



Abertay  
University®

## INTERIM 2020 – 2021

January 2021

### Annexes:

Annex A Interim National Measures Table

OUTCOME AGREEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

This interim outcome agreement for 2020-21 sets out the ways in which Abertay University will continue to contribute to the national aims and priorities for higher education in Scotland during and beyond the current emergency situation. It builds on our existing outcome agreement for 2019-22 and has been developed in the context of our new Strategic Plan 2020-25 and associated operational plan.

This interim outcome agreement builds on our existing strengths. We would like to highlight in particular:

- Our continued commitment to, and strong performance in, widening access to higher education. 27% of our 2020-21 Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants came from SIMD20 postcode areas, or experienced educational disadvantage (as recognised by our contextual admissions policy) prior to coming to Abertay – only slightly down from 28% in 2019/20.
- The continued high levels of articulation with full credit into our undergraduate programmes, with 23% of our Scottish-domiciled entrants articulating with full credit onto years 2 or 3 of an Abertay degree in 2020-21.
- Our continued commitment to equality and diversity: as of 2020, we remain the only university in Scotland to achieve the Race Equality Charter Mark and we have a well-developed, multi-stranded Mainstreaming Equalities agenda.
- Our rapid, effective response to the coronavirus pandemic, ensuring continued delivery to and support of our students during this challenging time, with essential campus-based teaching activities taking place in line with social distancing guidance, and research that has to be conducted on campus continuing with additional risk assessments undertaken.

## Fair access and transitions

Improving access to higher education and continuing to ensure that we recruit students from a diverse range of backgrounds remain priorities for Abertay. Our approach to access to education reflects the strong sense of social mission felt by the Abertay community, and our focus on social mobility in our strategic plan. Our Strategic Plan 2020-25 emphasises our commitment to offering transformational opportunities to those who have the ability to benefit from Abertay's approach to education, by providing a range of routes to an Abertay degree and by supporting students and graduates to reach their full potential. Our dedicated Widening Access and College Recruitment Officer supports engagement with a diverse community of prospective students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, including engagement with community learning teams.

### Deprivation and educational disadvantage

In 2019-20 17% of our Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants came from the 20% most deprived postcode areas, rising from 15% in the previous year. The provisional figure for 2020-21 indicates a marginal fall to 16%. 33% of our entrants were from the 40% most deprived postcode areas in 2019-20, with this remaining at the same level in 2020-21.

We introduced a contextual admissions policy for students entering Abertay from 2014-15 onwards. This allows us to identify applicants who have experienced educational disadvantage prior to applying to Abertay. The criteria we take into consideration include participating in a recognised higher education widening access programme; spending time in care; or a combination of other criteria including: attending a low progression school, living in an SIMD40 area, having parents or guardians who have not participated in HE, or having experienced serious disruption to formal education.

We actively promote this policy and the associated access thresholds through local educational networks and via our prospectus and website. All of our course information on our website encourages applicants who expect to pass three Highers to submit an application, and our prospectus lists the minimum grade requirements for each course.

In 2019-20, 20% of our entrants met the criteria to be eligible for a contextual offer, with only around 40% this group coming from SIMD20 postcodes. In 2019-20, 16 entrants had care experience and in 2020-21 this has provisionally increased to 20 (1.7% of total intake). In 2020-21 20% of entrants met the criteria, of whom 40% were from SIMD20 postcodes, confirming that basing this measure on postcode alone does not capture the full range of disadvantage.

Due to the educational disruption likely to have been suffered by applicants due to the coronavirus crisis, we took the decision for entry in 2020-21 to confirm offers to all applicants who reached the access threshold for their chosen programme. This decision also helped to minimise the disruption caused by the changes in the SQA exam results, as many students who may have had lower than expected grades in the original set of SQA results would still have had their offer of a place confirmed in early August.

**Taken together, contextual entrants and SIMD20 entrants accounted for 28% of our Scottish-domiciled undergraduate intake in 2019-20 and 27% in 2020-21.**

National measure	2018-19 baseline	2019-20 actual	2020-21 actual
CoWA measure: proportion of full-time first degree SDUEs from SIMD20 postcodes	15.1%	16.6%	16.3%

While it is reassuring that we have been able to maintain and even improve our recruitment of students from SIMD20 areas since 2018-19, further improvement is likely to be challenging given a) strong recent competition between institutions to attract and recruit from this limited population and b) the comparatively small number of SIMD20 areas in north-east Scotland and the comparatively high number of locally available university places. This challenge is likely to be exacerbated as those institutions not currently meeting their own SIMD20 recruitment targets increase their efforts to do so.

## Articulation & pathways

In 2020-21, as with previous years, around a third (32%) of our Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants joined Abertay in year 2 or 3 of their degree programme. This reflects our commitment to articulation and to offering a range of routes to an Abertay degree. It also reflects the model of progression we operate with our partner colleges (Dundee and Angus College and Fife College), with the expectation that there are clear articulation routes and automatic progression with no additional grade requirements to Abertay degrees for students passing their HNDs at partner colleges. In June 2019 we expanded this progression model to include Al-Maktoum College, and work is underway to incorporate Forth Valley College. Working in partnership with Dundee & Angus College, we have also mapped progression routes for Foundation Apprenticeships.

As well as our local partner colleges, we also work with colleges across Scotland to support articulation. We offer a wide range of articulation routes across our degree programmes to support transition through the learner journey. The full range of articulation routes is publicised on our website - <https://www.abertay.ac.uk/study-apply/how-to-apply/entry-from-college/>

27% (295) of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2019-20 articulated to year 2 or 3 of a degree programme with full credit, with a further 7% (81) entering year 2 or year 3 with partial credit. 57% of entrants with an HN qualification received full credit for their qualification.

Our data for 2020-21 shows that 23% (271) of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants articulated with full credit and a further 9% (104) with partial credit, and that 48% of HN entrants received full credit for their qualification. This fall in articulation levels may partly be due to educational disruption resulting from the pandemic affecting the performance of HN students (for example, we know that placements for students taking HNs in Care & Administration were suspended as a result of the pandemic). We also saw an increased intake of direct applicants via Clearing, where students may be more likely to possess HN qualifications unrelated to their eventual course of study.

National measure	2018-19 baseline	2019-20 actual	2020-21 actual
Proportion of Scotland-domiciled HN entrants articulating with Advanced Standing	56.1%	56.6%	47.5%

Our 2020-25 strategic plan reaffirms our commitment to offering a range of routes to an Abertay degree, and to continuing to work with our college partners to ensure a smooth and successful transition to Abertay.

