



Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Strategy 2025/26 to 2029/30

Submitted by Heriot-Watt University to the Scottish Funding Council KEIF Strategy 2025

Founded in 1821, we are a leading research-intensive institution with a strong emphasis on innovation, inclusion and enterprise. With campuses in Scotland (Edinburgh, Scottish Borders, and Orkney), United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia, we leverage our international presence to deliver impactful research and education addressing global challenges.

Renowned for high-impact research, we focus on critical areas such as energy transition, net-zero initiatives, health and care technologies, earth and marine sciences, robotics, artificial intelligence, and quantum and photonics technologies—fields poised to drive significant technological advancements in the coming decades. Our collaborative and interdisciplinary approach builds on core strengths in engineering and mathematics, as evidenced in our joint REF 2021 submission with the University of Edinburgh.

Our enterprising research culture creates a dynamic environment where research, innovation, and entrepreneurship intersect. Leveraging our global campuses, we offer unique opportunities for cross-border collaboration and the development of globally relevant solutions. This enterprise focus supports a thriving ecosystem of spin-outs, start-ups, and industry partnerships, driving economic growth and societal impact.

Through KEIF we will grow and scale our ambitions, driving forward “five shifts” to develop a truly integrated knowledge exchange and innovation ecosystem:

- 1 Advancing our approach to cultivate our global partner network to increase in industry funded research**
- 2 Materially Grow Consultancy to engage more staff in KE&I**
- 3 Drive impactful collaboration and innovation across industries and schools through scaling our KTP activities**
- 4 Achieve Top-Table 10 UK Performance in Commercialisation & Entrepreneurship through developing our Entrepreneurial Ecosystem**
- 5 Embed Equality Diversity and Inclusion in KE&I**

Annex A: Heriot-Watt University

Institution: Heriot-Watt University

Section A: Overview

1. Institutional context

Founded in 1821, we are a leading research-intensive institution with a strong emphasis on innovation, inclusion and enterprise. With campuses in Scotland (Edinburgh, Scottish Borders, and Orkney), United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia, we leverage our international presence to deliver impactful research and education addressing global challenges.

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Partnerships are central to our strategy. By collaborating with leading academic institutions, industry leaders, policy makers and governments worldwide, we enhance the reach and impact of our research. Alliances such as Centres for Doctoral Training with other Scottish institutions enable us to pool expertise across Scotland to tackle the most pressing challenges, from sustainability to health to quantum.

Our commitment to global research, combined with our enterprise focus, positions us as a key player in driving innovation and creating a better future for all.

2. Overview of strategic ambitions

We will drive outcomes through mission-based research embedded within our **Global Research Institutes (GRIs)**, focusing on **Health & Care Technologies, Net Zero, Earth & Marine Science, and Robotics & AI**. This approach will align with University Strategy 2035, addressing global challenges while driving economic growth and societal impact.

Mission based priorities:

- **Health & Care Technologies:** Deliver transformational patient outcomes through digital health, data-driven tools, and equitable healthcare innovations.
- **Net Zero:** Lead in decarbonisation, sustainable materials, and renewable energy solutions to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon economy.
- **Earth & Marine Science:** Protect ecosystems, foster resilience, and advance sustainable resource use, delivering scalable climate adaptation solutions.
- **Robotics & AI:** Deploy cutting-edge robotics and AI to redefine production, healthcare, and environmental monitoring globally.

We will continue to grow our areas of excellence to:

Translate world-class research and academic capabilities into high-impact solutions

- Scale technologies, forging international partnerships and attract investment.
- Expand industry research and technology partnerships, creating viable commercialisation pipelines for applied research into high-impact outcomes.
- Accelerate commercialisation of deep-tech technologies to deliver high value industry benefit.
- Foster the growth of spin-outs and start-ups.
- Leverage our Hubs and Centres for Doctoral Training to advance industry-centric skills.

