



# **Interim Outcome Agreement SRUC**

**(Scotland's Rural College)**

## **Academic Year 2020/21**

March 2021

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# 1. Priorities

## Outcome Agreement Construction

This Interim Outcome Agreement for SRUC (blended across HE and FE) for Academic Year (AY) 2020/21 addresses the guidance within the SFC's Interim Outcome Agreement Guidance (AY 2020/21). In these exceptional COVID pandemic times, we are prioritising within SRUC that we:

- Support and promote the **achievement** and **retention** of our students through a blended delivery model
- Ensure the wellbeing of staff and students through these unprecedented challenging times
- Deliver an education-led economic recovery for Scotland through supporting the **success** of the natural economy now and in the future through our world class teaching, research and consultancy
- Take a **regional approach** with our campuses acting as anchor institutions to ensure that we deliver to the natural economy across Scotland.

### 1.1 Introduction

SRUC provides world class translational research, education, skills and consulting. Our vision is to be a new Enterprise University at the heart of the natural economy which delivers positive social, cultural and economic impacts for Scotland and that is attractive to learners, collaborators and investors. SRUC remains ambitious to achieve Taught and Research Degree Awarding Powers (DAP). Following the outcome of ELIR 4, internal developmental work, and the input of external consultants (Advance HE), a road map to achieve DAP has been developed. Initially, the primary focus will be on achieving taught degree awarding powers (TDAP), whilst further development is made on the policies and processes which underpin our long and successful history as research degree managers and supervisors. The application for TDAP is currently being drafted with the intention of submitting in the summer of 2021.

### 1.2 Supporting Students

As a tertiary institution, SRUC is unique in its level of provision from SCQF levels 4 to 12, working closely both with academic and industry partners across the rural sector and in schools. Widening access opportunities and the learner journey are key, and learners are able to progress flexibly and appropriately, with recognition given to prior attainment and focusing on the interests of the learner. On that basis SRUC seeks to meet the needs of the land-based sector for an appropriately skilled workforce by recognising the importance of the learner journey and focusing on positive purposeful destinations. During the 2019 ELIR review ([Reports](#)) of SRUC's Higher Education, SRUC were commended on supporting the individual journeys of learners, in many cases allowing students to achieve outcomes beyond their initial aspirations.

Teaching and learning during this COVID period underwent a full pivot to online blended learning. This approach was supported by the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, who rapidly assessed new platforms for delivery and assessment, secured Big Blue Button as a teaching resource, *ProctorExam* for online proctoring of the Veterinary Nursing exams and provided staff development activities to support colleagues. A number of working groups were set up to prepare for the 2020/21 academic year, which is being delivered through a blended approach, in line with Scottish Government advice.

At the beginning of the current Academic Year SRUC took a student centric view to providing Halls of residence accommodation to students. Although year-long contracts for accommodation were offered to the very small number of students who required it, the vast majority of students have used the 'stay and pay' accommodation offer - students pay only for the nights they require accommodation to attend their practical classes. This allowed the residences to operate at no more than 40% capacity and students were not contracted to pay. This is costly to SRUC but protects staff and students.

As part of the enrolment process, students completed online forms to assess requirements for computers and student support – this allowed devices and student support requirements (tailored for blended delivery) to be put in place early in the academic year. SRUC continues to offer loan devices to students when required. This has been complemented by a successful application to Connecting Scotland ([Link here](#)) where we have obtained 22 devices to distribute to care experienced students and students in families with a shortage of devices to help ameliorate long term digital poverty.

### **1.2.2 Mitigation and Help not Hinder**

The implementation of a full lockdown in response to the COVID pandemic in March 2020 necessitated adjustments to a number of processes during that academic year. Key adjustments included:

- Adjustments to closed book assessments
- Introduction of a “Help not Hinder” policy (with validating University approval).
- Extension of the definition of “good cause” in student absence and mitigating circumstances.
- Adjustment to progression criteria.

