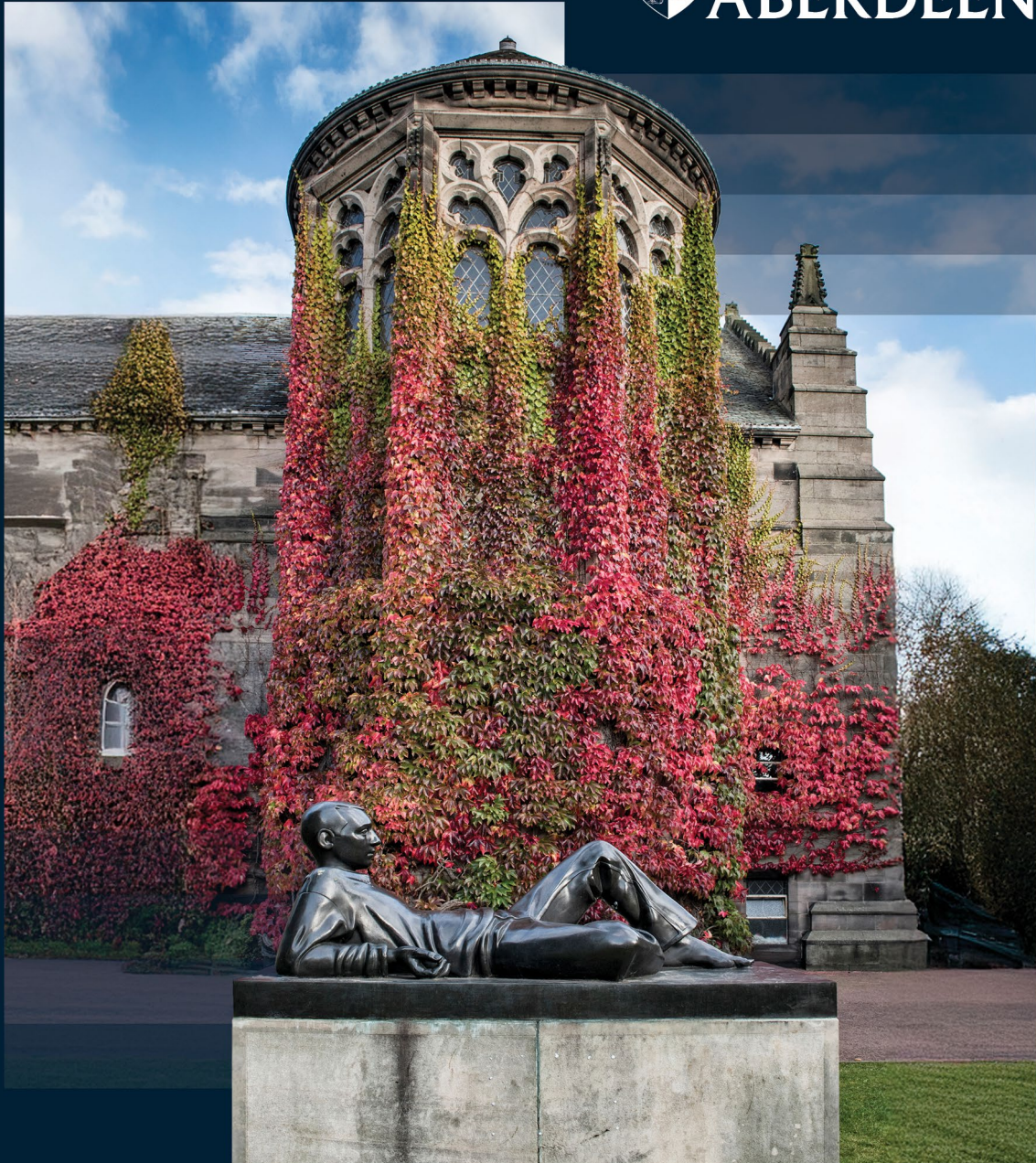


GO BEYOND BOUNDARIES



EST → 1495

# Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Fund Strategy

2025/26 – 2029/30

Institution: [University of Aberdeen](#)

## Section A: Overview

### 1. Institutional Context

Our institutional strategy 'Aberdeen2040' reaffirms the institution's foundational purpose to act 'in the service of others'. Key supporting commitments include the development of a research portfolio that promotes national and international collaboration with stakeholders, including companies; listening to and working with external stakeholders, regionally and globally, to build partnerships that deliver imaginative solutions to societal and industrial challenges. Aberdeen2040 prioritizes five challenges of our time: Energy Transition, Health, Nutrition & Wellbeing, Data & Artificial Intelligence, Environment & Biodiversity, and Social Inclusion & Cultural Diversity.