## Transitions and support

Ensuring students enjoy a successful transition to Abertay and are supported during the course of their degree are priorities for Abertay. A comprehensive programme of support is in place to support all students through the admissions and entry phases, and throughout their period of study. In addition to this, our support team proactively engage with students disclosing looked-after status or a disability on their application or at registration. Routine contact is made with students from looked-after backgrounds in their first semester to check on their early progress and to remind them of assistance

Data for retention of 2018-19 entrants into 2019-20 shows that retention of SIMD20 entrants was lower than overall SDUE retention, at 80% against 85% overall. Retention of care experienced students was lower than the average at 73%, although the cohort is small (11 students). Retention of articulating students was higher than the average at 87% (92% among those who articulated with full credit). Latest data for the retention of 2019-20 entrants into 2020-21 indicates an overall SDUE retention rate of 86%, with retention of SIMD20 entrants again below the average at 78%. The position for articulating students appears to have reversed, with 80% of those students articulating with full credit being retained.

### **Support for care experienced students**

In addition to recognising in our admissions process the context in which care-experienced applicants have achieved their qualifications, the University remains committed to supporting students from care backgrounds throughout their studies. In addition to financial support which may be available from SAAS, the University also offers a Care Experienced Bursary of £1500 per academic year to care-experienced students, and our support team proactively engage with students disclosing looked-after status on their application or on registration. Routine contact is made with students from looked-after backgrounds in their first semester to check on their early progress and to remind them of assistance available.

Abertay is also a formal partner in Breakthrough, a charity supported by DC Thomson to support care experienced young people to achieve. We have agreed:

- We will promote opportunities for Abertay students and staff to become Breakthrough mentors (one hour per week during school term), particularly if they are care experienced themselves.
- We will liaise with Breakthrough on initiatives to encourage their care experienced young people to have ambitions to think of HE as an achievable aim. We will do this through taster sessions/visit days to Abertay throughout the year.
- We will work with Breakthrough to promote our contextual admissions policy supporting guidance teachers to understand this to support enhanced careers advice to care experienced young people.
- The Robertson Trust and Abertay University will support two Breakthrough students to attend Abertay with a full scholarship package (£4,000 per year of study plus additional support.)

The University published its [Corporate Parenting Report \(2015-2018\) and Plan \(2018-21\)](#) in March 2018. This confirms our commitment to supporting students with experience in care throughout their studies.

### **Support for disabled students**

As with students from a care background who may require additional support, our support team also proactively contact students who declare a disability to ensure that they have the support they require. We have increased the number of advisers who have undertaken needs assessment training and are continually seeking to improve the service and support available. This includes providing advice to academic staff on how to adapt teaching styles to accommodate students' requirements.

In December 2019 we partnered with AccessAble to provide detailed guides to the accessibility of each of our buildings, including for example transport links, locations of disabled toilets, location and operation of lifts, signage, and how to access support. As well as providing key information to prospective and existing disabled students, this also gave us the opportunity to review the current accessibility of our estates and look at ways of improving the on-campus experience.

## Support for estranged students

The University currently offers estranged students a bursary via the Discretionary Fund of up to £1500. Students are also offered support via Peer Mentoring in addition to that offered by one of the Student Advisors. Additionally, with University Residences, Student Advisors support access to accommodation if an estranged student has become homeless or accommodation deposits are required.

## Support for students with caring responsibilities

The University is committed to ensuring that students with caring responsibilities are supported in their learning and engagement with their academic studies. In November 2018 we launched our *Students With Caring Responsibilities Protocol* which outlines the support available to students during their academic journey. One of our Lead Voices groups (see Equality and Diversity section) focusses on students with parent/carer responsibilities. We are currently working with the Carers Trust to obtain accreditation under the Going Higher scheme.

## General student support and retention

We offer support to students both before arrival and while at the University.

Examples of pre-arrival support include:

- The University Preparation Programme (UPP), which is designed to build confidence in undergraduate students entering the University. Students attending this programme are very often from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The Abertay College Transition (ACT) programme supports college students coming to Abertay to understand the different learning styles involved in University study. In addition, staff highlight the skills college students have already acquired that will assist them in their studies.

For 2020-21 entry these programmes were provided to entrants online.

We continue to improve the ways in which we support students during their studies, with a particular focus on proactively identifying students who may need additional support at various points in their journey. To support this, we have adopted an innovative approach to helping students to identify, and act on, their own support needs. This multi-strand approach involves:

- The introduction of Learner Analytics, a machine-learning system in which the student's engagement with the University (attendance, usage of learning technology, module grades, and so on) are analysed in order to enable identification of students who may require additional support or who are at risk of leaving. This is operating in tandem with a refreshed approach to attendance monitoring. These systems provide information to enable focused and targeted action to be put in place.
- A mobile-phone app called Study Goal allows students to see their learning activity, set targets, record their own study activity and share this with their peers.
- The appointment of additional student advisors to support retention, using the output of the learner analytics system or self-identification by students, and proactively contacting students to engage with them and ensure that they have access to appropriate support and information.
- Each academic School now has a School Academic Advisor (0.3FTE) to deal with matters which could impact student retention.
- The University provides counselling and mental health support. About 10% of the student population engage with the Counselling and Mental Health Service at some point in their studies.
- The University understands that funding can be an obstacle to students completing a degree, and provides supplementary financial support for living expenses and childcare. The University also works with philanthropic donors to secure bursaries to support disadvantaged students.

## Equalities and Inclusion

The University is committed to mainstreaming and our [Mainstreaming Report](#) sets out the range of activities taking place across the University and our priorities to 2021.

Since 2017-18, we have operated our successful 'Lead Voices at Abertay' initiative. We have recruited volunteer staff members and students to act as general 'advocates' or 'lead voices' for particular protected characteristics; connecting the management with the wider student and staff community, but - crucially - acting in a peer-to-peer way and thus helping to articulate various staff and student views and share these with management, especially with respect to equality impact assessment of University policies and decisions. This is intended to provide a clear, structured approach to E&D engagement with more visible routes for input; named volunteers who will actively promote engagement across all protected characteristics; and increased visibility of E&D activities and best practice guidance across the staff and student population.

### Transgender & non-binary students

The University is committed to ensuring that transgender and non-binary students are treated with dignity and respect and our Gender Identity Protocol for Students sets out the relevant advice, guidance and support available. Similarly, [Transgender Staff Guidance](#) outlines the University's commitment to ensuring that transgender employees are treated with dignity and respect and are not disadvantaged in the workplace. Both documents are published on our intranet and the Transgender Staff Guidance is published on our main website.

### Pregnancy

The university undertook a study exploring the experiences of students who are pregnant or who have a partner who is pregnant. The outcomes are informing our own 'Students Experiencing Pregnancy Protocol', and the project's researchers have been invited to contribute to Advance HE national guidance for universities, as well being asked to present their work at Advance HE's annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion conference.

