional and national economic development through KE and innovation, and transfer the skills required to meet the changing requirements of employers, with a focus on building entrepreneurial mindsets to support SMEs and start-ups. Importantly, we aim to do all of this in collaboration with external partners across further and higher education, industry, and the public sector.



Figure 1: "Explore ENU event", where S5 & S6 pupils came on campus to find out more about university, the help available to them, and to experience workshops in Creativity or Engineering

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Section A: Overview

1. Institutional Context

With a community of over 15,000 students across Edinburgh and 6,000 studying further afield, Edinburgh Napier is the Home of Difference Makers. We have the ambition to lead the charge in fostering sustainable practices and innovative solutions addressing Scotland's challenges. We will play a key role in sustainably sparking innovation – attracting investment and creating jobs that will benefit entrepreneurs, businesses and individuals in our local communities, placing the delivery of Scotland's priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) at the forefront.

Our strategy, *Shaping Our Future: Driving Distinctiveness*, drives us to:

- Advance knowledge, to deliver impact;
 - Grow networks, to connect communities;
 - and Build careers, to create opportunities –
- with a cross-cutting commitment to sustainability and the UNSDGs.

Our entrepreneurial and knowledge exchange activities drive impact and generate value to Scotland's economy, and are aligned to local and national strategic priorities.

Edinburgh Napier hosts 17 research centres across a wide range of disciplines, and we host the *Built Environment – Smarter Transformation* Innovation Centre which creates and stimulates high-quality knowledge exchange and innovation to the benefit of the communities we serve.

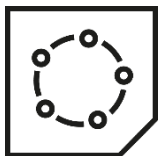
Powered by our hub for enterprise practice, Bright Red Triangle, and working collaboratively with other institutions, we are providing enhanced entrepreneurial support to students, graduates and staff across the Edinburgh and southeast Scotland region.

Our entrepreneurial staff and impactful research have led us to be a top 10 UK university and second in Scotland for generating successful spin-out companies (Octopus Ventures 2023).

Through our Innovation Hub, we support businesses with advice and knowledge to achieve their growth ambitions and help them succeed.

2. Overview of Strategic Ambitions

Our KEIF strategy is aligned to the University strategy and focuses on four pillars:



A deep integration of sustainability and culture of circularity: We will propagate circular economy practices by reusing our knowledge and expertise to continuously adapt and leverage our expertise to work across disciplines, addressing societal and business needs. Aligned to our KE Concordat plan, we will integrate sustainability and leadership into all our activities, building on our transformational impact in many sectors.



A systematic, transdisciplinary approach to KE&I: Recognising the fast-evolving, complex and multifaceted challenges facing society and business today, we will use a systematic transdisciplinary approach to KE&I to develop holistic solutions and knowledge. We will lead and facilitate collaborative engagement between stakeholders in health and wellbeing and environmental & societal sustainability, through our centres of excellence.



An integrated approach to innovation and connectivity to KE&I: Recognising the sometimes-fragmented nature of the KE&I landscape, we will provide end-to-end support across assets to support a successful entrepreneurial and KE&I ecosystem. This includes being key a contributor in the Forth Green Freeport, the Borderlands Region and City Deal, Edinburgh's Climate Compact & Net Zero strategy and accelerate the built environment's transition to zero carbon, whilst using our track record supporting start-ups and spinouts to help Scottish entrepreneurship flourish.



Leadership – an approach to creating impact and upskilling: To deliver the above, we will also cultivate a culture of leadership to deliver accessible upskilling, innovation, and informing leadership practice for the benefit of professionals at all levels.

3. Alignment to Scottish Government Priorities

Edinburgh Napier University's KEIF strategy is articulated around four pillars which will drive our activities, as described in the previous section. A diagram showing the linkages between the pillars and the objectives of 1) Scotland's National Performance Framework, 2) the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 3) the National Innovation Strategy for Scotland and 4) the themes of the Entrepreneurial Campuses review has been outlined below.