The NE Scotland Regional Economic Strategy acknowledges that the region is experiencing a period of profound economic change, with an economy previously dominated by oil and gas extraction transitioning to a new post fossil-fuel reality built upon economic diversification and a just energy transition. Several of the sectoral priorities identified by the Regional Economic Strategy also align with institutional strengths, namely: future green energy solutions, digital technology, food & drink and life sciences. Entrepreneurship and innovation are highlighted as key strategic enablers to drive growth in these sectors, with the University having a key role to play in supporting existing businesses to innovate and fostering creation of new companies.

Following the adoption of Aberdeen2040 in 2020, there has been a renewed emphasis on KE&I at the University, including appointment of a Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement in 2021 whose portfolio includes knowledge exchange and innovation. Institutional KPIs have been established to track performance, and work has already been completed to review and refresh relevant institutional policies (including spin-out equity arrangements).

### 2. Overview of Strategic Ambitions

Our approach to KE&I is enshrined in the University's Innovation Strategy Framework; this is organized around five themes: People, Platform, Process, Place and Partnership. These reflect our institutional ambitions to:

- enable our staff and students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset (People);
- invest in the enabling physical, human and digital infrastructure necessary to support innovation and entrepreneurship including business-university collaborations, startup and spin-out formation (Platform);
- ensure that our policies and procedures make business engagement simple and that we take a ‘founder friendly’ approach to new company creation (Process);
- adopt a place-based approach that aligns our innovation activity with the Regional Economic Strategy and other emerging place-based innovation priorities (Place);
- partner with regional and national organisations to deliver against our ambitions, avoiding duplication, and maximizing our resources (Partnership).

KEIF funding has enabled the University to dedicate resource in support of institutional ambitions aligned to national priorities, as follows:

- enhance entrepreneurial education across the curriculum and co-curriculum (including development of teaching materials, field trips, competitions and prizes);
- increase the number of spin-out companies created by the University and the number of startups created by students and staff (support for pre-accelerator and accelerator programme(s), entrepreneurs-in-residence, venture mentoring);
- increase engagement with industry through a variety of mechanisms including contract and collaborative research, consultancy, KTPs (investment in additional dedicated business engagement staff, innovation roundtables, masterclasses and hackathons, enterprise mentoring);
- provide support for wider societal impacts (public engagement events, policy engagement);
- continue our support for a range of national and regional KE&I initiatives (Converge, Interface, Regional Innovation-Driven Enterprises programme, Regional ICURE programmes).

At present, the University has very limited space on the main (King’s College) campus to support startup and spin-out companies, and there is no obvious entry-point for local businesses seeking to work with the University or to access a range of services. The King’s Innovation Quarter (KiQ) proposal envisions an area of the King’s College campus dedicated to enterprise and innovation activity. Anchoring the KiQ will be an Innovation Hub to act as a beacon for the University’s entrepreneurial campus and innovation capabilities; it will facilitate connections between researchers and businesses, provide support to develop and embed the entrepreneurial skills, capabilities, and mindset necessary to commercialise research, and act as a home for early-stage startups and spin-outs. We are in discussions



with Scottish Enterprise who have agreed to support the University in further developing the KiQ concept.

### 3. Alignment to Scottish Government Priorities

Our Strategy aligns with priorities in both the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and Scotland's National Innovation Strategy (NIS); it has also been designed to take account of the recommendations in the Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint report and the work already completed by the University to create an Entrepreneurial Campus Action Plan. By enhancing entrepreneurial education and co-curriculum opportunities, we will support the 'Entrepreneurial People & Culture' programme within NSET and specifically development of an entrepreneurial campus infrastructure for students and staff; we will also support the creation of more student/graduate startups and academic spin-outs through investment in training and development, accelerator programmes, and expansion of our entrepreneurs-in-residence programme (contributing directly to the Innovation-led Entrepreneurship and Commercialisation programme within NIS). This will include support for social enterprises (building on the success of our 'SparkingChange' pilot programme delivered in 24/25 in partnership with Aberdeen City Council and Converge) and targeted interventions for people from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds and communities.