### Gender-based violence

The University is committed to the implementation of the Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit to address gender-based violence (GBV). To date the University has:

- Worked with Rape Crisis Scotland to provide front line training for academic and support staff to support those disclosing sexual violence and misconduct.
- Developed online awareness raising modules for staff (Responding to students who disclose sexual violence or misconduct) and students (Consent)
- Developed a web tool and site (<https://tellus.abertay.ac.uk/>) to allow students, staff and visitors to report sexual violence/misconduct, harassment and coercion anonymously or in person. The website also contains information and support.
- Undertaken a communications campaign via web and social media under the banner 'Challenge all of it' to highlight the University's zero tolerance approach to GBV and to signpost the 'tell us' reporting tool.

The Abertay Students' Association (SA) has employed an ESHE coordinator (seconded from WRASAC Dundee) to provide training and awareness raising among student officers, class reps and clubs and society office bearers. The SA are currently providing bystander training to class and society reps.

Additionally, the University currently enables reporting and support/referral in relation to GBV through its Complaints process (for students) and Grievance Procedure (for staff), supplemented by Bullying and Harassment Guidelines, Code of Discipline for students, and support services. These policies and the



associated support will be reviewed as part of the development of a protocol to ensure effective handling of GBV, including ensuring visibility and accessibility.

## Race Equality Charter Mark

Our commitment to equality and diversity was recognised in 2016 when we were the first university in Scotland to be awarded the Race Equality Charter Mark. As part of the application process, we developed a [race equality action plan](#), which is now embedded into our overall Equality Action Plan, and which we will continue to implement over the period covered by the outcome agreement. We will be applying for Charter Mark recertification in 2020/21.

## British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

Our BSL Plan 2018-2024 was developed during 2017-18 and was published in October 2018. A BSL version is also available on our website. A number of actions have already been implemented, e.g. details of the BSL interpreting service have been added to staff email signatures to improve opportunities for BSL users to communicate with non-BSL users.

## Quality, learning, teaching and participation

### Student satisfaction

The annual National Student Survey (NSS) provides us with feedback from final year students on their experience at Abertay. Following a drop in overall satisfaction in NSS 2018, performance recovered in the 2019 survey, with overall satisfaction rising to 87%, four percentage points above benchmark, and improved further in 2020, with overall satisfaction rising to 89% (the third highest score in Scotland), seven points above benchmark and in the top ten in the UK. Six of our sixteen subject areas were in the UK top 10 for overall satisfaction and eight were in the top 10 for teaching satisfaction. Reflecting this strong performance, Abertay was named UK University of the Year for Teaching Quality by The Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021 (see <https://www.abertay.ac.uk/news/2020/abertay-named-uk-university-of-the-year-for-teaching-quality>).

National measure 7	2018-19 baseline	2019-20 actual
% satisfaction in National Student Survey	87%	89%
% +/- benchmark	+4%	+7%

Our internal module surveys, modelled on the NSS, were revised in 2017-18 and are run for all our taught provision (undergraduate and taught postgraduate). This followed an internal review of previous practice and recognition of the importance of the surveys as a mechanism for gathering valuable information on students' learning experiences which can be used for both enhancement and assurance purposes. It also recognised the importance of closing the feedback loop by sharing the results and developing enhancement plans in a timely manner. Our internal module surveys are run online and we have achieved good response rates through our enhanced survey system.

In addition, since 2017-18 we have operated introduced Division-level student voice forums which take place each term. These are co-chaired by the School Head of Teaching Quality and a nominated student rep for each Division. Heads of Division, Programme Leaders, and Module Leaders are all required to attend and an open invitation is extended to all students from the Division. Class Reps are expected to



attend and to encourage students in their class to attend. These meetings present an important opportunity for students to raise issues/ concerns/ areas of good practice from their modules so far that term, and for staff and students to jointly discuss possible resulting in module actions.

## **Retention**

Ensuring a successful transition to Abertay and supporting students during the course of their degree are priorities for Abertay. We continue to improve the ways in which we support students, with a particular focus on proactively identifying students who may need additional support at various points in their journey

To support this, we have introduced several initiatives which we will evaluate and continue to embed over the period of the outcome agreement. These include:

- The implementation of a learner analytics system in 2017-18 to enable identification of students who may require additional support or who are at risk of leaving.
- The appointment of two student advisors to support retention, working with academic schools and using the output of the learner analytics system to proactively contact students to ensure that they have access to appropriate support and information.

We expect that the implementation of these initiatives will contribute to the achievement of our retention targets over the period of the outcome agreement.

## **Student mental health**

Abertay has a range of policies and activities intended to support and promote the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff. The University's Mental Health Policy notes that "the University aims to provide a supportive environment in which all students, including those with mental health difficulties, have the opportunity to realise their full potential and meet the academic requirements of their programme of study." Our new Strategic Plan 2020-25 includes a commitment to "aim to create a culture which promotes and supports physical and mental health and wellbeing for staff and students".

Students have access to a range of support, which includes our Counselling and Mental Health Service. SFC's provision of additional funding for 1.4FTE counsellors has supported the expansion of the service with additional counselling staff. The Students' Association and University Counselling Services have also developed on a Student Mental Health Agreement. For details on how these services are being run and supplemented during the pandemic, see the 'Public health emergency' section.

Abertay Sport are signatories of the SAMH Charter for Physical Activity and Sport. As part of this we created an action plan centred around using sport and physical activity to promote positive mental health and support those with mental health issues. Details on the charter can be found [here](#) and our action plan can be found [here](#). We are continuing to implement and monitor our action plan; achievements to date include: the provision of a Free Sport Wednesday drop in for students; strong uptake from staff and students of our twice annual step challenge (Step It Up Abertay); and 98% of student sports clubs volunteers having attending a Mental Health & Sport workshop.

## Learning with impact / Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal

Abertay University is deeply embedded in our regional economy. The 'localness' of our student demographic and our long history of delivering learning and research which is applied by business and industry locally, as well as nationally and internationally, means that we are in regular contact with our local Chamber of Commerce and the four local authorities which make up the Tay Cities Region (Dundee City, Angus, Fife and Perth & Kinross).

Our Learning Enhancement Strategy commits us to ensuring that all of our programmes have work-related learning built into all stages, such that students not only learn new knowledge, but are able to apply their learning in practical situations.

As part of the development of the cyberQuarter programme, to be funded from April 2021 as part of the Tay Cities Deal, we have been developing relationships with a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in cyber skills and talent. Abertay will be a big part of growing the emerging Scottish cyber tech cluster, leading to increased demand for the ethical hacking and offensive cyber security expertise we focus on.

### Placements

Our strategic plan states that "our students will have the opportunity to undertake placement, work-related and/or enterprise opportunities". A range of activity takes place across our academic schools and our Placement Coordinator works closely with the Placement Tutors, who focus on the academic aspects of the placement, within each of the subject areas. We also offer a range of employment opportunities within the University to our students.