Alignment of Edinburgh Napier KEIF Pillars to Scottish Government Priorities

Delivery Approach	NPF Outcomes	Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation						National Innovation Strategy for Scotland	Entrepreneurial Campuses
		Entrepreneurial People and Culture	New Market Opps	Productive Businesses & Regions	Skilled Workforce	A Fairer and More Equal Society	A Culture of Delivery		
Pillar 1: Deep integration of sustainability and a culture of circularity									
Promote engagement around sustainability and the delivery of UNSDGs	Economy Environment Fair Work & Business Culture		✓	✓		✓	✓	Innovation Investment	Theme 1: Align with regional ecosystem
Positively influence and support citizens, businesses and regions on sustainability	Fair work & Business Communities International	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Innovation Clusters	Theme 2: Inspire through impact
Circular practice approach, using learning to enhance future activities with partners	Education Economy Fair work & Business	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	The adoption and diffusion of Innovation	Theme 4: Transform Curriculum Theme 6: Engage external expertise
Pillar 2: A Systematic Transdisciplinary Approach to Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (KE&I)									
Transdisciplinary thinking in KE&I activities to facilitate one-stop-shop innovative solutions to complex problems	Health Environment Poverty	✓	✓	✓			✓	Innovation Priorities	Theme 8: Align funding Theme 10: Deploy a framework for change
Pillar 3: An integrated approach to support Innovation and connectivity to KE through collaboration with external stakeholders.									
Structured engagement approach with partners to provide clarity, and enhance impact of KE&I activities	Education Economy Fair work & Business	✓	✓	✓			✓	The adoption and diffusion of Innovation	Theme 3: Lead from the top
Pillar 4: Leadership - An approach to creating impact and upskilling									
Cultivate leadership to drive innovation and generate meaningful impact	Economy Fair work & Business International	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Innovation-led entrepreneurship and Commercialisation	Theme 5: Enhance Extra-Curricular support Theme 7 : Enhance Spin-out support
Generating leadership capacity and upskilling with partners through KE&I activities	Education Economy Fair work & Business	✓		✓	✓		✓		Theme 9: Develop a talent pipeline

Figure 2: Alignment of ENU KEIF Pillars to Scottish Government Priorities

Section B: Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Capacity

4. Platform Grant

As we have done previously, we will continue to match fund the platform grant of KEIF as part of our wider commitments to underpin the research and innovation activity of the University. We will continue to use the platform grant to provide specialist KE support from our Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) department.

The platform grant allows us to provide stable and multi-year activities that build capacity for KE within our research community, and where appropriate generate synergistic benefits by cross-link this with strategic allocation of funding from the Research Excellence Grant (REG) where impact and KE activity is relevant.

The platform grant has been used to create professional services staff roles that drive improvements in our KE&I activity across the university. These roles, through delivering training programmes, providing 1:1 specialist support to academics and researchers, and brokering of external relationships, raise the visibility of KE and enhance the capacity to deliver our ambitions around KE&I.

5. Overall Capacity for Knowledge Exchange & Innovation

There are a range of professional services staff and academics who have KE&I responsibilities within their roles across the institution. We have up to 6 FTE roles that are directly supported by KEIF within our Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) department, covering areas such as public engagement and business development.

Professional services roles that provide support for KE&I activities include our Head of Business Engagement and IP Commercialisation and our Business Engagement team, our Head of Enterprise and the Bright Red Triangle team, Head of CPD and Consultancy, and our Public Engagement Manager. In addition, we have the newly created executive level role of Assistant Principal, and a number of academic leadership roles to drive the KEIF strategy and its implementation within our Schools and across the University, including our Associate Deans for Research and Innovation, our Innovation and Enterprise Academic leads, our Public Engagement academic leads, and Entrepreneurs in Residence.



East of Scotland **KTP Centre**

Collaboration • Innovation • Impact

Figure 3: East of Scotland KTP Centre logo

Edinburgh Napier hosts the East of Scotland Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) Centre which, with the support of other higher education providers, offers companies the opportunity to work with a wide range of academic, including scientists or engineers, on ambitious innovative growth projects.



Figure 4: AI exhibition in School of Computing, Engineering & Built Environment at Merchiston Campus: Beezer the dog meets a robot dog

Section C: Outcome Grant Activities

6. Knowledge Exchange Metric Activity

Ambition

The four pillars upon which the University's KEIF strategy rests have been developed to ensure that the University is able to sustainably grow its knowledge exchange, innovation and entrepreneurship activities as well as research impact – as outlined in Annex B.

As indicated in section 3, these pillars directly align with objectives from key Scottish Government strategies. The approach below details, with KEIF's support, how this alignment will be realised.

Approach

We will embed sustainability and a culture of circularity in how we KE&I. Our initial priorities will include:

At a strategic level, developing a culture of circularity of knowledge building so that knowledge that has already been developed can be repurposed and applied to new contexts, adding value beyond the context where it was originally created. This will include leveraging our strategic academic focus on wellbeing and sustainability and four research themes to implement the four pillars of this strategy, seeking to deploy KE&I activities, innovation-led entrepreneurship and commercialisation to the benefit of our region and wider Scotland. This will also ensure that we are inclusive in our approach and deliver impact in Scotland's communities who face additional challenges.

Alignment: NSET (Entrepreneurial People and Culture, New Market Opportunities, Productive Businesses and Regions, A Fairer and More Equal Society, A Culture of Delivery), National Innovation Strategy for Scotland, Entrepreneurial Campus Review

We will embed KEIF metrics as part of the University's annual planning round, including at a School level and regularly monitored through the institution's Research & Innovation Committee and Academic Board. This will enable the University to measure performance against our targets, re-assess priorities as needed, as well to consider additional opportunities to put in practice this circularity of knowledge.

Alignment: NSET (A Culture of Delivery)

Our internal structures – our Research, Innovation and Enterprise department (including our Innovation Hub and Bright Red Triangle) alongside our five Schools – will continue to enable KE&I activities to flow through complementarily, where KEIF (formerly REG, UIF) and public engagement activities mutually support one another. To support this further, we will:

Provide additional focus on KEIF through the recent appointment of Associate Deans for Research, and school Innovation and Enterprise Academic leads, whose roles will explicitly include supporting KEIF activities.