Our Strategy also supports the 'New Market Opportunities' and 'Productive Businesses and Regions' NSET programmes by enhancing industry-academic engagement in key economic sectors that are relevant to both the national and regional economy - namely Energy Transition, Health & Life Sciences, Data & Digital Technologies and Food & Drink; it supports the ambition to enhance innovation diffusion and adoption. Specific KEIF interventions will include investment in professional services support to enhance business engagement, industry-focused innovation roundtables, masterclasses and hackathons, building on enterprise mentoring experience gained to pilot a scheme for academics.

## Section B. KE&I Capacity

### 4. Platform Grant

The Platform Grant is being used to enhance KE&I capacity through the appointment of additional team members within the Directorate of Research and Innovation to grow the level of business engagement and industry partnerships across the Energy, Health & Life Sciences, and Digital sectors (3 FTE in total); further investment is also planned in a senior

role to lead the activity. Platform Grant support has also enabled the development and operation of a new Engagement CRM tool - to better manage industry relationships.

To support the creation of new businesses and their investor readiness, the Platform Grant is used to deliver the ICURe pre-accelerator, mentoring, Entrepreneurs-in-Residence, support for Converge Challenge and student enterprise programmes. Protection of intellectual property is also supported by the Platform Grant to help underpin the creation of the spin-out pipeline.

The University of Aberdeen confirms that it will match fund the Platform Grant, and that additional resource will be used to support improvements in KE&I, particularly relating to contract research and formation of innovation-driven enterprises.

## 5. Overall Capacity for KE&I

The University has established structures to demonstrate its commitment to enterprise and innovation, focusing on leadership and operational roles aligned with its strategy and goals. These structures include new governance frameworks for monitoring KE&I performance.

There are 9.95 FTE staff directly supported by KEIF, with additional academic school-based staff having KE&I as a significant part of their role. Teams currently supported by KEIF are: Technology Transfer & Entrepreneurship (4 FTE), Public Engagement (1.95 FTE), Business Development Executives (3 FTE) and a Consultancy Officer (1 FTE). These KEIF-supported staff provide the human capital needed to support an active pipeline of spin-out opportunities, to accelerate their development, to support student entrepreneurship and student startups, to provide a varied programme of public engagement events, to facilitate collaboration between researchers and industry and to respond to industry requirements for R&D and bespoke specialist advice. Additionally, there are 5.3 FTEs dedicated to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Services underpinned by University resources.

The recent appointment of three specialist Business Development Executives to cover the Energy, Health & Life Sciences, and Digital sectors demonstrates the utility of KEIF as a mechanism to target resource to meet institutional (and wider regional) priorities.

Leadership roles with significant KE&I involvement include the Vice-Principal Regional Engagement (0.5 FTE), Dean for Enterprise and Innovation (0.5 FTE), Dean for Entrepreneurship and Employability (0.25 FTE), and Director of Research & Innovation (0.50 FTE). Each of the University's twelve academic schools has an Enterprise and Innovation Champion, totalling approximately 1.2 FTE.

The Director of Research & Innovation leads teams with KE&I as their focus (as described above), along with other teams whose activities interface with KE&I, namely Impact Support (3.6 FTE) and Contracts Advisors (3.2 FTE). The University of Aberdeen also employs dedicated staff with KE&I roles in the North of Scotland KTP Centre; this Centre is supported jointly by Robert Gordon University, the universities of Dundee and Abertay and UHI (3 FTEs employed by Aberdeen, 5.2 FTEs in total). An Enterprise Executive supported by Converge (1 FTE) is hosted by the University of Aberdeen and works across RGU, UHI, Dundee and Abertay.

Professional services staff with strong KE&I roles are also present in academic schools, including business development and public engagement roles in the Business School, Rowett Institute, and Elphinstone Institute.

