

## **Outcome Agreement Remit 2019-20**

- This paper invites further discussion on the development of Outcome Agreement (OA) guidance for universities to deliver intensification, and to strengthen the demonstration of each institution's distinct contribution to national outcomes and impact for public investment.

## **Recommendations**

- Advise the executive on how the outcome agreement remit and subsequent guidance can be developed to deliver intensification, and to strengthen the demonstration of each institution's distinct contribution to national outcomes and impact for public investment;
- Recommend any significant changes to be included in the Outcome Agreement remit to be considered by Council in June 2018.

*Remove blank page for web version*

## **Outcome Agreement Remit 2019-20**

### **Purpose**

1. This paper invites further discussion on the development of Outcome Agreement (OA) guidance for universities to deliver intensification, and to strengthen the demonstration of each institution's distinct contribution to national outcomes and impact for public investment.

### **Background**

2. The OA process is both SFC's main mechanism to drive change and its main route for demonstrating each institution's distinct contribution, to national outcomes and to impact achieved by public investment.
3. OAs set out what an institution plans to deliver in return for their funding from SFC. The process aims to deliver a funding system that supports institutions in pursuing realistic goals: that are complementary to their strategies; which are agreed by their Court / Board; and which deliver progress towards SFC and Scottish Government priorities.
4. The OA remit for AY2019/20 was discussed at the March 2018 meeting. The action from this meeting was for the executive to review the committee's comments and present a follow-up paper for discussion at the meeting on 17 May 2018.

### **Letter of guidance**

5. SFC's most recent Guidance Letter<sup>1</sup> from Scottish Government (April 2018) re-stated Ministers' expectations of an intensification of the OA process and of a clearer 'line of sight' between Scottish Government policy ambitions and SFC's investments in teaching, research, and innovation.
6. The letter of guidance also:
  - Looks to SFC to continue to work with the sector and partners through Connected Scotland, the emerging 'Scotland is Now' national branding strategy and other partnerships to identify opportunities to communicate that our colleges and universities remain open to students and academics from across the world and committed to teaching, research and mobility collaborations with our European and international partners.

---

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/AboutUs/SFC\\_letter\\_of\\_guidance\\_2018-19.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/AboutUs/SFC_letter_of_guidance_2018-19.pdf)

- Sets out an expectation of the Funding Council to ensure that [REG, RPG and UIF] are used to maintain world-leading research and innovation in our universities.
- Although not directed solely at research & innovation the letter sets out the Minister's ambition that 'University and college campuses should be transformative places where students not only achieve academically but flourish and where their well-being is supported and nurtured'
- Recognises universities' pivotal role in driving up levels of business innovation by making the best use of university knowledge. [...] expect the SFC to work closely with the sector to use the University Innovation Fund to drive increasing engagement with businesses in support of the CAN DO Innovation Action Plan published in January 2017;
- Recognises the key role universities and colleges play in supporting an entrepreneurial culture in Scotland. To this end, [SFC should] drive acceleration of work between the sector and partners within the framework of the CAN DO Innovation Action Plan.

### ***2019/20 Remit***

7. Council will consider the remit for AY19/20 OAs in June 2018. The remit is an internal exercise which forms the basis for the subsequent drafting of the published OA guidance.
8. We have an opportunity to set out proposed updates to the guidance to incorporate the intensification and other issues referred to in the Minister's letter of guidance and to strengthen the demonstration of each institution's distinct contribution to national outcomes and impact for public investment.

### ***Outcome Agreements and Research & Innovation***

9. The Committee have previously discussed outcome agreements in Research & Innovation – the most recent being the March 2018 meeting - and this paper builds on those discussions which are summarised below.
10. The Committee have recognised that while there is a complex relationship between R & I and Outcome Agreements in an environment where SFC is not the only, or even the main funder of research activity, it should still be possible to strengthen the feedback loop to allow institutions to demonstrate impact of funding.
11. The Committee highlighted the difficulties in introducing targets and measures in research beyond the REF and noted the importance of avoiding OA-asks which may adversely affect non-SFC funded research or are distracting to REF.
12. Members further noted that current outcome agreements were not capturing the broader picture of Scotland's world class research environment and that

there was potential to make better use of OAs to understand and drive research and innovation activity in universities.

13. The Committee agreed that outcome agreements should represent an opportunity for two-way dialogue with the sector

#### **Discussion session**

14. The Committee is invited to discuss in detail how the guidance can be developed to address the above issues, to encourage sensible discussion with the sector on their direction of travel and ambitions and for institutions to demonstrate their contribution to SG and SFC priorities in return for investment.
15. The executive will circulate a set of slides prior to the meeting to help focus this discussion. Members may wish to reflect on the Ministerial guidance, SG priorities, and SFC outcomes and how these are reflected in the current guidance and summary of responses appended.

#### **Risk assessment**

16. There are no risks associated with this paper.

#### **Equality and diversity assessment**

17. We expect an equality and diversity impact assessment to be prepared for SFC's board meeting in June 2018.

#### **Financial implications**

18. There are no financial implications.

#### **Recommendations**

19. The Committee is invited to:
  - Advise the executive on how the outcome agreement remit and subsequent guidance can be developed to deliver intensification, and to strengthen the demonstration of each institution's distinct contribution to national outcomes and impact for public investment.;
  - Recommend any significant changes to be included in the Outcome Agreement remit to be considered by Council in June 2018.