The adapted processes for assessment alternatives, mitigation and progression were carried through into AY 2020/21. SRUC are currently considering further mitigation, for example the Programme Approval and Academic Standards Committee have agreed a blanket extension for Honours thesis/project hand in of 5 working days (in addition to the mitigation processes outlined above) and have also delayed Exam Boards by a week to support students to successfully complete their studies.

### **1.2.3 SQA Awards**

A significant part of SRUC’s portfolio are SQA awards – both at HE and FE levels. Throughout the pandemic, SRUC has engaged fully with the guidance released by SQA. At the start of 2020/21 colleagues reviewed award structures and individual unit assessments, developing where possible combined or adapted approaches to assessment to enable students to have the best possible opportunity to achieve their awards. In light of the ongoing restrictions, SRUC has recently submitted to SQA, details of the critical practical competencies that are of concern and holding initial IQA panels in February, following SQA guidelines. The nature of SRUC’s provision does mean that some vocational areas are challenged to deliver the core competencies in the current COVID lockdown.

### **1.2.4 SRUC Students Association (SRUCSA)**

SRUCSA have been integrally involved in the planning and adaptations during coronavirus; by taking part in coordinating committees, having regular catch-up meeting with the Principal and Academic Director, being given input into student facing communications and by partnered working on policies such as the ‘no detriment’ policy and adaption of the mitigating circumstances to cover pandemic related circumstances more fully.

During the first lockdown SRUCSA took several steps to remain in contact with students. A weekly class representative check in was introduced, along with sessions aimed at students who may be more impacted by lockdown, such as student parents. In the current post-Christmas lockdown, SRUCSA have re-introduced these fortnightly sessions, holding both open sessions for all students as well as targeting student parents and student carers. SRUCSA have also created an online page where time with the sabbatical officers can be booked directly, giving students a straightforward way to recreate the ‘open office door’ that any student would normally take advantage of on campus.

Following a recommendation provided by the Student Voice Mapping project, SRUCSA and the SRUC Student Journey Team have been working together to improve the election process for the SRUCSA sabbatical officers, liberation officer and student Academic Board members. An election committee has been created to provide leadership on maximising the number of students both coming forward as candidates and participating in the voting process.

SRUCSA were able to adapt their usual induction activities for the current academic year, running activities through Microsoft Teams. One event, a 'Cook-along' where students meet online to cook the same meal together was popular enough to have become a self-running society. SRUC placed the SRUCSA Events in the student induction timetable which helped to get good attendance, with over 400 Students turning up to the first SRUCSA session.

As part of work based learning thematic review being held at SRUC this academic year, SRUCSA are working with the National Society of Apprentices to reach out to our apprentices with the aim of discovering what apprentices' understanding and expectations of the student association are, and what matters most to them. This will allow SRUCSA to identify improvements in the way they operate and support SRUC's work based learners.

SRUCSA were able to provide some on campus activities for students who were on campus. These small events, with safety precautions in place, were attended by students who were living on campus and who otherwise would have no activities provided.

## 2. Wellbeing

SRUC's commitment to supporting mental health is articulated in our [Healthy Learning and Wellbeing Strategy](#), developed by staff and students, and setting out how SRUC will support the physical and mental health of its community. The COVID pandemic has meant that SRUC have shifted to online support whilst retaining some on campus support depending upon the restrictions in place. TogetherAll (previously BigWhiteWall) has been implemented as a major source of information and support for both SRUC staff and students. An escalation system has been implemented with TogetherAll so that senior staff with a responsibility for student safeguarding can be contacted in the case of extreme emergency. Student utilisation of the system is monitored monthly through reporting to the Academic Leadership Team. SRUC are also this year piloting live therapy for students in the South and West faculty, through Togetherall, to complement the regional counselling we have in place in all campuses. The live therapy offers the advantage of out of hours counselling, though students under the age of 18 are not permitted to use the live therapy functionality.