Rapidly scale the impact of our GRIs and world-class Research Hubs

- Deliver improved patient outcomes through widespread clinical adoption of research-led Health and Care technologies.
- Provide scalable solutions in geo-energy, sustainable materials and decarbonisation, delivering improvements in Net Zero.
- Redefine production processes with advanced manufacturing solutions based on Robotics and AI.
- Become internationally regarded as a thought-leader in deploying Quantum and Photonics delivering high value technology solutions across sectors.

Drive business performance alongside EDI

- Advance research on inequality and social inclusion to drive legislative change through stronger collaborations with industry, government and community partners.

3. Alignment to Scottish Government priorities

Heriot-Watt is committed to the ambitions of the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation and Innovation Strategy. KEIF will help drive global, national, and regional impact through strategic investments and partnerships.

Entrepreneurial People and Culture

We will embed entrepreneurial learning and development, attract entrepreneurial talent into programmes, and foster entrepreneurial mindsets across the University and wider ecosystem.

New Market Opportunities

- **Health & Care Technologies:** We will grow collaborations with health & care providers and the MedTech industry, building on the success of the Medical Device Manufacturing Centre (MDMC) to transform healthcare delivery.
- **Quantum and Photonics:** Through the Integrated Quantum Networks Hub, we will advance Scotland's leadership in quantum and photonics, partnering with global hubs and advancing our centres for doctoral training to drive enterprise creation and industry partnerships.
- **Energy Transition & Marine Environment:** Leveraging net zero and marine science expertise, we support offshore energy through marine technology and conservation research.

Productive Business and Regions

- **Sustainable Growth:** Supporting business development to enable effective partnering with initiatives like the Forth Green Freeport and Islands Growth Deal.
- **Manufacturing:** We will enhance manufacturing through robotics, photonics, and AI, building on the National Robotarium and MDMC.
- **'Place-based Partnerships':** Continuing to grow 'place-based' partnerships with local authorities to increase inward investment and scale up activity.

Skilled Workforce

- **Graduate and Student Skills:** Advancing the development of graduate skills and student entrepreneurial skills through Centres for Doctoral Training and tailored designed studentfocused entrepreneurial skills development.

Fairer and More Equal Society

- **Growing Participation of Female Entrepreneurs:** designing new programmes that contribute to a fairer and more equal society.

Section B. KE&I Capacity

4. Platform Grant

Heriot-Watt will match fund the Platform Grant with cash which together will be utilised to strengthen our KE&I initiatives by directly supporting our central Business Development and Commercialisation teams. These teams are crucial in building industry partnerships, facilitating technology transfer, creating new enterprises and accelerating adoption of innovations.

KEIF funding accelerates our efforts and enables us to be ambitious, focusing on our five 'big shifts' presented in section 6 below. Without KEIF funding we would not have the resource to pursue all of the activities outlined in our plan and the team would need to focus more strongly on shorter term income generating activity through **growing and enhancing impactful industry engagement** (i.e. Shifts #1, 2 &3).

However, KEIF funding enables us to grow and strengthen ALL activities critical to building a vibrant innovation ecosystem thus driving economic growth in Scotland, in particular the following activities in Shift #4:

- **Embedding and Expanding Entrepreneurial Support:** Providing resources for Entrepreneurs-in-Residence and student enterprise, nurturing the next generation of innovators and facilitating the creation of spin-outs and start-ups.
- **Increasing Innovation Challenges for Academics, Students and External Innovators:** Funding innovation challenges to stimulate the formation of businesses of the future that create solutions to real-world problems, engaging academic community and external stakeholders.
- **Growing the Intellectual Property Portfolio and Increase Technology Transfer Outcomes:** through providing training and support to staff to identify and protect IP.