We have implemented a staggered approach to placements depending on the level of pandemic restrictions, with individual risk assessments undertaken at protection levels 1-3, and at protection level 4 placements limited to students on healthcare programmes. We are aiming to convert field trips and industry visits to operate online during the pandemic.

### Student Enterprise

Bell Street Ventures (BSV), Abertay's student enterprise programme, has been in operation since March 2019. BSV provides a range of services to support staff, students and recent graduates with their enterprise ideas – hot desking and collaboration space, practical workshop sessions, access to advice and networking with more experienced entrepreneurs. A key element of BSV is its connectedness with the entrepreneurial support ecosystem in the area and across the country. We focus not only on company creation, but on supporting students and graduates with the journey into self-employment, freelancing and consultancy, since a large proportion of our graduates will work in the digital creative industries and sport – both industries where models of good work are rapidly evolving.

BSV continues to operate virtually during the pandemic, offering virtual support to students.

### STEM strategy

At Abertay, we educate and train the next generation of scientists, technologists and engineers and develop their ability to work across fields through interdisciplinary learning and collaborative working. We encourage the development of STEM (including digital) skills within all our graduates and STEM literacy more generally within the regional community. We do this through programmes of education, upskilling and reskilling, research, collaborative innovation and enterprise, outreach and public engagement. Our

activity is informed by professional body and employer engagement, as well as sectoral, national, and regional strategies and frameworks.

In 2019-20, 58% of our Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants were to STEM courses, and provisional figures for 2020-21 indicate the same proportion. We will adjust and adapt our STEM offer and curriculum in response to evidence of current and future labour market needs and the economy.

## **Upskilling and reskilling**

Our upskilling offer in 2019-20 was focused on:

Digital skills for business and management: The original intention was to focus on the third sector as a critical part of the supply chain for the provision of public services and the creation of social capital. With 75 per cent of surveyed providers saying they had very few digitally skilled staff, there was anticipated to be limited capacity for the digital transformation required to advance causes and create new business models fit for the future. We therefore developed a series of microcredentials in Digital Marketing, Digital Business, and Managing Change to be delivered to the sector. With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, we expanded our marketing to the general public, including SMEs, furloughed staff, workers at risk of redundancy and unemployed people, with an extremely positive response (over 100 registrations per microcredit when we had expected 20-30).

Counselling and Caring Professions: With health and social care being the largest employing sector in the region and providing one of the greatest contributions to Gross Value Added in the region, opportunities were identified for Abertay to use its existing expertise in counselling and mental health to upskill public sector professionals. In response to the Scottish Government's identified need to have an education workforce with the skills to support good health and mental wellbeing in our children and young people, we ran a short course in Supporting Children and Young Person's Wellbeing, delivering to 39 guidance teachers across Dundee schools.

We are currently preparing our proposals for 2020-21 delivery, which are likely to focus on:

- Continued delivery of our digital skills portfolio, working with local authority economic development functions to identify the sectors worst affected by COVID-19 locally and form part of the recovery plan and response for the Tay Cities Region.
- On-line and telephone counselling skills for third sector care providers, in recognition of the challenges COVID-19 has brought for the delivery of counselling and mental health support.
- Improving the pipeline of digital and cybersecurity skills by upskilling secondary school Computing teachers delivering the National Progression Award in Cybersecurity.

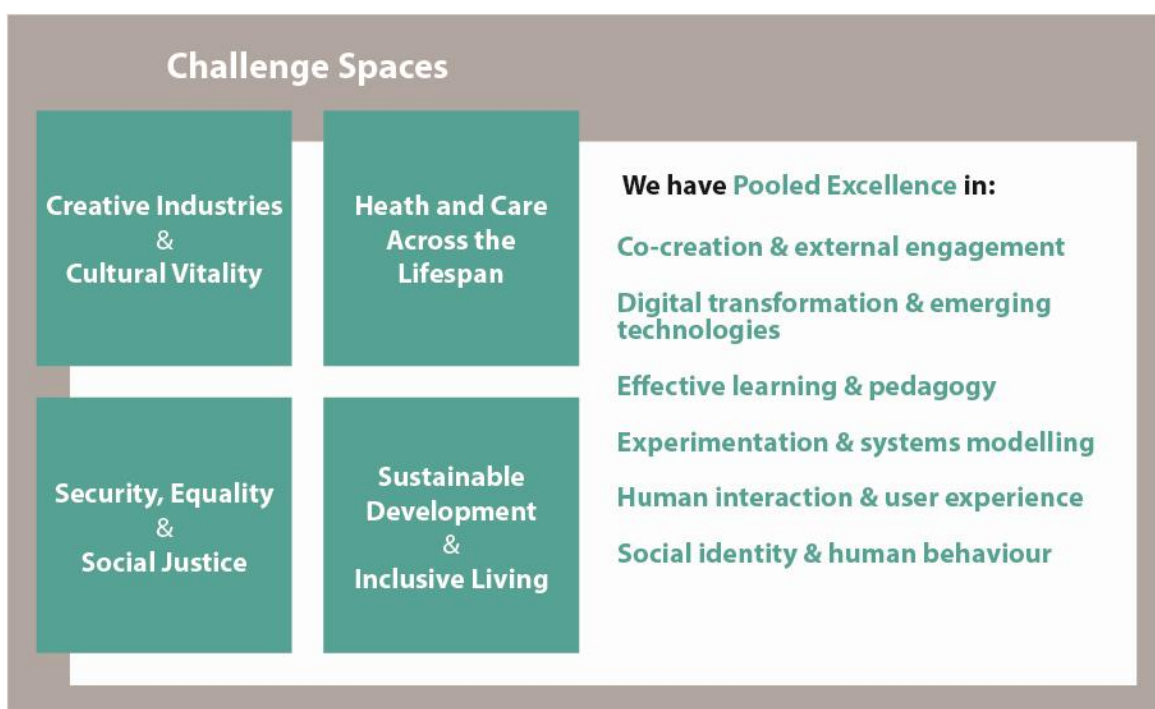
We have also identified other potential areas of delivery for development beyond 2020-21 if sufficient funding to allow delivery is made available.

We intend to use the experience gained through this delivery to extend our wider CPD opportunities for our graduates, business, industry, the public sector and the wider community through a portfolio of micro-credentials, in order to meet the changing demands of the modern workforce and in recognition that today's graduates will undertake a number of changes during their career.

## Research Excellence

Abertay is a compact and focused university with an established reputation for working well across traditional research boundaries, as well as within new and emerging disciplines and sectors. Our strategic plan confirms our ongoing commitment to high quality research and innovation that addresses real-world challenges and delivers real impact for society and the economy, aligned with national and local priorities.