### 2.1.1 SRUC ensuring the wellbeing of students

Support for mental health and wellbeing comprises a five-pronged approach:

- **Face-to-face general support:** following our restructure in 2019/20, each faculty has dedicated pastoral student support workers whose main focus is on supporting the mental and physical health of SRUC students. Other student-facing staff continue to undergo mental health first aid training to support students and staff in crisis. Each faculty has dedicated safeguarding managers and officers to ensure the health and wellbeing of our students and staff.
- **Targeted counselling and occupational therapists:** SRUC are utilising the Scottish Government funding both to employ in-house counsellors (50% of funding) and to provide access to external counselling (50% of funding). This flexibility of use will enable us to ensure our diverse range of students receive the support they need. This is complemented by the piloting of TogetherAll live therapy. The additional £37k that SRUC received for mental health support is welcomed.

- **Online support:** working with SRUCSA, SRUC has a partnership with the charity SANE, providing access for students and staff to online support and out of hours telephone support until 22:30. Staff and their families have access to a 24/7 confidential employee assistance helpline which provides a range of practical and emotional support services.

**Student belonging:** understanding that mental health and wellbeing can be bolstered by connectedness, SRUC endeavours to support students to feel part of a learning community. This year, the community building has been focussed through our Virtual Learning Environment, (VLE), Moodle. This started through the online induction process, which was delivered at three levels – cross SRUC, cross Campus and within programme, all trying to ensure students feel part of their learning communities.

**Signposting to other support:** SRUC has created a directory of support agency contacts, online (e.g., through Moodle, MySRUC etc.), We have extensive connections with local authorities and third sector bodies and encourage students to connect with these as appropriate. We invite representatives from these to relevant cross-campus events in an attempt to support familiarity, and so to encourage use when required.

SRUC introduced in AY 2019/20 a new student app, MySRUC, to act as a single digital access point for students and education staff, to improve accessibility and enhance learner engagement. The ongoing pandemic has ramped up the use of the application. It offers a combination of information and interactive services and the portal will be further developed to facilitate online personal student support.

## 2.2 SRUC ensuring the wellbeing of staff

SRUC is aware that work plays a crucial part in most people's lives and the importance of supporting wellbeing. As an organisation we recognise that we have a responsibility to support and enhance staff wellbeing across the organisation.

### 2.2.1 Healthy Workplace & Wellbeing Strategy

Even before the unprecedented situation we have found ourselves in this year SRUC has always taken staff wellbeing seriously, developing in 2017 a Healthy Workplace & Wellbeing Strategy (2017 - 2020), which will be reviewed this year and will consider the lessons learned from the impact of COVID. The strategy outlines our mission to ensure that the SRUC community will have improved health and wellbeing and set out the direction of travel and provided a framework for future decisions. The strategy set out our priorities for the 3-year period, namely:

- Wellbeing
- A healthy workplace
- An effective strategy

To support the aims of this strategy the following are in place as a means of enabling staff across the organisation access the right support:

- **Occupational Health** - we engage the services of an occupation health partner, currently Duradiamond, to provide guidance, confidential and tailored to the individual need, on how we support staff to access the right support in the right way.
- **Mental Health First Aid** – to date 37 colleague across the organisation have undertaken in-person Mental Health First Aid training. This training teaches them how to help people developing a mental illness or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis. Mental Health First Aid is an initial response to distress and all trained staff understand that this help is given only until other suitable or professional help can be found.

- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** – SRUC has an EAP which provides a 24-hour support helpline from Health Assured to support staff through any of life's issues or problems. This is a completely confidential service. Services include: EAP, Home Life Support, Work Life Assistance, Physical and Emotional Health, Wellbeing Resources, Self Help Programmes, Mini Health checks and webinars.
- **TOGETHERALL** - All colleagues and students at SRUC can access free online support with Togetherall. Whether suffering from work-related stress, struggling to sleep or simply need someone to talk to, Togetherall helps individuals get support, take control and feel better. On Togetherall members are anonymous and this allow them to participate in the anonymous global community, express themselves creatively, and access a library of self-care resources, including clinical tests, tips and guided group courses with topics. Trained professionals are online 24/7 to keep all members safe and provide extra support.