5. Overall capacity for KE&I

Strategic direction for KE&I falls under the direction of our Deputy Principal for Business & Enterprise, a role that was specifically created to grow our activities in this area. Since being appointed the DP(B&E) has created a team of approximately 22 staff, including business development, commercialisation, enterprise and operational roles, in the Business and Enterprise directorate. Fifty percent of these roles are directly funded though KEIF. Additional academic strategic support is provided though our Associate Principal for Enterprise who is a well-recognised entrepreneur having established the innovative sustainable K Brick and the company Kenoteq.

The B&E team works closely with our newly appointed Associate Executive Deans for Enterprise, who hold senior leadership positions in our Schools to promote Enterprise. Furthermore B&E coordinates institutional activities including GRI teams, local industry engagement staff attached to frontier research groups, incubation teams in the Edinburgh Business School and KE&I teams in our Research and Engagement directorate. This wider integrated network amounts to over 50 academic and professional staff.

Section C: Outcome Grant activities

6. KE metric activity

Our five-year strategy aims to grow Heriot-Watt's Knowledge Exchange & Innovation performance through focused investment, stronger partnerships, and expanded capability. KEIF is critical to delivering five major shifts that collectively will transform Heriot-Watt's Research Park into a world-leading innovation district—building the sectors, businesses, and jobs of the future and delivering economic benefit to Edinburgh, Scotland, and beyond.

Our priorities align with the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation and National Innovation Strategy, focusing on Robotics/AI, Quantum, Net Zero, Space, and Health Tech. Through strategic partnership with local agencies, we will develop sectoral clusters in our Research Park, which has the long-term potential to support 10,000–15,000 jobs.

KEIF enables us to prioritise these growth areas, develop future-focused KE capabilities, and maintain institutional agility in responding to emerging opportunities.

Shift #1. Grow Global Partnerships and Industry Research Income

We will significantly increase industry-funded research (**from £11.4m to £15.1m by 2028/29**) by leveraging our global networks and success in securing >£100m in national R&D hub investments (e.g. IDRIC, TRANSIT, Robotarium, Quantum). These hubs already engage over 400 businesses across a wide range of industries, creating a strong foundation for growth. KEIF will support data-driven partnership development, internal capability building, and tools to help academics shape industry-aligned propositions.

Shift #2. Expand Consultancy Activity

We will double academic engagement and generate **£4.1m p.a. in consultancy income by 2028/29**. KEIF will fund a consultancy manager and support the rollout of a new global consultancy policy that incentivises staff, streamlines contract delivery, and builds capacity in opportunity identification and value creation.

Shift #3. Grow Innovation & Impact through KTPs

We will increase the number of active **KTPs to 36 by 2028/29**. KEIF will support internal and external promotion, impact case studies, and targeted engagement across Schools and sectors to scale participation and value.

Shift #4. Accelerate Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship

We will achieve **10 new spin-outs by 2028/29**, placing us in the UK top 5 for commercialisation. KEIF will grow our current deeptech pipeline (from 9 active projects in 2024/5 to 14), enable strategic investor engagement, and enhance licensing (~£300k p.a. target). We forecast £3.2m p.a. in venturing income by the end of the period, building on momentum since 2023/24 and growing levels of Enterprise Scheme awards (>£1M in 2024/5).

Shift #5. Embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

KEIF will support a more inclusive KE&I community through funding for EDI-focused events and partnerships with Heriot-Watt's diversity networks. Underrepresented groups gain entrepreneurial targeted experience through bespoke offerings of our flagship programmes like the Global Innovation Challenge and Entrepreneurial Minds, building on our successful female Entrepreneurs Programme.

Our targets are underpinned by data, including current income levels per academic FTE and our relative positions vs competitors in league tables.

With KEIF support, we will create a vibrant, inclusive and high-performing KE ecosystem. Resources will be strategically targeted to deliver national priorities—supporting high value growth sectors, fostering innovation, and enhancing Scotland's global competitiveness—while retaining flexibility through our central KE team to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

This will lead to a greater level of economic impact and prosperity that fosters entrepreneurship to enhance Scotland's economic impact and tax base. Through building these clusters on our Research Park we will drive significant local impact.