Continue to develop our existing Research Centres, sector-focused Innovation Centres and institutes, with an eye on future expansion whilst maximising our established collaborations.

Focus the **Innovation Hub's** activities to bring a critical mass of university expertise into interdisciplinary consortia to showcase and responsibly work with businesses and industrial sectors to address their needs. This includes generating leadership capacity through the provision of targeted upskilling courses. Our external outreach is supported by the business engagement team; our efforts are leveraged through our close collaborations with our ecosystem partners such as Interface and the Innovation Centres. Our Consultancy and Commercial Activity Framework has been developed to encourage and incentivise staff to undertake consultancy and non-credit bearing bespoke CPD activities in support of knowledge exchange and external collaboration.

Continue to roll out our stakeholder engagement plan which will support the Innovation Hub's activities described above and our public engagement activities in the region and beyond.

We will continue to engage closely with the East of Scotland KTP Centre, to focus on KTPs across all areas. We will continue to build a strong pipeline through targeted school-level engagement, streamlining academic–industry matchmaking through platforms such as Beauhurst and Konfer, regular spotlighting at School and Campus meetings, and strategic promotion via online campaigns and innovation-focused events.

Increasing Research funding: increasing both the volume and quality of applications submitted by Edinburgh Napier University to external funders. This includes the creation of an Internal Peer Review College (IPRC) drawing on the expertise of almost 100 academics at Edinburgh Napier who are involved in external funder peer review colleges and panels and embedding a culture of improved quality to increase the likelihood that applications submitted will be recommended for funding.

To support our ambitions on international collaboration for research funding, Edinburgh Napier is a founder member and active in the U!REKA network and will leverage the opportunities for partnership in funding streams.

We have established the Strategic Research and Innovation Funding Forum (SRIFF) to provide focus and agile decision-making on strategic funding opportunities for interdisciplinary funding.

The university will continue to deliver an annual programme of workshops, face-to-face and online for the academic research community to support individual academics and project ideas through to fruition into fundable grant applications.

Translation: Our ambitions in translating research into applied applications to support economic growth in Scotland include training and development for the academic research community to create a culture of always considering the pathway between a research idea and how this translates into practical applications to support economic growth. We will encourage academic researchers to target more of the available translational research funding schemes across many research disciplines.

7. Graduate Start-ups and Spin-outs / Entrepreneurial Support

Ambition and Context

The development of start-ups, enterprise skills and capacity building for KE will be a focus for the institution, aligned to the Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint, providing leadership to create impact (Pillar 4).

Transform Curriculum & Culture

We are embedding entrepreneurship education across our curriculum through our Department of Learning & Teaching Enhancement in collaboration with Bright Red Triangle (BRT) and our Small Business and Enterprise Research Group. BRT is the Enterprise Hub for Edinburgh Napier, supporting students, staff and alumni to develop enterprise skills, and providing training to start-up businesses. Together they developed The Entrepreneurial Playbook, providing accessible resources for enterprise skills which will be shared with colleges and universities across Scotland and the UK.

We will continue to promote responsible and inclusive entrepreneurship in our local communities through:

- Our partnership with Daydream Believers, providing accreditation for their creativity and innovation programmes in Scottish schools.

- Hosting and facilitating Young Enterprise Lothian events and training to support the delivery of enterprise skills training in local schools.

Continuing to offer our services to partners in the local community, including free access to our BRT Start Up Studio as well as business advice and coaching from the BRT team.

We have great ambitions for the new enterprise partnership with Queen Margaret University (QMU) and Edinburgh College, through the effective use of shared UIF/KEIF funds, to offer entrepreneurial support to students, graduates and staff at all three institutions, which is expected to reach 60,000 students.

Enhanced Support for Spinouts

In 2025, we will launch a new VENTURE programme for spinouts, arising out of University IP, with strengthened support for ventures created from know-how and for social enterprise. It includes our new membership to the ASPECT network, focused on SHAPE subjects and brings together entrepreneurial support from BRT and our ecosystem partners.

Strategic use of KEIF funds as pre-seed funding for early-stage ventures have been targeted to support venture evolution and to leverage further proof of concept funding. The programme will make it easier for a researcher to achieve success.

Via our stage-gate university process, we will prioritise access to early-stage proof-of-concept funding ensuring promising innovations are investment ready and primed for commercialisation. To support the focus on the funding trajectory, we will optimise our pool of commercial champions by collaborating with current Entrepreneurs-in-Residence to build a dynamic network ready to accelerate university-led innovations.

Enhanced support for student and staff start-ups

We will continue to develop our Entrepreneur-in-Residence network with six current EIRs (3 funded by the Royal Society) supporting researchers and students.