### 2.2.2 Direct Response to COVID

As a direct response to the impact of the pandemic we have enhanced our provision with additional resources/signposting to support our community, including:

- E Learning modules including the recently added Digital Wellbeing and Mental Health module, a direct response to the impact of COVID
- Health & Wellbeing Reading list
- Links to external support organisations.
- Physical resources to enable staff to work effectively from home including digital and office equipment
- Supported managers to lead a team remotely, including check-ins, managing a flexible workforce to allow staff to balance work and personal needs

Over the course of the year as well as supporting the impact of COVID on the wellbeing of our staff it is giving us the opportunity to look at how we work and how we could work differently/more effectively in the future – in a more flexible and agile way supporting the wellbeing and work life balance of staff. This includes the development of a framework that will support the varying areas of the organising to review, discuss and formulate how this could work for their teams.

## 3. Fair Access and Transitions

SRUC is committed to widening access and we are keen to encourage students from the widest possible range of backgrounds to participate in Higher and Further Education and appreciate that not all students have had the same opportunities to meet our advertised entry requirements. For this reason, we aim to identify applicants who could benefit from additional consideration in the admissions process.

SRUC have undertaken a significant review of its Admissions area during 2019/20 and changes as a result of the review are being implemented during 2020/21. The changes fall in to two areas. The first is that we have updated and approved both our overarching admissions policy and our contextualised admissions policy. The second area is that we undertook a process review of our Admissions area. SRUC are moving to centralised on-line Admissions for FE programmes and we are also moving all progression applications (HNC to HND and HN to degree) to an online system. Both these changes will lead to a much quicker and streamlined experience for the applicants.

SRUC was one of three HE institutions to participate in the SFC funded pilot of the training developed to set out the [Principles of Good Transitions](#). Run by the Association for Real Change Scotland (ARC Scotland), 12 SRUC staff from across all campuses and with either a student support or teaching remit, together with representatives from partner local authorities, social services or education teams, worked through the seven principles which provide a framework for supporting the transition into and from college/university of students with additional support needs. It is now intended to roll out on a campus basis bringing together teaching and support staff.

## 4. Quality Learning and Teaching

### 4.1 Student success and retention

A recent review of student retention and success across full time FE and HE programmes indicates that despite the challenges associated with the pandemic in 2019/20, 77.7% of students enrolled on a National Certificate programme successfully achieved their award, this was only 0.7% below the success rate of this group in 2018/19 which was 78.4%. Withdrawal rates on these programmes did increase by 0.9% to 22.3% but this is still below the sector average for full time enrolments on recognised qualifications in 2018/19 which was 24.7%. Similarly, at HE level student success at HNC/Degree Year 1 to Degree Year 3, success rates dropped slightly, but all were above 80% and all were within 2 -3 percentage points of the same measure for that group in the previous academic year. Withdrawal rates also increased slightly with the highest increase occurring at HNC/Year 1 i.e., from 9.5% in 2018/19 to 12.2% in 2019/20, HND/ Degree Year 2 and Degree Year 3 were significantly lower at 6.4% and 3.5% respectively. Honours graduates however, saw an improvement in success with an increase from 87.9% in 2018/19 to 93.4% in 2019/20 and an allied drop in withdrawal from 6.9% to 4.1%. Colleagues within the academic teams and the support functions continue to work with students to help them to engage with new blended approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and to access additional support and funding during this academic year.

### 4.2 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy

In 2020, SRUC launched the new SRUC Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2020-2025 which is comprised of two pillars and ten principles to which all new and existing programmes of study will align, as well as a plan for implementation. Briefly the pillars are that “All learning, teaching and assessment at SRUC will enable learning for change and learning for all”. The ten principles underpinning the pillars include:

- Working with learners as partners;
- Designing realistic learning;
- Embedding global challenges;
- Designing research-informed curricula;
- Encouraging critical and creative thinking;
- Building learning communities;
- Providing flexible learner journeys;
- Designing inclusive learning;
- Designing active blended learning and
- Enabling independent learning.