7. Graduate start-ups and spinouts/ Entrepreneurial Support

Heriot-Watt is committed to scaling a comprehensive entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports the creation, survival and scaling of start-ups and spin-outs. Our approach integrates internal capability and external partnership, aligned with the Scottish Government's innovation-led economic growth ambitions and the principles of *The Entrepreneurial Campus*.

Our vision is to become a globally leading entrepreneurial hub. We will leverage assets such as the GRID Innovation Hub, National Robotarium, and MDMC to foster interdisciplinary innovation and provide entrepreneurs with cutting-edge support. Our Global Research Institutes act as bridges between academia and industry, translating world-leading research into commercial applications—particularly in fields such as quantum, photonics, AI, and brewing and distilling.

Delivering Our Venturing Ambition

To reach our target of £3.2m p.a. in venturing income by 2028/29 and become a top 5 UK university for commercialisation, we will:

- Grow our deeptech spin-out pipeline from 9 to 14 active projects and increase enterprise scheme income (e.g. SE HGS, ICURe, SG PoC) from £1.7m to £5m p.a. We are already one of the highest performing institutions in securing funding through these routes and have an integrated spin out process.
- Launch 10 new spin-outs, including mid-tech 'lean start' ventures designed for rapid time-to-market and early revenue. While timescales for venture creation are inherently variable we have developed a strong pipeline which is mature and ready for the next stage.
- Strengthen leadership teams through our alumni and C-suite networks.
- Build strategic investor relationships and scale investor-readiness support.
- Expand licensing income to £300k p.a. via new interfaces with Business Development.
- Attract development of Research Park to create location opportunities for scale-up spin-outs and start-ups, encouraging active engagement with the emerging innovation ecosystems there.
- Leverage our global brand and campuses (e.g. Dubai, Malaysia) to support internationalisation.

Developing Entrepreneurial Minds

To sustain long-term impact, led by our Associate Principal for Enterprise, we will significantly grow entrepreneurial capacity across our community:

- Embed entrepreneurship in degree and doctoral programmes, offering alternative career pathways.
- Expand flagship programmes such as the Converge, Global Innovation Challenge and Entrepreneurial Minds.
- Partner with Tech Scaler, Barclays Eagle Labs, Stage Two, and ConceptionX to co-deliver accelerators and mentoring.
- Advance the EBS Incubator to provide practical support for academic-led and student-led ventures.
- Ensure inclusive access through EDI-aligned outreach and collaboration with internal diversity networks.

This evolution of our strategy—enabled by KEIF—will ensure that Heriot-Watt produces not only high-growth ventures, but also entrepreneurial graduates and researchers equipped to transform Scotland's economy.

Section D: Wider KE&I activities

8. Wider Societal Impact

Societal impact and economic benefit are central to KE&I at Heriot-Watt and sit at the heart of our research. A comprehensive and multifaceted strategy has been developed in partnerships with the Heriot Watt Engage team to grow further wider societal goals, based on proven KE&I approaches and innovative models of engagement and influencing.

Grow public engagement and outreach

Widen academic participation in the Edinburgh Science Festival, the Orkney Science Festival and the EPSRC IAA Impact Festivals.

Enhance awareness amongst academics of wider opportunities for participation in public engagement and outreach, and double 'institutional' participation in strategically significant festivals and events over 5 years.

Continue to grow collaborations with local schools, promoting inclusivity in entrepreneurship, which are crucial in supporting STEM education and reducing barriers for underrepresented groups.

Influence policy makers through active participation in key committees and thought leadership

Provide evidence-based insights to policymakers and contributing to discussions in both UK and Scottish Parliaments on topic ranging from Robotics, industrial decarbonisation, sustainable fisheries and homelessness and destitution.

Proactively influence shaping national robotics policy and education.