Students can access start-up advisory services through our Startium platform and training through our Freelance Academy, BYOBiz and Start For Future programmes as well as cohort specific offerings. We will offer seed funding through our Bright Red Sparks competitions, our Social Innovation Challenges and Appin Awards.

Align & Engage with our Local, Regional and International Ecosystems

We have strong relationships with enterprise and knowledge exchange stakeholders including the Global Entrepreneurship Network, Business Gateway, the Converge Challenge, Scottish Enterprise High-Growth spin out programme, ICURe and Santander Universities.

Edinburgh Napier is a founding member of the Start For Future (SFF) network which works in collaboration with over 30 European University partners on start-up programmes, sharing entrepreneurial training, coaching, access to industry and investor networks, incubator resources and best practice.



Figure 5: Appin Entrepreneurship Awards hosted by Edinburgh Napier University's Bright Red Triangle

Section D: Wider Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Activities

8. Wider Societal Impact

Ambition and Context

Our ambitions include:

- To promote sustainable and circular economy practices (Pillar 1) by leveraging our expertise to systematically work across disciplines to meet the needs of public, private and other stakeholders (Pillar 2).
- To be the partner of choice in the Edinburgh and Southeast Scotland region for the systematic and rapid delivery of knowledge exchange (Pillar 3), cultivating leadership to drive impact (Pillar 4).

To deliver this ambition Edinburgh Napier has put in place the new executive leadership role of Assistant Principal, with responsibility for KEIF. Our ambition is to enhance and grow areas where we are providing significant impact around key sectors, particularly multi-partner centres of excellence such as NHS Assure, Policing Academic Centre of Excellence (P-ACE), Mountain Bike Innovation Centre (MTBIC), and Built Environment – Smarter Transformation (BE-ST), and in doing so help to build teams that will solve the sector's most pressing challenges. Our public engagement is highly place-based, with a focus on the South-West of Edinburgh where our three campuses are located. This includes neighbourhoods with some of the highest rates of child poverty in Scotland, with a relatively high level of people who have recently arrived in Edinburgh. The university has strong links in Midlothian, with an engagement officer embedded in communities there. Our researchers engage with local schools, prisons, galleries, libraries, archives and museums.

We work collaboratively with other universities, notably through the Beltane Network. It brings together Edinburgh Napier, Heriot-Watt, Queen Margaret and The University of Edinburgh to deliver projects, events and share training and expertise – with public engagement professionals often working collectively with partners (Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council, the Scottish Parliament, the Fringe, Research Councils) to give a joined-up approach and central point of contact. We are proud to organise Soapbox Science with opportunities for 12 women STEM researchers from Scottish universities to share their research with around 1,000 members of the public every year.

Policy engagement is central to our researchers' work and includes:

- Hosting the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), supporting internationally excellent, multi-disciplinary policing research to enable evidence-informed policy & practice
- Working with the armed forces and the wider community through military research
- Partnerships with NHS Scotland. Researchers in cardiovascular recovery, learning disabilities and mental health
- Edinburgh's festivals
- Wood science and technology

Approach

Our three campuses are firmly anchored in our local communities, enabling us to deliver projects impacting directly on people's lives. Public engagement with research is led by one public engagement professional and five academics through a Public Engagement Forum.

For several years, the university has allocated £70,000 of KEIF (formerly UIF) funds to public engagement activity, in the form of seed funding which researchers can apply for. Our application process prioritises projects which:

- engage with areas of high levels (decile 1-4) of multiple deprivation
- engage with communities, individuals or organisations which support people with protected characteristics
- address the impact of the climate crisis
- respond to a demonstrated request from a community partner
- take place in and with communities

KEIF funding supports around 30 public engagement projects annually and has been increasingly used for interdisciplinary projects.

The KEIF funding allocated to public engagement has been a launchpad enabling a systematic approach, and nurturing sustainable relationships, with communities. As a result, we have successfully applied for public engagement funding from external organisations including:

- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- Royal Society of Edinburgh
- Royal Academy of Engineering
- Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)
- British Science Association

9. Collaboration

Ambition and Approach

Our ambitions and approach align with Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, the Entrepreneurial Campus, Scotland's National Innovation Strategy, the KE Concordat and Invest 2035.

Our ambitions are to collaborate in regional and national initiatives by leading and facilitating collaborative engagement between stakeholders through grounding our collaboration approach in our core themes of health; environment; AI and advanced technologies; and culture and communities, with the three main focus areas outlined below.

1. Supporting Sustainable Innovation Infrastructure (Pillar 1)

We will continue to engage across our innovation ecosystem with innovation centres, Interface, Converge Challenge, and Scottish Enterprise, to align our research and innovation priorities with societal needs.

We collaborate with other institutions like the SKEIM mentorship program. By sharing best practices within professional services across institutions, we are fostering a strong and sustainable KE&I ecosystem across Scotland. One of the areas we will build upon in this academic year is the 'ecosystem building' activity via the KEIF for a "Team Scotland" approach.

2. Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research (Pillar 2)

We will continue to engage in networks so we can foster interdisciplinary research to address complex societal and economic challenges, and drive innovation and knowledge transfer.