One of the underlying principles of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement strategy is to design active blended learning i.e., combining hands-on, experiential learning with digitally-enhanced approaches, promoting digital intelligence and supporting flexible learning. This really underpins SRUC's approach to learning with impact. The Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) team had already made active steps towards addressing this approach in learning and teaching when the onset of the COVID pandemic accelerated this as a priority.



Activities associated with digital technologies in curriculum delivery have therefore been extensive and include:

- the establishment of a Digital Learning team within CELT to focus on staff development and the support of a digitally-enhanced approach to learning and teaching;
- the development of an intensive digital learning staff development programme, including the creation of a “Getting the Best out of Moodle” toolkit;
- the investment in and support for use of a range of digital learning software and hardware including improvement to Wi-Fi, use of drones, 360 camera and chatbots, use of lecture and virtual classroom software, and digital improvements to our library services;
- roll out of the Jisc’s Digital Insights survey to students and Digital Capabilities tool to staff to help prioritise areas for development;
- introduction of new staff Digital Champions and student Digital Experience fora;

As noted above, while staff and students needs with regard to digital learning intensified owing to COVID, much of the activity undertaken to support staff during this year was already anticipated (if not to the intensity required) owing to SRUC’s overall ambition towards a digitally-enhanced approach to learning and teaching. SRUC has recently engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to help develop a digital strategy, as part of this work there will be a wholesale review of the estate to ensure that it reflects the institutions pedagogic needs.

### 4.3 Digital Strategy

SRUC believes digital is the driving force of the fourth industrial revolution and therefore, to fulfil our full potential in the future as Scotland’s Enterprise University at the heart of the natural economy we must live a ‘digital first’ philosophy. The digital strategy sets out how we will create our own digital future. The strategy, launched in January 2021, has five key themes;

**Getting the digital basics right**- world class basics will underpin our future. Our foundations need to be digital ways of working and technology, supported by good governance

**Augment Research Support**- data is one of SRUC’s key assets, research activities can be optimising how data is stored, managed and shared with partners

**Building a Digital Culture**- a digital culture focuses on building digital skills for staff, digitally enabling and building innovation capabilities

**Create Customers Insight**- As customers become more digitally literate their expectations will shift and SRUC needs to meet them

**(Re)Defining the Learning Experience**- the Student Experience can be transformed: enhancing the current learning experience with digital innovations that enable cross platform learning and provide support to students outwith as well as within the teaching environment

### 4.4 Student Feedback

Feedback from students is gathered via a range of mechanisms and in 2020/21, SRUC launched the “My Voice” feedback mechanism within the virtual learning environment. This enables all students to provide feedback about any aspect of their student experience at any time during the year.

In 2019/20, SRUC saw a slight reduction in responses to the National Student Survey (71% from 75% in 2019); this is still above the Scottish average (70%). Overall satisfaction remained at 72%. However, there was a reduction, to varying degrees, of satisfaction at every scale.

Areas highlighted by the NSS, echoed in other student feedback, that are particularly problematic are:

- assessment and feedback, particularly around feedback timeliness;
- organisation and management, particularly around the programme running smoothly;
- student voice, particularly around how students’ feedback has been acted upon.

To address these, a range of activities have been put in place. For assessment and feedback, programme teams have been tasked with submitting feedback timetables for 2020/21 which are being monitored by Heads of Department. To address the underlying factors causing poor assessment and feedback satisfaction, a review of policy and practice is underway.

During the 2020 annual dialogue meetings with the Boards of Studies, it was evident that engagement with the range of student feedback approaches is variable and some subject areas were tasked with reviewing their approaches to and subsequent responses to that feedback. This included specific discussions about the National Student Survey with each team (as appropriate) being asked to create a specific action plan detailing their response.

Programmes that are particularly underperforming have been put into supportive measures. A fuller special measures process has been piloted, utilising a wider range of student feedback (i.e., not just the NSS), as well as performance against benchmark, bringing accountability into annual monitoring.