Building on our significant successes and responding to external opportunities and challenges, our new Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2020-25, R-LINCS2, is set to produce a step-change in our research capacity and excellence, and our generation of collaborative research and interdisciplinary innovation with impact. Strategic RKE activity will be focused within and across Challenge Spaces addressing key local, national and international priorities that our research base best positions us to respond to. To address these Challenge Spaces we will draw on our research expertise that is encapsulated in our Pooled Excellence, which represent cross-institutional ways of working, and our academic units. Through investment in and delivery of our new RKE Strategy, Abertay will support areas of existing and emerging research excellence across the University and grow the value of our research to make a major contribution to economic prosperity, social and cultural impact, sustainable development and inclusive growth. Our ambition is supported by significant investment in academic staff with strong research records, our Postgraduate Research Student community and the Graduate School.



To realise our RKE Strategy we will:

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Foster ambition and success, build critical mass and new research and knowledge exchange strengths across the University, by leveraging existing excellence within priority challenge spaces

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Stimulate excellence in collaborative and interdisciplinary research and knowledge exchange with societal and economic impact through development of existing staff and the new appointment of talented and leading academics and practitioners

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Develop researchers to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse and global research environment, through provision of researcher training, mentoring, facilitated interaction with enterprise and public engagement channels, investment and support

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Enhance the value of our researcher output and impact through research leadership and a streamlined and effective research support infrastructure

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Develop further strategic collaborations aligned with our core academic provision through national and international academic and industrial research and knowledge exchange alliances

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## **REF 2021**

We are committed to achieving an enhanced performance (overall score and number of staff submitted) in REF2021. This is central to our long-term plan to embed a research-led culture right across Abertay, underpinning everything we do in research, knowledge-exchange and teaching.

In REF2014, we achieved an overall score of 2.15, described as 'quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour'. Our overall score rose by almost 18% from our score of 1.83 ('nationally recognised' quality) in RAE2008 and represented a significant step-change for a university of our size. The overall improvement in REF2014 was particularly noteworthy as our explicitly collaborative and interdisciplinary research strategy potentially hampered success in a subject-driven assessment process. Abertay chose to submit more staff and to more subject panels than it did in RAE2008, reflecting our inclusive and growing research community. Overall, we submitted 30% more staff than in 2008, and submitted to seven Units of Assessment compared to six in 2008, including three first-time submissions (Sport and Exercise Sciences, Sociology, and Biological Sciences).

Our REF Steering Group governs our REF2021 strategy and institutional support activity is coordinated centrally. The preparation of individual Unit of Assessment submissions is led by Unit Champion Leads supported by Unit Working Groups. Our REF Code of Practice, which sets out the principles underpinning the University's approach to REF2021 and the fair and transparent processes for identifying staff with a significant responsibility for research and outputs to be submitted (approved by SFC on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019; updated August 2020 to reflect new REF guidance issued July 2020, and approved by the SFC on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020). We have made available our REF2021 Privacy Notice and Data Collection Statements and have implemented our Declaration of Individual Staff Circumstances process. We submitted our Intention to Submit information on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

## Research Sustainability & Collaboration

### Research training and development

The University is committed to embedding a culture where diverse researcher talent is nurtured and developed, by providing a high-quality environment for researcher training and professional development. The Graduate School serves as a central hub of support for researcher development within the University. All Abertay postgraduate students and researchers are given membership of the Graduate School and have access to our dedicated study and social spaces – a forum in which they can meet, work and learn with other researchers and postgraduates from across the University. The Graduate School offers an integrated and high quality training and professional development programme to enhance research excellence, impact and individual employability. This includes a calendar of events and training for researchers at all levels (generic and discipline specific skills), one-to-one support and development, access to the Vitae Research Development Framework and on-line provision. Since March 2020, our entire researcher and development offer has been transformed for on-line delivery involving a blend of synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Staff and Research Students have opportunities to share research expertise, access to development programmes, as well as networking and facilities, through our membership of the inter-University Scottish Research Pools (SAGES, SICSA and SIPR) and Graduate Schools (SGSAH and SGSSS).

Staff and Research Students receive advice and support to develop their research into impact or into businesses through the Graduate School, our Academic Enterprise leaders and Business Engagement Team, and Bell Street Ventures. Through our integrated approach, we provide an ecosystem of support for individuals and organisations in order to help realise the economic, social and cultural impact of new innovation arising from our research.

Our Strategic Plan 2020-25 affirms our commitment to developing and sustaining an inclusive and supportive culture, welcoming and retaining students and staff from a diverse range of backgrounds and inspiring our students, staff and graduates to achieve their full potential. We are mainstreaming equality and diversity across all of our activities. The University is a signatory and is fully committed to the principles outlined in the revised UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (September 2019) and is currently developing a revised detailed action plan. We were the first Scottish university to achieve the Race Equality Charter Mark. In 2018 we received a renewed Athena SWAN bronze award for the institution and a new bronze award for the School of Science, Engineering and Technology, and became a signatory of DORA in December 2020.

### Use of additional research funding

As redevelopment of teaching materials and modes of delivery has had to be prioritised during the COVID pandemic, the impact on research and knowledge exchange activity has been substantial as the majority of our academic staff have combined teaching and research roles. We have therefore used our allocation of this funding to mitigate against some of the additional burden caused by Covid pandemic disruption, including through the purchase of additional part-time lecturer hours to backfill and mitigate against the impact on research due to the increased teaching and supervision load felt by our academic staff. The aim is that researchers are freed up to continue research activity, development and manuscript preparation. Our Postgraduate Research Degree Students have been supported throughout the COVID pandemic and have been able to seek financial support for Research Degree extensions and stipends through a fair and transparent application process and allocation of this fund.

### Research collaboration

Collaboration and interdisciplinary working are central to our Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy - the underlying ethos of which is *focused collaborative research and interdisciplinary innovation for impact*.

With the aid of the SFC's Global Challenges Research Fund to support overseas development funding bids, we have developed collaborative projects involving national and international partners. For example, Abertay as lead institution, has recently been awarded a BBSRC Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) for a collaborative project entitled "Combined Food Systems Approach to Scaling-up Interventions to Address the Double Burden of Malnutrition". The project brings together food technologists, nutritionists and sociologists to look at the health benefits from bug porridge in Zimbabwe. We will continue to apply for GCRF, British Council and Newton funds.

Abertay has had positive engagement with the Digital Health and Social Care Institute (1 PDRA and 1 PGRA jointly funded with Macmillan Cancer Support, exploring Machine Learning and Games Technology to develop a decision support tool for service provision), the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (a PhD studentship through the BBSRC CTP Scheme) and Data Lab (collaborative support for two Abertay run Data Fest events - a collaboration between Dundee City Council, Abertay, and Data Lab to highlight Dundee as a vibrant, digital city focussed on the creative industries and wider software development).