**Publication**

20. This paper will be published on SFC's website.

**Further information**

21. Hazel McGraw, Policy Officer, tel: 0131 313 6657, email:hmcgraw@sfc.ac.uk

<b>Scottish government priority: internationally competitive and impactful research</b>	
<b>Outcomes:</b>	
Universities have a world-leading reputation for the impact of their research Scotland is a country of discovery where talented researchers from across the world come together to explore, challenge and address some of the most fundamental questions facing our society Universities have world-class facilities, a global reputation and standing, and international connections and collaborations Scotland is a place that nurtures, develops and trains the international research leaders of tomorrow	
<b>Commitment, strategies and evidence of progress</b>	
Institutions are asked to summarise their strategies to enhance the competitiveness and international standing of their research, maximise the impact of their research, and embed a culture where diverse researcher talent is nurtured and developed. Where appropriate to your institution, statements should outline strategies and aspirations to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance their performance in the next REF exercise (REF2021).</li> </ul>	There is a real focus on REF preparations with some reference to how institutions are using REG to support this ie through building capacity. There are references to re-structuring and focussing on successful areas, on developing their impact and on internal improvements to capture and present impact. Institutions are carrying out mock exercises and planning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in partnership with SFC and Universities Scotland on debate and engagement with the principles of the 'Concordat on Open Research Data' (noting that SFC is a signatory).</li> </ul>	A majority confirm their commitment to open research data principles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grow research income from the UK research councils and other sources (including Overseas Development Funding), and how they will use REG funding to support research excellence.</li> </ul>	Institutions are continuing to target increases in research income despite mixed results in previous years. There is nervousness around the impact of BREXIT and about business income in the current economic climate (particularly in oil & gas). Strategies include improving internal reviewing and training in grant applications and some refer to strategies to target GCRF and Newton Fund income through a challenge approach and through inter-disciplinary working. Few link this to REG allocations. It should be noted at least one institution does not target increased research income as this would increase their financial vulnerability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustain a high-quality environment for research training and development.</li> </ul>	Almost all institutions are targetting an increase in research postgraduate numbers (despite mixed results in previous years), some very ambitiously. Most institutions reflect on the environment for research training and development although few give real detail of any substantial developments, it's mostly not that exciting! Some refer to engagement with the Scottish Graduate Schools in AH and SS. No mention of the pools and their graduate schools here. A number refer to development of training courses both discipline specific and generic skills. Some are re-structuring graduate schools. None seem to link this work to RPG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the development and diversity of its researchers (including ambitions for Athena Swan and HR Excellence in Research charter mark), and address equality and diversity issues identified by REF2014 and guidance in REF2021.</li> </ul>	Institutions are at different stages with Athena SWAN applications, most if not all mention it and are targetting sustaining current levels or improvements. A majority also reference HR Excellence awards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance research collaboration including support for research pools, and promotion of multi / interdisciplinary working including addressing global challenges.</li> </ul>	This area probably receives the least attention. Few responses mention their commitment to research pooling although as referred to above a number are developing strategies for inter-disciplinary working in response to challenge funding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance public and cultural engagement and contribute to public policy and public sector delivery.</li> </ul>	
Institutions are also asked to evidence their commitment to the principles set out in the Universities UK Concordat to support research integrity.	Most, if not all have confirmed their commitment, and compliance with the concordat principles although this is mostly not evidenced.





<b>Scottish Government priority: effective knowledge exchange and innovation including excellent collaboration between universities and industry</b>	
<b>Outcomes:</b>	
Scotland's economy is stronger, more productive and resilient with economic growth supported by innovation from our universities	
Scotland's research excellence attracts investment and job creation from the world's most dynamic international businesses	
A deep culture of collaboration between universities, colleges, business, and venture capital and improved commercialisation of research	
Businesses in Scotland use innovation to improve their competitiveness, productivity and growth. Our entrepreneurial students and researchers drive the growth of innovative new businesses and improvements to our public services	
<b>Commitment, strategies and evidence of progress</b>	
Institutions are asked to summarise their approach to sustaining a culture in which innovation can flourish, and their work with business, industry, and the public sector to find innovative solutions that support economic growth, and impact on our society and culture. Where appropriate to your institution, statements should outline strategies and aspirations to:	
· Engaging with the innovation landscape in Scotland including Innovation Centres, Interface, Innovation Vouchers, and the Scottish Government's innovation action plan.	
· Maintain and sustain the activity and priorities that have been put in place in response to the Innovation Scotland Forum action plan.	
· Engaging with SFC and Innovation Centres on the recommendations of the Innovation Centre review and with Innovation Centres progressing to phase 2.	
Delivering the individual institution's agreed contributions to the nationally agreed University Innovation Fund (UIF) outcomes at an individual and national (collaborative level). This should include working openly and proactively with the UIF manager (hosted by UWS).	
<b>Measure of progress</b>	
(13) The number of SFC innovation vouchers and Follow-on innovation vouchers	
(14) Institutions should attach a submission to their Outcome Agreement outlining their plans for the use of their UIF allocation in support of individual and	
Institutions should also continue to complete the annual Higher education-business and community interaction (HE-BCI) survey.	