Recent feedback gathered via Faculty Panel meetings and the “My Voice” platform, have identified some key areas that students feel need to be considered when delivering online teaching i.e. the importance of giving students time before and after the teaching session to have some social time to chat to each other, delivering teaching in “bite-size” chunks with greater variation in activities and the importance of live contact to address the feeling of isolation that some students are experiencing. This feedback has been shared across the teaching teams to help enhance the student experience during this academic year.

At institutional level, the Student Journey Officer conducted a root and branch review of SRUC’s student voice activities. The associated report described a set of key recommendations covering a range of developmental activities including, improving data triangulation and clarity in relation to existing mechanisms, support for SRUCSA and their role in championing the student voice effectively and promoting a distinctive identity for the student voice at Board level. The next steps associated with the recommendations and further promotion of the “My Voice” system, will be actioned during the coming year.

Work is currently underway to prepare the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey for dissemination to eligible students for 2020/21. Focus will be given to promoting greater engagement with this survey as this has been identified as being below target in the past. SRUC will seek to maintain satisfaction levels in line with 2018-19 baseline figures.

## **5. Meeting Future Skills Needs Including Skilling and Upskilling**

The Scottish land based sector generated £27.1bn Gross Value Added in 2019, this represents 19.5 % of the total Scottish GVA in 2019 of £138.8bn. The sector generates some 340,000 jobs and between 2019 and 2029, there is forecast to be a total of 65,400 job openings across the land-based sector in Scotland, driven entirely by replacement demand, reflecting the aging profile of the workforce within the sector. In common with all sectors this is against a background of a decreasing number in the working age population which is projected to decrease by 4% until 2041 (source SDS Briefing Paper for SRUC, July 2019).

Our broader skills provision is developing in response to the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland ([Link here](#)), seeking to better understand and align our provision to the needs of rural employers and to provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision. The Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP), ([Link Here](#)) provides further context with agriculture and wider land-use, including forestry, one of the five main Scottish Government priority sectors within this plan. Moving to environmentally sustainable jobs, sectors and economies including the circular economy, will be a key element of achieving the net-zero carbon target for Scotland and SRUC has a vital role in maximising opportunities for people to gain the skills needed in a new green economy.

Against this backdrop SRUC wish to raise the level of our skills provision, presenting land-based as an innovative high tech, rewarding sector to young people, influencers, career changers and career progressors. This ambition is supported by provision driven by the SFC Upskilling Fund. Broader sectoral provision and employer engagement continue to be supported by Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) activity. Wherever possible we seek to respond to national initiatives.

Clearly if the sector is to be maintained then productivity will have to increase. Numerous reports recognise the role of skilling and reskilling the workforce in growing productivity. SRUC already delivers successful distance learning courses in several areas associated with the land-based sector. We have used our Skilling and reskilling funding to extend this and provide online level 11 (i.e. postgraduate level) accredited learning aimed at people employed in the rural sector. In the last twelve months we have provided level 11 accredited training to over 120 learners and currently have almost 100 undertaking courses. Our courses have delivered skills to:

- support the UK food supply chain
- support innovation in the rural sector
- develop skills and leadership in the rural community

We are extremely aware that the role of skills and training delivery at SRUC will be critical not only to our tertiary identity as an institution, but also to the national need to create a skilled Scottish workforce through upskilling and reskilling, particularly in relation to a green recovery. To that end, we have identified the need for a new leadership role at SRUC focusing on skills. The role will go to market for recruitment very shortly.

However, it must be noted that ambition and demand have been and continue to be constrained by COVID responses with limitations and restrictions on movement and social distancing impacting skills activity both in-college and in the workplace.

Adjustments to provide remote support for apprentices – for both pastoral, academic and monitoring purposes - have been introduced but delays in completions have been inevitable particularly within programmes designed around structured campus-based experiential learning and assessment e.g., Land-based Engineering. These situations are further compounded by reduced groups sizes on campus. The delivery of apprenticeship framework enhancements has been particularly challenging. Practical skills training activity has been heavily impacted across the land-based sector and across all our student groups. In addressing these issues, we will prioritise support for our students and apprentices when circumstances allow.