The £11.7m Tay Cities Deal funded 'cyberQuarter' is being created at Abertay to provide a new cybersecurity research and development centre in Scotland. Based on the Abertay campus in Dundee, and run with core partner the Scottish Business Resilience Centre, the city's new 'cyberQuarter' will be a cluster of collaborative academic and industry activity and innovation, offering expertise in applied research and access to a range of public-sector support for local businesses and public bodies. This follows Abertay's recent recognition as an Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Education by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC – part of GCHQ), and among the first eight UK universities to receive this award.

Going forward, we will deepen our existing collaborations, and develop new strategic relationships with academia, industry, the public and third sector, locally, nationally and internationally, growing our position as an open innovation ecosystem for accelerated research translation. We will strategically manage our key external relationships for the long-term benefit of our research agenda, especially with a view to continued UKRI funding with industry.

### **Concordat to support research integrity**

Abertay is committed to good research conduct and to the underlying principles and commitments of the revised [UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) (October 2019), and is currently developing a revised detailed action plan. The Concordat has informed the development of our Research Code of Conduct (revised and approved September 2020), which aligns with our GDPR for Research Policy and Privacy Statement for Research Participants. All staff, students and visiting researchers must adhere to the highest standards of integrity in the conduct of their research as set out in the Research Code of Conduct. All breaches of the Research Code of Conduct are reported through the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. All proposed research is scrutinised and considered for approval by the Research Ethics Committee and its representatives, and administered via a bespoke on-line Research Ethics Management System which we developed and introduced in 2018/19. All academic staff and Postgraduate Research Students receive a condensed training on the Research Code of Conduct, and our Research Ethics and GDPR for Research Policies.

### **Knowledge Exchange Concordat**

Abertay is committed to effective knowledge exchange and we became a signatory of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat in January 2021. Going forward, we will adopt the eight guiding concordat principles to guide our development of clear and ambitious strategic objectives for KE activities, and an improved supporting KE infrastructure and management system.



## Responsive and Collaborative Institutions

### Public health emergency

The coronavirus pandemic has had significant implications for our operations and forward planning. This included the re-design during 2019-20 of our teaching model in preparation to deliver programmes through a blended learning model in 2020-21, with essential campus-based teaching activities taking place in line with social distancing guidance, and research that has to be conducted on campus continuing with additional risk assessments undertaken.

Subsequently, in light of the reinstated lockdown we have suspended all face-to-face teaching (with the exception of essential lab-based work) until Easter 2021. We continue to keep these arrangements under review in light of changing guidance from the Scottish Government.

Support continues to be provided to our students on-campus and remotely, including 24-hour telephone and video counselling and mental health support; welfare advice and support including the provision of food vouchers for self-isolating students; financial hardship payments (including to alleviate digital poverty); study skills support; and general information and advice from our Support Enquiry Zone. In light of the increased demand for mental health support seen during the pandemic, a counsellor and/or a student advisor is on site each working day to be on hand for any student mental health or welfare crisis should a short face-to-face intervention be required.

The University's academic regulations for 2020/21 continue to take account of impact of the pandemic on student learning, to ensure that our students' learning is assessed as fairly and as sympathetically as possible.

The expected financial implications of the pandemic led us to put in place a programme of activity to reduce non-essential expenditure in 2020-21 and to reduce expenditure further by August 2021. This was focused on ensuring the University remains financially sustainable in future and that we are well positioned to deliver our strategic plan priorities, including the acceleration of our digital strategy. While the position is currently more positive than anticipated, we continue to monitor it close.

### Climate emergency

The University has commenced the development of a new environmental sustainability strategy that is centred on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Working with support from the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges and in consultation with students and staff, we are developing a holistic approach to sustainability that will continue our work on existing priorities, such as carbon reduction and embedding sustainability within the curriculum, but will also broaden the scope of our activity to look at the wider range of goals articulated in the UNSDG. Our new environmental sustainability strategy is in development, though has been delayed as a result of the pandemic.

We continue to take advantage of any opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint of our facilities: for example, during the development of our new Emergent Technology Centre, funding from SFC's Carbon Reduction Fund allowed us to incorporate rooftop solar panels and energy-efficient LED lighting, which we expect to save around 85 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum.

**SFC National Measures table: Interim Outcome Agreement 2020-21**

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19 benchmark (SFC- provided values in blue)	2019-20	2020-21
	Actual				As at 04/12	
Total SDUEs	1,012	976	1,142	1,273	1,084	1,175
<b>Measure 1: Articulation - The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing</b>						
Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	481	451	480	610	521	570
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with advanced standing	318	293	296	342	295	271
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants articulating with Advanced Standing	66.1%	65.0%	61.7%	56.1%	56.6%	47.5%
<b>Measure 2: Deprivation - The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes</b>						
Total number of full-time first degree entrants	1,006	960	1,138	1,255	1,077	1,173
Number of full-time first degree entrants from 20% most deprived postcodes	168	145	217	190	179	191
Proportion of full-time first degree entrants from 20% most deprived postcodes	16.7%	15.1%	19.1%	15.1%	16.6%	16.3%
<b>Measure 3: Care Leavers</b>						
Number - Care Leaver	4	2	6	10	16	20
Proportion - Care Leaver	0.4%	0.2%	0.5%	0.9%	1.5%	1.7%
<b>Measure 4: Retention - The number and proportion of full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants returning to study in year two</b>						
Total number of full-time first year SDUE	867	1,002	953	1,137	1,249	1,046
Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	771	862	838	992	1,061	899
Proportion retained	88.9%	86.0%	87.9%	87.2%	84.9%	85.9%
<b>Measure 5: Satisfaction - The % of students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey</b>						
% Satisfaction	88.0%	84.0%	79.0%	87.4%	89.2%	One year in arrears
% Benchmark	85.0%	83.0%	83.0%	83.0%	82.3%	
Difference +/-	3.0%	1.0%	-4.0%	4.4%	6.9%	
<b>Measure 6a: Graduate Destinations - The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled graduates entering positive destinations</b>						
Eligible population				570	560	One year in arrears
Proportion of graduates in positive destinations				95%	93%	
Number of graduates in positive destinations				540	520	
<b>Measure 6b: Graduate Destinations - The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree respondents working in professional occupations</b>						
Eligible population				405	330	One year in arrears
Proportion of FT first degree respondents in professional occupations				67%	59%	
Number of FT first degree respondents in professional occupations				270	205	
<b>Measure 7: Qualifiers</b>						
The number of Scotland-domiciled qualifiers at undergraduate level	853	782	771	757	751	One year in arrears

## **Abertay University**

### **University Innovation Fund – 2020/21**

Abertay is well placed to contribute to Scotland's priority economic sectors and the national programme (innovation improvement agenda) of structural change, process improvement and or university cultural change which have been framed for the period 2017-20.