Engage in environmental projects and build on partnerships like the Islands Growth Deal and the Arctic partnerships demonstrates our commitment to biodiversity conservation and climate action.

Grow academic participation in industry bodies and regulators, expanding Heriot-Watt's impact footprint across its research domains.

Grow inward investment and build international partnerships

Using the Research Park as a catalyst for economic growth and engaging in regional economic partnerships to drive regional development.

Leverage campuses in Dubai and Malaysia to build international partnerships and expand strategic global influence.

9. Collaboration

Collaboration is central to our vision, and we are committed to building on our strong partnerships, particularly with Scottish Funding Council (SFC)-supported innovation infrastructure. Moving forward, we will continue to lead and expand these collaborations to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable growth.

Leading Converge Challenge nationally – A key pillar of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, driving high-value skills-building, new business creation and global market opportunities

Scotland's largest entrepreneurial programme, led and hosted by Heriot-Watt since 2011.

We aim to further enhance the support provided to university staff, students, and graduates by strengthening access to training, mentorship, networking, and funding.

Our ambition is to support even more spin-outs and start-ups to achieve sustainable success.

We will continue to expand this pipeline of high-growth companies, fostering further innovation through partnerships with the National Robotarium, GRID, and other university programmes.

Integrate Innovation Centre participation in strategic KEIF programmes – Optimising KE&I opportunities through partnering to open up new markets and drive business productivity

While we have a legacy of hosting innovation centres like CENSIS, we are focused on growing key partnerships.

Roll-out full alignment of Global Research Institutes and Innovation Centres such as emerging work of the Health and Care Technologies GRI with the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (IBioIC), Data Lab and the Digital Health Institute.

Expand activities of the National Robotarium and enhance its Scottish ecosystem connectivity, including with TechScaler and Barclays Eagle Labs.

Mainstream engagement with Interface in all Global Research Institutes and research hubs – identifying new market opportunities and driving business productivity

We will continue to champion Interface, enhancing business access to the innovation capabilities.

Build closer operational links with Research Pools to drive new KE&I opportunities – Creating an entrepreneurial culture, identifying new market opportunities, enhancing workforce skills

Improve integration of Research Pools into Global Research Institutes and research hubs.

Actively support and participate in regional economic development programmes – enhancing regional productivity and market opportunities, skills development and a fairer and more equal society.

Regionally, we will amplify our contributions to economic programmes in Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides and the Borders.

Through initiatives like the Islands Growth Deal, we will strengthen our alliances with the University of the Highlands and Islands and Robert Gordon University

We will extend these models to other regions, fostering inclusive growth and regional development.

Continued strategic and operational engagement with key public sector bodies and trade bodies – Facilitating entrepreneurial skills and enterprise creation, and delivering new market opportunities and more productive businesses

Looking ahead, we will deepen our engagement with Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Development International, and Chambers of Commerce, reinforcing our role in nurturing new ventures, spin-outs, and start-ups.

10. Regional approaches

Heriot-Watt is committed to leading regional development through strong partnerships with business, industry, and the public and third sectors. Our senior leadership actively contributes to shaping national and regional economic strategies, ensuring that our initiatives align with Scotland's long-term goals for sustainable growth.

Our Research Park is a strategic asset in our regional economic growth ambition and with KEIF support we increasingly leverage its capacity to support new ventures, themed clusters and strategic partnering. A key objective is to transform the park into a globally connected innovation district with on-site clusters actively connected to our GRIs and frontier research areas. These hubs will serve as active interchange for our cutting-edge research, attract global investment, and position Edinburgh as a leader in innovation and sustainability.

We will enhance partnerships with Higher and Further Education providers, both in Scotland and internationally. Successful collaborations, such as the Orkney Research and Innovation Campus (ORIC), exemplify how we can support local business growth alongside partners like Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Robert Gordon University.