## Section C: Outcome Grant activities

### 6. KE Metric Activity

As noted above, the University has developed an Innovation Strategy Framework, organised around five themes: People, Platform, Process, Place and Partnership; implementation of specific actions under each of these themes will support our ambition to grow KE&I activity. Prior to the introduction of KEIF, the University of Aberdeen Court had already approved a series of strategic institutional KE&I objectives and associated metrics that are similar to the metric data used in the KEIF funding model, with the notable distinction that the latter uses three-year survival rates, rather than the number of company formations. Going forward, it is our intention to align institutional and KEIF KPIs.

The University's strategy is to increase industry engagement activity and partnership working (driving increases in contract research, consultancy, and CPD) with a particular focus on the growth sectors identified in the Regional Economic Strategy. While forecasts for consultancy and contract research are based on year-on-year growth from the 23/24 baseline, that year was an exceptional one for CPD, and forecasts for that metric therefore use the 20/21 – 23/24 median as a baseline. To increase collaboration with industry and to meet these targets, the University has recently invested in a CRM system to track and report on engagement with industry and has used KEIF support to recruit three Business Development Executives (BDEs) focusing on Energy, Health & Life Sciences and Digital. These are areas of research strength for the University and key sectors in the Scottish Government's National Innovation Strategy.

Additionally, the University aims to increase the number of KTP projects and proposes that this should be one of our additional institutional KPIs. The three additional KEIF-supported BDEs combined with the University's ongoing support of the North of Scotland KTP Centre will be key in meeting these targets and increasing income reported via the KEIF Outreach metric.

Enterprise Schemes include income from Innovate-UK and other grants to fund enterprise. We have proposed year-on-year growth in income based on the 20/21 – 23/24 median value, with a particular focus on growing Innovate-UK awards with industry. The remaining income-based KE metrics display significant levels of year-on-year variation; our forecasts for Licensing, Translation and Venturing are therefore based on the 20/21 - 23/24 median value and target an increase in activity over the five-year period.

To drive growth in spin-out activity, we have recently revised our Intellectual Property, Equity and Revenue Sharing Policy in line with best practice to incentivise entrepreneurship and translation. We are targeting growth in both the number of new spin-outs and staff and student startups, and those still active after three years (with details of KEIF and other support for these ambitions discussed more fully under Q7); additional supporting institutional metrics for new company creation (including social enterprises) are included in our forecasts.

Each of our 12 academic Schools have set individual targets that will directly impact upon SFC KE metric areas. Professional services teams dedicated to support KE&I activity will also have targets for the above in proportion to the University's overall targets.

## 7. Graduate Startups and Spin-outs/Entrepreneurial Support

The University recently conducted a sector benchmarking exercise which indicated that there was scope for us to grow the number of new companies created, both graduate startups and academic spin-outs; our ambition as indicated in the forecast data is to increase the number of spin-outs surviving for three years to 24 by 28/29 (from a 23/24 baseline of 14) and surviving graduate startups to 20 (from a baseline of 8).

The University's Innovation Strategy Framework emphasises the importance of encouraging and supporting such activity by enabling our students and staff to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, and by investing in the enabling physical, human and digital infrastructure necessary to support innovation and entrepreneurship; to aid in the development of an entrepreneurial action plan we have completed an institutional self-assessment exercise that considered the recommendations in the Entrepreneurial Campus

Blueprint (ECB) report through our specific regional (as well as national) context. Entrepreneurial Support is provided through the Technology Transfer and Entrepreneurship Team (itself part-funded via KEIF). Priority initiatives to be supported by KEIF are as follows:

- Expansion of training for academic and research staff on a range of KE&I matters including intellectual property, licensing, routes to commercialisation.
- Delivery of intellectual property protection services to spin-outs.
- Implementation of further credit-bearing entrepreneurship courses/programmes and integration with various co-curricular activities including the existing Lightbulb student entrepreneur competition, microfinance funding for graduate startups, student entrepreneurship ambassadors, networking events. The University will use a 'funnel' approach – offering large numbers of students training in entrepreneurial thinking and ideation, then providing more tailored support for those who want to develop an idea and start a business.
- Development and delivery of a student accelerator programme, open to all, but with fast-track entry for 'graduates' of our annual Lightbulb competition. It is intended that promising teams/innovations will progress as applicants to one of the Converge challenges.
- Expansion of the existing network of entrepreneurs-in-residence (several of whom have been supported via the Royal Society, including a successful application and renewal in 2024) to cover a broader range of academic disciplines, including SHAPE.
- Creation of an alumni venture mentoring programme to provide support to staff, student and graduate entrepreneurs.
- Expanded support for the ICURe pre-accelerator programme across the region.
- Continued support for regional innovation-driven enterprise initiatives (in partnership with RGU, Opportunity North East, Scottish Enterprise, Energy Transition Zone Ltd.) – including participation in the MIT Entrepreneurship Development Programme, Regional Venture Mentoring Service and sector-specific initiatives, including the ETZ Energy Incubator and Scale Up Hub. Ensuring that early-stage staff and student businesses are introduced to (and embedded within) the wider regional ecosystem is an important element of our strategy to enhance company survival rates.
- Continued support for and participation in national programmes, including Converge (see Q9).

To address underrepresentation and promote inclusivity, the following will be prioritised:

- Encouraging entrepreneurship in female staff and students, particularly in STEM startups where women entrepreneurs generally are underrepresented.



- Encouraging Early Career Research staff to participate in and lead KE&I activities, with specific actions detailed in our Researcher Development Concordat commitments.

As early-stage funding is often the most significant challenge faced by graduate startups and student spin-outs, the University is working with donors to develop a new approach to venture philanthropy. The 1495 Venture Fund will initially comprise two sub-funds: the Student Enterprise Fund will seed-fund student-led enterprises and equip students from across the University with experiential learning opportunities; the Global Challenge Fund will support academic-led, early-stage, startup or spin-out activity aligned to Health & Life Sciences, and Energy & Climate Change.

## Section D: Wider KE&I activities

### 8. Wider Societal Impact

Achieving wider societal impact and economic value from our KE&I activities is of key importance to the University, as part of our foundational purpose to be 'in the service of others'. The following dedicated professional services teams support such activities: Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU), Public Affairs, Stakeholder Engagement & Events (PASE), and Impact Support.

PERU manages the programme of activities for public engagement with researchers, leading the EU-funded Explorathon project, Doors Open Day, and Café Sci events; it is a founding member of the Scottish Public Engagement Network (ScotPEN). In FY23/24, our public engagement events attracted over 6385 members of the public and involved over 160 researchers. PERU also provides training for researchers to enable meaningful engagement with communities. In 2025, the University is co-hosting the biennial Public Communication with Science and Technology Conference.

The PASE team supports the University and its researchers in influencing policy and engaging with stakeholders, including local and national government, charities, cultural organisations, and local communities. The team partners with the annual Festival of Politics at the Scottish Parliament, hosts VIP visits and roundtable discussions, and holds an annual parliamentary showcase of our research. The PASE team also provides bespoke advice to academics for government consultations or parliamentary inquiries.

Enabled by KEIF support, the Impact and PASE teams support researchers to build their skills and knowledge, enhancing two-way engagement with policymakers, government bodies and other agencies involved in public policy development. The University works with the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange, coordinating knowledge exchange between academics and policy communities to improve how research evidence and expertise interacts with and shapes policy. This activity increasingly includes a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion to facilitate representation of early career researchers and to increase the diversity of researchers engaging with the policy community by ‘demystifying’ the KE process.

Our interdisciplinary Just Transition Lab exemplifies the approach of delivering societal impact in partnership with communities, industry and government. The Lab's researchers work at the forefront of Just Transition challenges, employing action and participatory research to facilitate insightful policy analysis and engagement with key stakeholders. Recent projects include: ‘Advancing community climate deliberative participatory democracy in Scotland’, ‘Measuring a Just Transition’, and ‘Just Transition in an energy city: exploring the role of civil society’.

The University is an active member of the Aberdeen Community Planning Partnership, and researchers regularly contribute their expertise to Local Outcome Improvement Groups, helping to transform the lives of citizens. As a partner in the NIHR-funded Aberdeen Health Determinants Research Collaborative (AHDRC) we are working closely with Aberdeen City Council (ACC) and NHS Grampian to better understand the social determinants of health; a key ambition of the AHDRC, and one that the University is actively supporting, is to establish and promote a positive research culture within ACC and to support ACC staff members to engage confidently with research.