Our 2020/21 plan is continued proactive engagement with the UIF agenda and should be read with our comprehensive plans for previous years (available as appendices to our previous Outcome Agreements) as a logical development of our services in the spirit of continuous improvement and enhancement, and collaboration.

We have built upon our strengths and given the funding framework, have focused our engagement with some, rather than all of the outcomes. Abertay University utilises the UIF Platform Grant from the Scottish Funding Council to maintain its core knowledge exchange and innovation support activities. For example, UIF infrastructure had been essential in helping to secure our Tay City Deal (the cyberQuarter). We continue to engage with and develop activity to support the Sustainable Development Goals and National Outcomes identified in relation to the Outcome Grant. We work collaboratively across the sector, sharing our experiences and learning from other institutions.

In discussion with Scottish Funding Council we have agreed that the best mechanism to work at a sector level to deliver the national outcomes is to work together to:

- Analyse current activity and identify best practice.
- On the basis of this, where appropriate, devise and execute a pilot programme.
- If successful, develop/initiate a sector-wide programme.

Through the Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG) each institution has agreed to contribute to various outcomes. Each institution notes and acknowledges the importance of each of the outcomes but for the best use of resource each institution will be involved with a different combination of work. As an institution we have signed up to participate in the groups for outcomes 1 and 4 and will engage with the learning and outputs of the other three groups (outcomes 5-7) going forward.

#### **1. Demand Stimulation**

*To help increase the demand and quality of engagement from business and the public sector for university services.*

Our Business Engagement team is developing a one-stop shop approach to business engagement, to ensure that commercial, public and not for profit organisations can access and navigate University support, facilities and services.

We will continue to focus on:

- Working with key stakeholders in the business/public sector/third sector communities through events, speaker opportunities and company engagement in key sectors.
- Supporting academic colleagues with new course development through identification of sector trends/skills gaps/synergies with industry bodies.
- Supporting financial and business development bids (eg Tay City Deal, UKRI Strength in Places).
- Driving enterprise initiatives to support student employability.

Our drivers are:

- Abertay becoming the first port of call for private, public and third sector partners in key industry areas including sectors identified in the new UK Industrial Strategy, Scotland's Economic Strategy and the Tay Cities Regional Economic Strategy 2017-2037.
- Our students and graduates being known to possess the right mix of skills, confidence and attributes for their employers, now and in the future.

#### **2. Simplification / Commercialisation**

*To simplify business access to the knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities.*

Our consultancy framework encourages our staff to use their knowledge and expertise to solve real-world problems and to make a positive impact on the world around us. This will support the attraction and development of the best staff, recognising and rewarding them for the contribution they make to our success, to enrich the lives of staff by offering opportunities for new experiences and to encourage and support entrepreneurial activity by our staff.

We launched a new website in February 2018 with a dedicated Business section, to support businesses to better understand the innovation opportunities which can be realised in collaboration with Abertay. We have clear information about our services and facilities, single points of contact and examples/case studies in different categories to illustrate what is possible. Increased communications and PR activity linked to innovation and business collaboration has also been facilitated by the inclusion of the Business Engagement function within the wider External & Corporate Communications team.

The One Stop Shop approach has allowed commercial businesses to engage efficiently and quickly with the University, particularly within restricted timeframes. For example, companies wishing to bid for public sector contracts through the formal procurement process have a simple route to request input and/or expertise, with a single point of contact responsible for routing the request, following internal procedures and responding within an agreed and appropriate period.

### 3. Simplification / Greater Innovation

*To make strategic use of sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy.*

The Business Engagement team has provided a valuable additional layer of expertise which can be applied to filter ad hoc opportunities or ideas, and support those which progress to the next stage.

#### **The cyberQuarter (Abertay-led and named within the Heads of Terms for the Tay Cities Deal)**

This project is under development as part of the Tay Cities Deal, and is named within the Heads of Terms from November 2018. We anticipate signature for the full Deal to take place in Spring 2020 and subsequent progression to Full Business Case this year.

Cybersecurity, cyber resilience and safety are critical for economic growth and 21st century living, yet most businesses are not sufficiently aware of the threats nor do they invest in appropriate solutions. In the UK there are 65,000 cyber-attacks on small businesses every day and each successful attack costs £27,500 on average. Given the prevalence of cyber-attacks, it is no longer a case of if a business is hacked, but when. With 60% of SMEs not surviving a malicious attack, the need for innovative, rapid solutions underpinned by academic research that is effectively deployed to and adopted by SMEs to protect against these losses has never been greater.

The cyberQuarter is an academic-industrial partnership delivered via a 15-year programme designed to position the Tay Cities Region as a centre of best practice in applied R&D and knowledge exchange in the cybersecurity sector and beyond. The cyberQuarter will exploit the potential of Abertay University's distinctive ethical hacking and offensive cybersecurity provision to deliver:

- Collaborative R&D with the cybersecurity industry to develop deployable solutions to enhance cybersecurity in the SME sector
- Support for SMEs in all industries to raise awareness of cybersecurity risks in the SME sector and increase the adoption of new products and services to become more cyber resilient
- Jobs growth in cybersecurity firms as turnover increases and new products/services are commercialised - through a combination of business start-up, growth in micro and small enterprises, scaling for medium sized enterprise and expansion of cybersecurity operations in large corporations
- Potential jobs growth in other sectors of the economy where firms adopt the new products/services, as they benefit from increased cyber resilience leading to improved trade and reduced losses from cybercrime
- Ethical hacking and offensive security development activities designed to upskill workers and tackle local and national skills shortages through related channels and initiatives
- The ambitions of the cyberQuarter were endorsed by the Scottish Government's National Cyber Resilience Leaders Board at a meeting in December 2017.

To achieve these outcomes, the cyberQuarter project involves six different strands of coordinated activity, using a mixture of Tay Cities Deal investment (for two capital-funded strands) and further funding (for the remaining four revenue-funded strands).

The capital investment from the Tay Cities Deal will deliver:

- An innovation hub; and
- A pump-priming fund.

Beyond the Tay Cities Deal investment, further proposals for revenue costs for skills and learning activities, and outreach and adoption workstreams will be developed to attract additional funding to the programme to deliver:

- Business-focussed R&D;
- Outreach to and support for businesses;
- Regional cluster management; and

Development of skills and talent.