For example:

- 1) the Turing University Network focussed on data science and AI to advance world-class research and apply it to national and global challenges, build skills for the future and drive an informed public conversation
- 2) the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA) which aims to improve skills, access to finance for spin-outs and start-ups, and foster collaboration across life sciences disciplines in Scotland and beyond

We encourage interdisciplinary research through workshops, training, funding, and a collaborative culture for all researchers.

3. Strengthening Existing Partnerships and Engaging with Industry (Pillars 3 and 4):

Using our existing partnerships, we will fuel innovation and growth across the KE&I ecosystem.

We will continue to work with South of Scotland Enterprise and other project partners to deliver the Mountain Bike Innovation Centre through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

We will continue to build strategic partnerships with industry which align with our themes. Our Innovation Hub, our interface with the business community, will ensure the alignment of university capability with external economic sectors, so that we continue to be positioned as a key engine for growth locally, nationally and internationally.

For example, the University will host the new Scottish Centre of Excellence for Digital Trust – bringing industry, academia and the public sector together to make the digital world more reliable. The Scottish Centre of Excellence in Digital Trust and Distributed Ledger Technology secured around £1m in funding, including significant backing from Scottish Enterprise. The plan for the Centre, developed alongside FinTech Scotland, focuses specifically on payments and transactions to support the Scottish finance industry.

Our approach will be strengthened through the expected delivery of an open innovation platform aligned to our internal structures to allow real-time co-creation and unite our research community with our external partners and enable direct engagement and collaboration between innovators.

10. Regional Approaches

Ambition and Approach

To be contributors in regional and national initiatives such as the Forth Green Freeports, the Borderlands Region and City Deal, Edinburgh's Climate Compact & Net Zero strategy and accelerate the built environment's transition to zero carbon.

We will be exceptionally collaborative in our approach, working closely with Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College and other partners, to take a leading role within the innovation ecosystem and be recognised the partner of choice in the City of Edinburgh and wider Scotland for the rapid delivery of knowledge exchange and enterprise.

Our vision is to enhance our partnerships with the Chambers of Commerce and other Edinburgh and Southeast of Scotland partners to target more place-based opportunities (e.g. Forth Green Freeports, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal) collaborating with Scottish Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise.

We have the ambition to grow our delivery of upskilling courses alongside a regional and sectoral approach to skills development, including with West Lothian College. Development of start-ups, enterprise skills, and capacity building for knowledge exchange will increase through our new partnership with Queen Margaret University (QMU) and Edinburgh College, and with the support of Women's Enterprise Scotland.

We will, alongside QMU, provide joint professional and career development shared services to support our researchers and entrepreneurs across both universities.

We will continue to act as a catalyst for multidisciplinary collaboration adding value to the work of key strategic partners such as Scottish Football Association, NHS Assure, Scottish Institute for Policing Research and Scotland Beyond Net Zero network.



Figure 6: Edinburgh Napier University Principal and Vice Chancellor Professor Sue Rigby presenting at the Neurodiversity and Policing event hosted by Edinburgh Napier University in partnership with Police Scotland, the Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association and the Scottish Institute for Policing Research

Section E: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

11. Embedding and Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We want to be recognised as a university that acts with respect and integrity, where everyone involved feels proud, confident, challenged and supported – with a commitment to promoting equality and diversity and creating a culture of inclusion.

Our latest Mainstreaming report¹, published in April 2025, highlights our progress towards mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). It also outlines our vision to build a community where all of our members are empowered to fulfil their full potential and find their own unique place in the world.