## 9. Collaboration

Working in partnership with others in the innovation ecosystem is of particular importance to the University's E&I strategy, highlighted by the *Partnership* and *Place* themes. We will continue to work with those Innovation Centres that are most relevant to our strategic focus and ambitions, namely The DataLab, the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre, and the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre. As an illustration, we work closely with the DataLab through their presence in the Opportunity North East (ONE) TechHub in Aberdeen, running joint events, promoting industry-academic collaboration and showcasing funding opportunities – and these will continue.

We will continue to actively engage with Interface to increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for University services. We will encourage academic engagement with the funding opportunities made available by Interface, including Innovation Vouchers (Student Placement, Standard, Advanced), and the Inward Investment Catalyst Fund, and explore more strategic initiatives when opportunities arise.

The University has been a supporter of Converge from its inception and we continue to value the role it plays in creating a community and providing opportunity to our spin-outs and startups, while also putting a spotlight on enterprise creation in Scottish HEIs. As noted above, Aberdeen hosts one of the Converge Enterprise Executives who works across the universities of Aberdeen, Dundee and Abertay, RGU and UHI. Recently, we worked closely with Converge to deliver the UKSPF-funded 'SparkingChange' social entrepreneurship programme and our ambition is to continue this partnership in the future.

The University is also engaged with the new SFC-funded Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EiR) network. Our EiRs and Dean for Enterprise and Innovation are virtual community members and are registered to attend in-person events for EiRs, and those in related roles, commencing January 2025.

We will continue to participate in and provide support to the collaboration structures that were put in place under UIF including the Enterprise Support Group and similar networks for IP Commercialisation and Business Development.

In terms of the wider Scottish Government funded KE&I ecosystem, we see Techscaler as an important partner and will continue to promote their programmes such as 'Startup Basics', 'First Steps' and 'Next Steps' and will explore ways to collaborate further.

We have a long-term partnership with the Scottish and UK Government funded Net-Zero Technology Centre (NZTC) based in Aberdeen. Support from NZTC was critical in establishing the National Decommissioning Centre – a hub for research and innovation activities in late life asset management, decarbonisation, and decommissioning; the Centre partners with fishing, marine, safety and environment organisations in the UK and internationally, including the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult and Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Funded by the UK and Scottish Governments, Energy Transition Zone (ETZ) Ltd is a private sector not-for-profit company based in Aberdeen and focused on the creation of an integrated energy cluster that helps to accelerate delivery of net zero. ETZ is constructing an Energy Incubator and Scale Up Hub (EISH) on its innovation campus, and the University is working closely with ETZ to ensure that we maximise this opportunity. KEIF support will be vital in ensuring institutional engagement with EISH, including events such as industry-

academic roundtables, provision of mentoring and support for green energy startups and spin-outs.

## 10. Regional Approaches

The University already plays an active role in the region, through its membership of the North East Scotland Regional Economic Partnership, the Aberdeen City Region Deal Joint Committee, and the Board of Opportunity North East (the private-sector led regional economic development organisation). We are also currently engaged in the development of the NE Scotland Investment Zone (as a co-signatory) and the NE Scotland Regional Innovation Action Plan (led by Innovate-UK and Scottish Enterprise); the Investment Zone includes proposals to enhance business-university engagement and entrepreneurial activity. The recent announcement by UK government that Great British Energy's headquarters will be in Aberdeen clearly presents us with a strategic opportunity and one that we are actively exploring.

As outlined above (Q7) we already work closely with regional partners to support the innovation-driven enterprise ecosystem and will continue to do so. We also co-host the North of Scotland KTP Centre that provides a shared service to several institutions. During 2024 we co-funded delivery of the NE Scotland ICURe Discover programme in partnership with Innovate-UK and Opportunity North East; this programme was available to researchers across the region, and our ambition is to utilise KEIF to expand support for ICURe and similar programmes. We recently launched 'SparkingChange' – a social entrepreneurship programme for economically-inactive citizens (including students); the initial pilot was funded via UKSPF, and our intention is to utilise KEIF support for this activity in the future.

During the five-year period of this Strategy it is our intention to explore the provision of services to other tertiary institutions across our region, leveraging our knowledge and experience in supporting innovation-driven spin-outs and startups.