In the Scottish Borders, we are working closely with the Borderlands Regional Growth Deal and Borders College to align our initiatives with the region's economic needs.

Through the Knowledge Exchange and Impact Framework (KEIF), we will deepen our engagement with regional partners, promoting innovation and leveraging additional investment. This forward-looking approach will allow us to deliver impactful solutions that drive sustainable economic development across Scotland.

Section E: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

11. Embedding and promoting EDI

Enterprising Researcher Community: By creating an inclusive community of researchers and innovators, set within a wider global entrepreneurial campus, we will build pathways

of engagement that foster an entrepreneurial mindset and capabilities.

Our approach to EDI will be guided by our institutional plan 'Equality Outcomes 2025-29'. We are compliant with SFC Outcome Agreement good practice through gaining Carer Positive Employer accreditation, plus hold Disability Confident status. Our Athena Swan progress extends to four institutional and departmental awards at Bronze and Silver-level.

We play a leadership role in the UKRI and British Academy funded EDI Caucus research project, which is focused on creating inclusive careers across the UK's research and innovation ecosystem. This puts us at the forefront of national EDI/R&D conversations. We are continuously learning from this and the evidence emerging from the project, to refine our approach to deliver inclusive growth in KE&I.

Key interventions:

- 1 Extend approach for student enterprise through the new Research Futures Hub development pathways to equip PGRs and ECRs with an entrepreneurial mindset
- 2 Co-design programme, with Staff Inclusion Networks to understand and overcome barriers to engagement for all genders and those with protected characteristics
- 3 Co-deliver programme, drawing on Converge, Interface and existing network in external innovation ecosystem
- 4 Extend approach to new mid-senior career development programme to ensure that researchers are equipped to embody an inclusive approach, drawing on GRI leadership and WattClub
- 5 Attract and leverage additional philanthropic funding for our global enterprising researcher community through the "Shaping Futures" Campaign
- 6 Understand baseline of participation in enterprise (KTPs, commercialisation, consultancy, collaborative R&D) and set stretching targets and evaluation criteria to ensure continual evolution of the programme.
- 7 Increase and maintain female academic leads in spin-out companies completed

An EIA has been undertaken. The Business & Enterprise Directorate will continue to work with leading academics in Diversity & Inclusion. This will be informed through engagement with the EDI Caucus led by Heriot-Watt.

Section F: KE&I Culture

13. Promoting positive KE&I culture



Building our inclusive enterprising researcher community is central to implementing the themes of our enterprising research culture action plan and implementing research-led good practice informed by the Heriot-Watt- led EDI Caucus’ work on Equity in Research and Innovation Careers.

As an impact-intensive global university, the pathways to enterprise, global partnerships and support for building capability that form part of our KEIF strategy are further incentivised by the culture action plan. Each theme will focus on integrating research and enterprise, to grow our community of researchers and innovators.

Over the next five years, we will enhance KE&I culture by focusing on engagement, inclusivity, enterprise, and effective communication across our global campuses. This will involve integrating entrepreneurs in residence, student ambassadors, and academic commercialisation champions to embed KE&I principles within our community.

KE&I Champions - Grow our network of KE&I champions, including entrepreneurs in residence, alumni, academics, commercialisation champions, and student ambassadors, to drive and advocate for best practices.

Training and Development - Enhance workshops and knowledge-sharing sessions with real-world insights, encouraging broader participation in KE&I activities through student ambassadors and academic champions.

Cross-Sector Collaboration - Prioritise academic-industry-investor engagement, supported by GRID, the National Robotarium, and our Centres for Doctoral Training.

Recognition and Reward - Enhance annual recognition and reward schemes to celebrate outstanding KE&I contributions. Expand our KE&I Career Pathway, building on recent promotion policy changes.

Marketing and Communications Strategy - Embed KE&I culture in our marketing strategy, showcasing the successes of our entrepreneurs, student ambassadors, and commercialisation champions to inspire and attract further engagement.