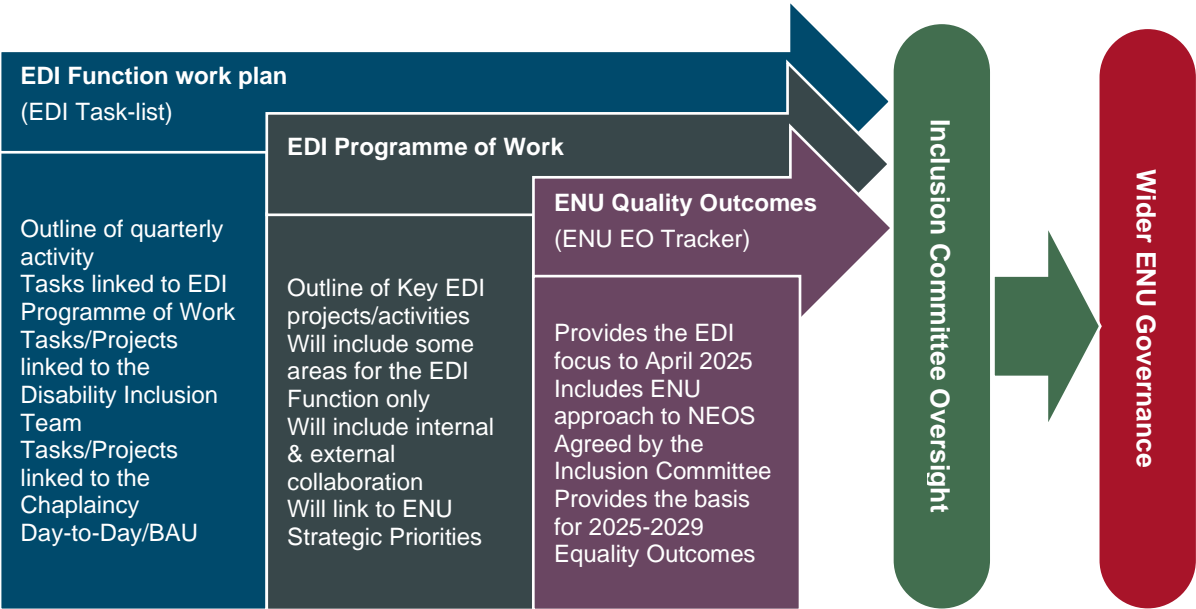


Figure 7: Edinburgh Napier EDI Infrastructure

Following the publication of the SFC National Equality Outcomes (NEOs), we worked with external consultants to review the university’s approach to EDI and we identified

¹ Edinburgh Napier University (April 2025), *INCLUDE 2025: Mainstreaming Report*. Accessible: <https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/documents/equality-and-diversity-documents/edinburgh-napier-university-mainstreaming-report-april-2025.ashx>

areas for future focus covering: Diversity Confidence & Leadership, Employee Experience, Employee Resource Groups, Inclusive Communication and Conscious Scrutiny. This work shaped the development of a new internal infrastructure for EDI, underpinning activities to support EDI embedding into everyday activity, and development of new Equality Outcomes – mapped to the SFC NEOs – for the period 2025-29 published on the University's [website](#) at the end of April 2025.

The report highlighted case studies identifying good practice towards mainstreaming EDI in the KE&I space, such as:

- Working with the Cheltenham Science Festival to become more inclusive and diverse to attract and inspire new generations of cyber security professionals.
- Our Centre for Mental Health Practice and Law research taking forward a multi-disciplinary approach, involving academics, students and public, private and third sector stakeholders and informed by lived experience, carers and practitioners to address health and social care needs and challenges to find meaningful and impactful solutions.

We will use our new EDI infrastructure to continue to drive inclusive KE&I, including prioritising projects when allocating KEIF funds towards public engagement projects which engage with areas of high levels of multiple deprivation, and with communities, individuals or organisations which support people with protected characteristics.

An EDI Internal Audit took place in March/April 2025, and we are committed to an action plan to further enhance and embed Equality Impact Assessment, integration of School inclusion roles, alignment with the University's EDI Strategic Framework and performance reporting against equality outcomes.

From an entrepreneurship perspective, through Bright Red Triangle (BRT) we will continue to embed:

- A revisited entrepreneurship training and event offering that includes new digital resources to widen participation. This includes new programmes for women entrepreneurs.
- Working with OutBritain (the UK's first LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce – set up by one of our alumni) on LGTBQ+ events and programmes as well as pRespect, Datakirk, and Dechomai to develop opportunities with BAME communities.
- Developing a new programme for neurodivergent entrepreneurs.
- Empowering women in business and leadership through the appointment of the Chair of Women's Enterprise Scotland as an Entrepreneur-in-residence, shaping our SDG5 Living Lab and providing tailored training, cutting-edge resources, and networking opportunities.

We will work with Equate Scotland (hosted at Edinburgh Napier) towards continuing to create inclusive working and learning environments, particularly where these relate to STEM disciplines.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

An EIA has been undertaken and is provided alongside this KEIF strategy in Annex 3.



Figure 8: Incoming and outgoing Edinburgh Napier Students Association (ENSA) Student Presidents at our 2024 Alumni Awards

Section F: Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Culture

13. Promoting Positive KE&I Culture

Our approach to KE&I culture is to empower and enable our staff and students to recognise, celebrate and enhance the potential to exchange knowledge and co-create impact.

We recognise KE&I in our career progression framework and Workload Allocation Model, promoting a diverse range of KE&I indicators through impact networks and events. Investing in training and development for staff and students, integrating PE, KE and impact, we champion KE&I across the full breadth of university activities. We are building capacity by mentoring early career academics and students through experienced, impact-generating staff and providing access to professional expertise including PE, BE, commercialisation, consultancy specialists and coordinated systems. We ring-fence funding to pump-prime transdisciplinary engagement opportunities and implement fair and inclusive practices by actively monitoring and assessing representation across protected characteristics.

We will increase:

- Awareness of KE&I, evidenced through staff surveys and testimonials of staff and students
- Volume of staff allocated time for KE&I activities
- Training attendance and satisfaction
- Interactions with KE and PE professionals
- Number of high-impact spin outs, licensing opportunities and partnerships
- Usage of the RIMS impact system
- Recognition of the quality of our impact through achieving high-scoring impact case-studies in REF29
- Evidence of public engagement.