## Section E: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

### 11. Embedding and Promoting EDI

Our 'Aberdeen 2040' strategy commits the University to be 'open to all' in keeping with its foundational purpose; our commitment to inclusion guides our education, our research, and our KE&I activities. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is also central to the *People* strand



within our Innovation Strategy Framework and its commitment to ‘promote opportunities for all’. We are proud to support Athena Swan and Race Equality Charters and our KE&I activities take account of the principles enshrined in the University’s overarching Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

In March 2024, we held our inaugural StartHER conference to bring women founders together to focus on the challenges featuring female founders and women’s entrepreneurship with c. 50 participants; our intention is to make this an annual event.

The University is cognisant of its requirements under data protection legislation in collecting information on participants in KE&I activities. It also approaches EDI advancement by identifying and removing barriers, making its resources and activities as readily available as possible to all staff and students.

We welcome the development of national EDI measures, as this should help ensure that data collection is standardized across institutions, allowing for collation of national and regional datasets and institutional benchmarking. We suggest that in addition to routine EDI information, postcode data should also be captured (to identify participants from possible areas of deprivation). EDI measures should focus on the following: receipt of microfinance funding; startup company founders; spin-out company founders; intellectual property filings; accelerator participation; involvement in KTP or Innovation Voucher projects.

## 12. EIA

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and was included with our KEIF Strategy submission.

## Section F: KE&I Culture

### 13. Promoting Positive KE&I Culture

Considerable work has been undertaken within the past 24 months to support a positive KE&I culture at the University, with a particular emphasis on enhancing recognition and reward (Principle 6 of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat). This included revisions to academic promotion criteria to explicitly recognise engagement, innovation and impact; changes to revenue sharing arrangements to make these more generous to inventors; changes to spin-out equity terms to make these more founder-friendly by reducing the stake taken by the institution; introduction of additional excellence awards for engagement

with industry, public engagement and research impact. Other changes include the introduction of Enterprise & Innovation Champions in every academic school to promote KE&I activities to staff and students; inclusion of 'entrepreneurship' as a specific core skill within the MySkills framework used by students.

We hold monthly 'Start Here Breakfasts' on campus for staff/students, ecosystem partners and Entrepreneurs in Residence, who also run clinics and events to raise the profile of and support enterprise activities. A refreshed entrepreneurial curriculum will be introduced from September 2025, open to all students. We are also broadening the range of sectors that our Entrepreneurs in Residence are drawn from, with the first appointment from the SHAPE sector in 24/25.

Plans include expansion of training and development opportunities for students and staff; development of a communications strategy to celebrate KE&I successes; creation of a network of student entrepreneurial ambassadors; targeted interventions to support staff and students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. Suggested measures: number of graduates reporting that they are running their own business (Graduate Outcomes survey); proportion of REF impact case studies referencing new company creation; number of industry partnerships (HE-BCI).

#### 14. Knowledge Exchange Concordat Principles

The University of Aberdeen confirms its commitment to the Guiding Principles of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat.

#### 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.

Agreed by Court/Board on 23/1/25

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Impact Assessment**

### **Title of Policy, Procedure, or Function:**

Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Fund Strategy

**School/Directorate:** Directorate of Research & Innovation

### **Author/Position:**

Research & Innovation

**Version Date:** January 2025

## **1. Aims & Purpose of Strategy**

The University of Aberdeen receives funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to fund its knowledge exchange and innovation (KE&I) activities under the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF). The University has developed a five-year KEIF Strategy under the leadership of the Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement. The KEIF Strategy will be subject to approval by the University Court Commercialisation Committee on behalf of the University Court.

The University has completed this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Impact Assessment as part of the development of its KEIF Strategy which is itself framed by the institution's Innovation Strategy Framework which has the following ambitions:

- To enable our staff and students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset
- To invest in the enabling physical, human and digital infrastructure necessary to support innovation and entrepreneurship including business-university collaborations and startup and spin-out formation
- To ensure that our policies and procedures make business engagement simple and that we take a 'founder-friendly' approach to new company creation
- To adopt a place-based approach that aligns our innovation activity with the Regional Economic Strategy and other emerging place-based innovation priorities
- To partner with regional and national organisations to deliver against our ambitions, avoiding duplication, and maximizing our resources.