14. Knowledge Exchange Concordat principles

We confirm our commitment to following the principles of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat.

Section G: Any other information

Heriot-Watt is dedicated to enhancing inward investment, regional economic partnerships, international trade, and partnering with leading accelerator programmes to advance our KE&I impact beyond KEIF-supported activities.

Our global network of campuses, including those in the UAE and Malaysia, enable us to attract investors and build international partnerships. By collaborating with global organisations, we support the market entry of our spin-outs and start-ups, fostering international trade and investment.

Regionally, we engage in economic partnerships with development agencies, industry clusters, and local governments to drive economic growth, skills development, and employment, contributing to Scotland's knowledge economy.

We aim to grow targeted accelerator partnerships, aligned to our areas of strength, leveraging GRID, National Robotarium, Global Research Institutes and other key assets such as the Edinburgh Research Park. Leveraging our global reach, regional engagement, and targeted partnerships, we will create a positive and dynamic environment that drives innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic impact locally and internationally, aligned with the Government's vision for an innovation-led economy.

Section H: Court/Board approval

Please confirm that this KEIF strategy has been agreed at Court/Board level and provide date of approval.

I confirm that this KEIF strategy has been agreed at Court/Board level.

Signature:

Endorsed by the University Executive on 26th November 2024

Approved by the University Court on 5th December 2024

HWU Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

Name of Mechanism: Business Development & Commercialisation Services

1. Area overseeing EIA

Business & Enterprise

2. Lead Officer

Deputy Principal, Enterprise & Business

3. Date EIA started

13th January 2025

4. Is this a new or existing mechanism?

Existing mechanism, though subject to recent development and up-scaling.

5. Does the mechanism impact on people?

Yes, Business Development & Commercialisation Services are delivered to research active staff – all grades, full time and part time, permanent and fixed term. The IP Policy governs the process of commercialisation for all research active staff and how the proceeds to commercialisation are shared with inventors and enablers.

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

Business Development & Commercialisation Services aim to deliver impactful applications of university research outcomes in line with the University's strategic objectives of key strategic stakeholders in research and commercialisation including the UK Government, Scottish Government, UKRI and other research funders.

Commercialisation Service also deliver career opportunities to university staff and students, enhancing academic career paths and offering a high-value alternative career path to ECRs and students.

Business Development & Commercialisation Services also aims to deliver commercial income from the exploitation of research outcomes to the University and, in line with the IP Policy, to research academics involved.

The IP Policy defines the governance, procedural and financial contexts for the exploitation of research outcomes by the University.

7. Are there any associated objectives?

Specific objectives for Business Development & Commercialisation Services were set by the University in 2022, related to new AP2.0 funding and strategy, and in the KEIF (Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Fund Strategy) submission to the Scottish Funding Council in 2024.

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

Staff – commercialisation presents a multilayered opportunity for research active academics, including University recognition, parallel career opportunities (generally for mid and late stage academics), alternative career opportunities (generally for ECRs) and the opportunity for personal earnings as governed by the IP Policy.

The University/Schools – the University considers commercialisation outcomes as a key objective for Schools, aligned with the strategic objectives of key strategic stakeholders. Commercialisation outcomes represent excellent material for Impact Case Studies, for instance. Further, a proven culture encouraging commercialisation and entrepreneurship is valued by leading academics, for reasons mentions relating to Staff beneficiaries. And finally, commercialisation presents the opportunity to realise significant third-stream revenue, potentially over extended periods – directly through license royalty or indirectly through directly associated subsequent industry engagement relationships.

Key Strategic Stakeholders – commercialisation ranks as an important objective for the UK Government, Scottish Government, UKRI and other research funders, related to delivering societal and economic benefit from funded research outcomes.