14. Knowledge Exchange Concordat Principles

We became a signatory of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat in 2021 and went on to co-develop, via university-wide engagement, a self-evaluation action plan, resulting in a set of 5 key priority workstream actions.

The workstream priorities will underpin our approach for advancement of knowledge exchange over the next 5 years, recognising there is work to do across all 8 principles to raise visibility and embed good practice.



Figure 9: Work Experience competition at Edinburgh Napier University's Craiglockhart Campus

Section G: Any other information

In alignment with our four KEIF pillars, Edinburgh Napier University is closely engaging with Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College to develop a regional knowledge exchange and innovation partnership where we collaborate on a number of areas of significant shared interests.

Edinburgh Napier University will progress the delivery of its KEIF strategy, seeking the input and support of several external partners including Interface, The East of Scotland KTP Centre, the Built Environment – Smarter Transformation Innovation Centre, Equate Scotland and Scottish Enterprise.



Figure 10: Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, visits the Clinical Skills Suite at Edinburgh Napier University's Sighthill Campus

Annex: KEIF Equality Impact Assessment

Name of mechanism

Edinburgh Napier University Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Fund strategy 2024/25 – 2029/30

Area overseeing the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Research, Innovation and Enterprise Directorate

Date the EIA was started

09/10/2024, and it was submitted to the Scottish Funding Council on 30/01/2025

New or existing mechanism

The Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Framework Strategy (known by the acronym KEIF or referred to in this document as “the strategy”) is a new mechanism, introduced as a regulatory requirement by Scotland's tertiary education and research authority, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). KEIF replaces SFC's former University Innovation Fund. The SFC has stated that KEIF strategies, annual reporting and case studies will form a key part in improving its evidence base, demonstrating the value of KEIF within our broader Research and Innovation landscape.

Does this mechanism impact on people?

Yes – it is expected that the strategy will impact on the student, staff as well as local and wider communities.

- KEIF will set out the direction of travel and key outcomes that the University will seek to achieve, related to knowledge exchange and innovation over the course of the next five years. It is intrinsically linked with the objectives of our Research & Innovation strategy. It will affect work delivered by academic and professional services colleagues.
- The strategy sets out our ambitions to continue to support, develop and enhance student, staff and community entrepreneurship.
- The strategy sets out our ambitions to work systematically across disciplines to meet the needs of public, private and other stakeholders. As an illustrative example this would include collaborations with NHS Scotland in cardiovascular recovery, learning disabilities and mental health.

- Activities delivered under the banner of KEIF – in particular knowledge exchange – may also involve communities based overseas, an area in which the University has already been active.
- The strategy also includes an ambition to engage with our local communities – for instance through public engagement in research. This builds on our existing public engagement activity which includes projects engaging with:
 - areas of high levels (decile 1-4) of multiple deprivation
 - communities, individuals or organisations which support people with protected characteristics

What are the aims, objectives and purpose of the mechanism?

The strategy is intended to enable institutions to set out areas of strategic focus and outline how the institution will support the delivery of Scottish Government national priorities, such as the National Innovation Strategy for Scotland and the Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint over the five-year period.

Are there any associated objectives?

The KEIF strategy is also aligned to the objectives of the University's Research & Innovation strategy, and Shaping Our Future core strategies. It is further aligned to the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, the National Innovation Strategy for Scotland and the Entrepreneurial Campus Review as stated above.

Who is intended to benefit from the mechanism and in what way?

Research and innovation at Edinburgh Napier plays a crucial role in underpinning our ability to solve real-world problems and provide advice, knowledge and expertise to industry, the public and third sectors. The mechanism will guide our approach to knowledge exchange and innovation in order to help businesses and organisations, from a variety of sectors, use our skills and knowledge to transfer their ideas into reality. It will also help guide the expansion of our provision of entrepreneurial skills to students, staff and wider community. For further information on how the mechanism will impact on people and communities, please see the response to question 5.

Is there any data available about the mechanism?

This is limited – KEIF is a new mechanism which remains under development. It is an evolution of the Scottish Funding Council's University Innovation Fund. Guidance on the aims and objectives of KEIF may be found on the Scottish Funding Council's website.

As KEIF's governance is expected to be delivered through existing mechanisms (Research & Innovation Committee for instance), issues would be escalated through

established mechanisms. As regards equality, diversity and inclusion issues, these are expected to be escalated through the existing institutional Inclusion Committee.

How are you involving stakeholders, groups of interest in the EIA and development of the mechanism?

The working group tasked with developing the strategy was asked to consider equality, diversity and inclusion considerations in its drafting. Following the initial approval of the draft by the University Court in December 2024, a draft of the strategy was circulated to interested parties within the University community including the Edinburgh Napier Student Association and University Staff networks (LGBT+ staff network, interfaith staff network, BAMEish networkⁱ). Their contributions have helped to inform this Equality Impact Assessment.

It is important to note that further external engagements are planned as part of the operationalisation of the KEIF strategy, including with other higher education partners, business and local community representatives. These may identify further equality factors to be considered, and the EIA will be updated as appropriate.