The KEIF Strategy outlines how KEIF funding will be used to support institutional ambitions by providing resource to:

- enhance entrepreneurial education across the curriculum and co-curriculum
- increase the number of spin-out companies created by the University and the number of startups created by students and staff
- increase engagement with industry through a variety of mechanisms including contract and collaborative research, consultancy, KTPs
- continue our support for a range of national and regional KE&I initiatives

## **2. Stakeholders**

The key stakeholders for the KEIF Strategy are employees, students and recent graduates of the University of Aberdeen.

For staff and current students, the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) will apply.

Other stakeholders are:

- recent graduates seeking support for startups
- representatives of businesses that the University collaborates with
- representatives of other organisations that the University works with to support entrepreneurship
- the public for e.g. public engagement events
- local councils and national government employees and elected officials
- participants in workshops or training or CPD events

The University undertakes extensive evaluation of many of its activities falling under KE&I on a routine basis, usually as a condition of funding.

SFC, as funder, is a key stakeholder and University will report annually to SFC to provide oversight of the University's activities to meet the ambitions of the KEIF Strategy.

## **3. Additional Consultation/Involvement**

No further consultation and involvement has taken place. However, we aim to continue to undertake consultation with University staff, students and recent graduates to ensure that delivery of the KEIF Strategy is in line with this Impact Assessment.

## **4. Monitoring**

An impact monitoring plan will be developed during the first year of operation of the KEIF Strategy and will be developed in consultation with the key stakeholders identified above, namely University staff, students and recent graduates.

Monitoring and reporting against specific activities will be the responsibility of teams within Research & Innovation and academic Schools that are responsible for delivering those activities covered by the KEIF Strategy.

As noted above, the University will report to SFC on an annual basis.

Monitoring during the period of the KEIF Strategy will allow the University to revise activities and adjust priorities to meet the requirements

As noted above, the University routinely carries out evaluation of programmes and events inviting feedback that will enable the University to make changes to future activities to prevent avoidable negative impacts.



## 5. Impact Assessment

Protected Characteristic Group	Potential for positive or negative impact	Explanation and evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact
Age	No known negative impact		
British Sign Language (BSL)	Potential for negative impact	Potential for negative impact may arise from difficulty accessing materials	KEIF Strategy activities will follow University policies for accessibility
Care-experienced or estranged	No known negative impact		
Disability (impact may differ according to physical, cognitive, and mental health conditions)	Potential for negative impact	Potential for negative impact may arise from difficulty accessing events, training, materials	KEIF Strategy activities will follow University policies for accessibility. Closed captioning can be provided for hearing-impaired. Sessions can be recorded if appropriate.
Gender reassignment	No known negative impacts		
Marriage and civil partnerships	No known negative impacts		
Neurodivergent	Potential for negative impact	Potential negative impacts may arise from difficulties in concentrating	Build breaks into agenda for events and workshops. Sessions may be recorded.
Non-binary	No known negative impacts		
Parents and carers	Potential for negative impact	Timing of activities may prevent parents and carers from participating	Where possible, schedule activities within working hours. Avoid scheduling activities during school holiday periods.
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential for negative impact	Potential difficulties in participating in activities during pregnancy and early years childcare	Offer access via Teams or record sessions where appropriate.
Race	No known negative impact		
Religion or belief	No known negative impact		Activities take place outwith religious

			holidays where possible
Sex	No known negative impact		
Sexual orientation	No known negative impact		
Socio-economic group	Potential for positive impact	KE&I activities offer opportunities for participants from all socio-economic groups to engage in enterprise and entrepreneurship	

Activities supported under the KEIF Strategy will encourage University of Aberdeen students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset which should be advantageous for their futures after graduation. It will also encourage business startups among students and graduates, including social enterprises in addition to for-profit startups.

Activities delivered under the KEIF Strategy are also likely to result in business startups (staff and/or students) involving teams of people with different protected characteristics.

## 6. Publication

This assessment will be published together with the University of Aberdeen's KEIF Strategy by the Scottish Funding Council, so it does not require publication internally.

## 7. Review Date: 31 January 2026

Author (name and position):

Author's signature:

## 8. Date of Submission to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

**Date: To be confirmed**

Approval (please highlight as appropriate)

Yes          No