9. Is any data available about the mechanism?

Analysis of HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) data demonstrates that the University is generating low income from consultancy in comparison to benchmarked institutions. The analysis also demonstrates a comparatively low level of staff engagement. The policy and its operationalisation seek to increase the University's performance, with a projected uplift in income as captured in the aforementioned KEIF submission.

There is no data readily available to determine whether or not the engagement of individuals from protected groups in undertaking consultancy is proportionately low. However, data by protected characteristic on staff accessing this policy is required to be monitored. It has been agreed that Business & Enterprise will provide staff contacts to the central HR EDI Team after 3 years of the policy being in operation. This will then inform monitoring analysis across staff diversity as part of future policy review.

10. How are you involving stakeholders/groups of interest in the EIA/development of the mechanism?

Business Development & Commercialisation Services are reported to:

- i The University Executive and University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI), which have cross institutional representation.
- ii Executive Deans and Associated Executive Deans for Enterprise.

The IP Policy was adopted after consultation with the University Executive, UCRI and Court.

The Consultancy Policy (currently pending final sign-off) has been through consultation with University Executive, Finance, UCRI, HR and is set to be signed off by Court.

11. What challenges have identified?

Adoption of Business Development & Commercialisation Services across the University is not consistent, with a small number of research areas responsible for a disproportionate percentage of commercialisation engagements.

12. Are there any specific concerns about differential impact on any of the Protected Characteristic groups (including BSL (British Sign Language) users) or other groups of interest¹?

Adoption of Business Development & Commercialisation Services and participation in commercialisation projects by female academics is known to be disproportionately low. Further, female academics are known to disengage from commercialisation projects at a disproportionately higher level than other academics.

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

Further work is ongoing. Female focused Business Development & Commercialisation Services have been developed and marketed and a female peer group is now actively managed by Business and Enterprise.

14. Can differential impact be justified based on positive action guidance?

Yes, as discussed and further work is ongoing.

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

Note, adoption of Business Development & Commercialisation Services is normally relatively low as it is a low volume high impact service offering. As such, whilst data collection is strong, data integrity is affected by the modest number of cases recorded.

i) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation

We will continue to deliver a high level of transparency and will be accompanied by reporting on the uptake of Business Development & Commercialisation Services and the application of the IP Policy.

ii) Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups

Further work will be undertaken to enhance the uptake of Business Development & Commercialisation Services and ongoing participation in commercialisation projects by female academics.

Ongoing review will be undertaken to identify systemic issues preventing uptake by particular groups.

A key component of the IP Policy is that it applies to all grades of research academics regardless of grade or status.

¹ The Protected Characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 are: Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Belief (including no belief), Sex, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy and Maternity, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership. For Heriot-Watt purposes, we include Deaf and/or Deafblind BSL users as a protected group. It maybe that the mechanism seeks to address other groups of interest e.g. access and inclusion

16. Date EIA Completed and date for future review of mechanism

22nd January 2025

17. Summary of EIA (2 paragraphs max) Note text stated will be published on our public EDI webpage for compliance

University Commercialisation is a key component within the mix of the University's knowledge transfer activities. It drives research impact and societal and economic benefit as well as generating a third stream of income into the University and for academics involved. Professional and career development opportunities for staff are also increased.

The IP Policy defines the governance, financial and procedural contexts for the delivery of Business Development & Commercialisation Services by the University, specifically relating to the commercialisation of IP. The EIA identifies that the Business Development & Commercialisation Services and the IP Policy reduce the likelihood of discrimination or prejudice.

Action 1: Business & Enterprise to engage with HR EDI Team to refine data collection on update of Business Development & Commercialisation Services and ongoing participation in commercialisation projects by academics with protected characteristic, BSL users and caring responsibilities.

Action 2: Ensure the appropriate signposts to the HR Policies webpage (unless it is published there) www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/human-resources/human-resources-policies.htm.

Action 3: Provide relevant data on adoption of Business Development & Commercialisation Services and ongoing participation in commercialisation projects to the EDI Team to include into the EIA Form.