What challenges have been identified?

A number of potential challenges have been identified.

- 1) The first relates to addressing challenges already identified through the development of National Equality Outcomes (and tackling persistent inequalities) and related to wider equality, diversity and inclusion challenges across the institution which are not specific to this strategy. The University will remain mindful that its delivery of KEIF must include the promotion of its public sector equality duties as part of its external outreach and public engagement activities with its communities.
- 2) The second relates to potential challenges in the operationalisation of this strategy, which will be an ongoing process. Therefore, the institution will be required to regularly monitor and update its EIA to ensure new challenges are captured.
- 3) A specific challenge was identified related to womenⁱⁱ-led entrepreneurship. Noting that there is significant evidence showing that women are disadvantaged compared to men (e.g. through the [Ana Stewart Review](#)), the University will need to be mindful to ensure that its provision of entrepreneurial activities are inclusive. The University's setting up of the SDG5 Living Lab in partnership with Women's Enterprise Scotland should support that objective.
- 4) Related to the above, the ability of part-time workers to be involved in knowledge exchange activities has been highlighted as a challenge and, in many cases, represent an issue of equality of access for womenⁱⁱ.
- 5) During the development of our Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund Strategy, our working group recognised that, with the international partnerships that the University may seek to build, the institution's approach to these partnerships will need to ensure continued alignment with the University's responsibilities around inclusion.

- 6) Edinburgh Napier Students Association (ENSA) have raised a potential challenge around the accessibility of entrepreneurial activity to all students due to the costs of accessing co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 7) ENSA have also raised a challenge about ensuring that activities which build entrepreneurial skills in the student population – though not always defined as entrepreneurship – are recognised for the benefit they provide to students.
- 8) The Interfaith Staff network also raised the issue that, in delivering entrepreneurship activities, the University should remain mindful of relevant principles of certain faith groups – for instance that some Muslim communities may seek to use non-interest-based finance products to start businesses.

Have there been any specific concerns about differential impact on any of the Protected Characteristics Groups or other groups of interest?

Please see the relevant challenges identified under question 11.

What steps are being taken to mitigate concerns raised about differential impact?

The University has established processes in place to escalate issues – related to equality. Should further challenges or concerns arise during the operationalisation of the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund strategy, these would be escalated to the Inclusion Committee (cf challenges 1, 2, 3 in previous section).

Regarding the challenges facing those working part-time to engage in knowledge exchange activities, (cf. challenge 4) mitigations proposed include ensuring that deadlines for calls or activities do not clash where possible with school holidays. Differential rules may also be considered specifically for that group by the University's relevant governance mechanisms.

ENSA have recommended that entrepreneurship, industry partnerships and opportunities around employability should be embedded into existing programmes of study for students and not be regarded as additional activities (cf. challenges 6,7). These recommendations have been relayed to the University's enterprise hub, Bright Red Triangle.

ENSA have also indicated that they can support and encourage entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities through student film festivals, project management challenges, volunteering opportunities as well as clubs and societies (cf. challenges 6,7). They also run entrepreneurial activities that help students gain skills and experience and add value to students' experience. They have also recommended that the University aligns data around participation rates in ENSA-supported activities and how this links to other entrepreneurial activity around the university.

ENSA has also offered to help foster links with student LGBTQ+ and global majority student communities (cf. challenges 6,7).

Where practical and capacity allows, staff networks will also be in a position to support and facilitate these conversations.

Can the differential impact be justified based on positive action guidance?

As covered in sections 13 and 15, as differential impacts come to light, the University will put in place suitable accommodations, and issues will be escalated through established governance mechanisms.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a requirement to give “due regard” to the public sector equality duty in all functions. There is a specific duty to assess the impact of proposed new or revised policies and practices against the three needs of the general duty. Use this section to outline relevant issues.

i) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

As per its mission statement and values, the University will ensure that – in the delivery of its Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund strategy – it will deliver its activities in line with its public sector equality duties including to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

We would also encourage the Scottish Funding Council to share its own assessments to demonstrate that there has been a consideration of these issues upstream in the design of the KEIF framework and its related policies, to avoid perceptions of performative elements as regards equality impact assessments.

ii) Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups

The University will ensure that it provides the necessary accommodations in order to promote and advance the equality of opportunity to take part in activities to be organised as part of the operationalisation of the KEIF strategy – overseen by established university governance committees including those mentioned in this assessment.

iii) Foster good relations between people of different groups

The University is committed to ensure that the activities as part of KEIF support the building of good relations between people of different groups, building on our existing inclusive approach to public engagement.

Date EIA was completed and date for future review of mechanism.

The EIA was completed on 14 January 2025 and will be reviewed as part of the yearly review of progress against objectives outlined under the KEIF strategy and as often as required as a KEIF operational plan is developed to take forwards activities.

ⁱ The BAMEish network aims to create a space for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (or Global Majority) university staff to feel visible, valued and culturally recognised

ⁱⁱ This includes transgender women and people who identify outwith the gender binary.