## **Food and Drink**

We will continue to lobby for more flexible Scottish interventions for innovation led growth that don't assume one size fits all and encourage traction in high growth sectors such as Food and Drink, where R&D spend has historically been low but sector growth projections are high. In the spirit of the Scotland Food and Drink Strategy (2017-30) – Ambition 2030, we will continue to work in collaboration with SRUC and QMU to look at the alignment of resources focused on collaborative academic capacity building. For example, UIF is being used to support the development of a programme (GROW) which aims to attract and develop new talent and the transitional shift from student to professional practitioner, thus supporting sustainable growth in Scotland's food and drink sector through:

- Business and entrepreneurial skills development
- Market awareness
- Knowledge of the operational business environment in the food and drink industry.

The event will target undergraduates in the later years of their studies and recent graduates. It will involve industry partners and will be delivered during 2021. We will further develop this partnership and engagement with the Food and Drink Industry via our joint work with the liaison group.

## **4. Entrepreneurialism**

*To make a significant and positive change in the way that entrepreneurial opportunities are promoted and delivered to students, HEI staff and business.*

One of the most important contributions that universities can make to Scottish businesses is to refresh the pool of talent by developing business-literate and enterprising graduates and postgraduates with a strong educational grounding. We are proud of our industry focus and links to business. We will encourage the development of enterprise skills and entrepreneurial behaviour among our students through a range of activities across 4 priority themes.

Many of our students will not have a 'job' as we currently know but will be self-employed, freelance, contractors or take a portfolio approach to work and career. As a city, and as part of the Tay Cities region, Dundee faces major challenges in terms of employment, business start-up and economic growth. With some 75% of our students coming from the local area and so many choosing to stay here after graduation, Abertay can play a major role in developing the right skills to support employability and the creation of high value jobs locally, nationally and globally.

Our enterprise activities will span:

- Entrepreneurial mindset, skills and behaviours.
- Commercial awareness.
- Company creation and business start-up.

- Self-employment options and new ways of working.

Priority 1 - A place for enterprise – we have:

- Established a hub for student enterprise in the heart of the Abertay campus – Bell Street Ventures.
- Provided a mix of dedicated office accommodation for 3 RSE Enterprise Fellows and on an ongoing basis for the start-up companies emerging from these plus hot-desking facilities, meeting space and a collaboration space for team development activities

Priority 2 - Skills and learning for enterprise – we will:

- Engage with our teaching staff to identify opportunities to introduce and embed enterprise skills and expertise to students through a range of activities.
- Curate a year round programme of workshops and drop in sessions for students.
- Host relevant and useful resources for student enterprise.
- Offer enterprise activity as viable student placement and internship opportunities.

Priority 3 - Access to enterprise support

There is no shortage of courses, prototype funds, contests, dragons dens, incubators, accelerators and small pots of start-up funding available – many organisations and services are already working in this space. Our challenge is that Abertay students don't appear to be applying for or successfully accessing this support or money and that there is no single point of contact for external agencies to liaise with.

Access to finance and business development support can be a complex and crowded landscape for a student to navigate. We will improve signposting for students and help them to understand the options available to them.

We will prioritise engagement with high profile national and specialist sector programmes to facilitate the increased visibility of enterprise activity among our students and within the business community. Through our work in this area, we continue to outperform other Scottish universities in terms of applications and success stories for initiatives such as Converge Challenge and RSE Enterprise Fellowships.

In 2019 Abertay had two semi finalists in Converge, and Konglomerate Games (a team of 4<sup>th</sup> year students) were runners up in the Impact Challenge for Converge with their game which designed to improve compliance with physiotherapy regimes for young Cystic Fibrosis patients. We have continued to increase our involvement with Scottish EDGE. In 2019 we have had a Young EDGE finalist, Wild Card EDGE entries and now act as regional judging partners for the competition.

A further mark of our success in 2019 came through our showing at the Courier Business Awards, with 7 finalists nominated across 3 categories – including all four of the companies shortlisted for the Enterprise in Education category. The Courier has a readership of 200k people, reaching 39% of all adults in the region.

Priority 4 - “Social first” enterprise

We will support Scottish Government's Social Enterprise Strategy by:

- Building careers in social enterprise – increasing work placements and internships in this sector.
- Providing inspiration on campus - to stimulate social entrepreneurship through teaching, knowledge transfer and business incubation.
- Working with the Scottish Government backed support programme 'Social Shifters', delivered by CEIS, to promote and support social enterprise in HEIs.

A key component of our relationship with the Santander Universities programme is focused on student enterprise. In 2019 we have increased our engagement through the introduction of Enterprise Bursaries for students at the point of graduation, awarding cash to individuals to allow them to focus on their business ideas for up to 3 months.

## 5. International

*To pool knowledge, networks & shared good practice to promote and engage Scotland internationally.*

Abertay and Perfect World Education (a subsidiary of China's leading entertainment and creative enterprise Perfect World Investment & Holding Group) have a strategic partnership to develop and nurture new talent to meet the demands of the international computer games industry and to provide a platform for collaboration and

cultural exchange in computer game education. China has a rapidly expanding games development sector, and is now the second largest market for UK game exports. As Europe's leading university for computer games education, we are ideally placed to foster university-business links in this area, and we are confident it will prove to be a great success for both the UK and Chinese creative industries.

In 2019, Abertay completed a Scottish Government funded project (through Hydro Nation International) to explore ways to enhance the impact of Scottish Government support to the Government of Malawi in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6). Abertay secured this project on the basis of their experience over 15 years of undertaking audits and experience in knowledge exchange and capacity building in Africa in the context of water resources and environmental protection. The project involved a review of the changing demand on water supplies, the impact of abstraction and the resilience and sustainability of ground water in Malawi. The resulting stakeholder map of governance and policy development, regulation, policy implementation and service provision are being used to advise the Scottish Government Aid programme in Malawi and more broadly provided the tools and templates for assessing and developing effective interventions to address SDG6 needs in sub-Saharan African countries.

## 6. Inclusive Growth and Social Impact

*Contribute to society through public engagement with a research base with impact beyond pure economic terms.*

The Dundee Cultural Strategy (2015-2025) has made a commitment to ensuring that Dundee is known as an International City of Design and Creativity through a process of cultural-driven regeneration. Through an internal and external programme of activities, Abertay can make a valuable contribution to this ambition and in turn can reap the benefits in recruitment of students by positioning Dundee as a creative and vibrant city which is a good place for students to live.

Our City Deal proposals specifically address the inclusive growth agenda. For example, the cyberQuarter project has a specific focus on upskilling people in the local area, 'unblocking' the pipeline for the low and middle level jobs within the digital economy by offering opportunities (directly and in conjunction with FE colleges) to gain a 'cyber premium' in terms of skills, salary and employability prospects, and facilitating new entrants into the industry from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

## 7. Equality and Diversity

*Positive promotion in staff and all who are affected by the use of the UIF.*

Our strategic plan confirms our intention to mainstream equality and diversity across all of our activities. Our Equality Action Plan, which contains detailed actions related to student applications, admissions and student achievement, is routinely monitored and updated.