A particular focus through this period has been supporting senior phase school pupils and leavers who wish to enter the sector. In the North and South & West faculties we support the delivery of the Land-based Pre-Apprenticeship Pilot (essentially a Pathways to Apprenticeship-type programme) in partnership with Borders College and employers through the Scottish Machinery Ring Association (SMRA). In the south, again in partnership with Borders College and external partners we support the delivery of the Growing Rural Talent project (Scottish Government/South of Scotland Enterprise funded) which has developed work-based pathways into agriculture and forestry at SCQF4 for senior phase pupils. Both these programmes are founded on strong industry engagement.

More generally we continue to engage with partners and stakeholders to take a coordinated and strategic approach to tackling skills within and in support of the rural economy, including National Farmers Union Scotland, Skills for Farming, Skills Development Scotland, Lantra Scotland, Scottish Machinery Rings Association and the other land-based college providers across Scotland.

## **6. Equalities and Inclusion**

SRUC is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality and human rights.

In meeting the requirements of the Scottish Specific Duties SRUC has developed the following Equality Outcomes for 2017-2021 with an accompanying [action plan](#)

SRUC seek to foster an inclusive working and learning environment in which all employees and learners can fulfil their full potential. During 2019/20 the Equality, Human Rights and Inclusion Committee (EHRIC) was refreshed with new membership and remit. This is now the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and is chaired by the Director of Professional Services. The revitalised membership has ensured all areas of SRUC's operations are represented.

To support this refreshed approach to EDI, a new EDI Lead has been appointed and is responsible for coordinating an embedded approach to equality and diversity, recognising that operationalisation of our Public Sector Equality Duties is the responsibility of every member of staff.

Equality and diversity is being embedded in our processes: it is core to the new Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2020-2025, with Learning for All being one of its pillars and Inclusive Learning Design being one of its principles. KPIs around diversity data are embedded in annual monitoring and are included within the proposed special measures process.

Support for disabilities, including mental health has been a significant focus within SRUC (as noted previously) and SRUC has refreshed its British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for 2020: this has four action areas (1) Widening access to services for BSL users; (2) Staff development; (3) Maximising our Curriculum and Research to support the delivery of the BSL National Plan; (4) Monitoring, Review and Evaluation. For the first time, the SRUC Graduation Ceremony in July 2019 was signed, as were key induction videos (e.g. Principal's and SRUCSA's welcome).

Gender imbalance within SRUC's governance structure was a focus – SRUC's Board now consist of 42% female Non-executive directors (was 20% in November 2016), the Executive leadership team has increased from 0% in March 2018, to 29% female currently and the Senior Leadership team is 53% female. SRUC is currently working towards an institutional bronze Athena SWAN award and will apply for this in April 2021. A new Transgender Policy was co-developed with SRUCSA during the 2019/20 academic year.

SRUC has established a cross-institutional, cross-divisional Corporate Parenting Working Group, with both SRUCSA and student representation, which will review and refresh our Corporate Parenting Plan.

## 7. Targets

SRUC note the confirmation that SFC do not require targets for Academic Year 2020/21 and SRUC can confirm to maintain, wherever possible the levels of performance as in the 2018/19 base line year. There are a number of points;

- SRUC's HE SFC fundable places was 1460 FTEs. The SFC Early Statistics return showed SRUC's total fundable number at 1492.5 FTEs, the first time in a number of years that the fundable places target for HE has been exceeded.
- The number of Scottish undergraduate entrants for the current Academic Year is 745, not 867 (the figure from AY2018/19). This change is because, following SFC advice, we have this year excluded internal SRUC students progressing from an HND to year 3 of a degree.
- COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first-degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas is 11.4%, an increase from the 2018/19 level
- Delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship contract is currently below target but in line with current national activity. SRUC will seek to increase this activity when possible.
- Credit delivery is a little below target currently due to a reduction in the credits assigned to curriculum plans and a reduction in some delivery e.g. schools delivery.

## 8. Climate Change

As part of SRUC's remit we deliver systems-based solutions to tackling local, national and global agri-food greenhouse gas emissions, through a better understanding of how these emissions arise in agri-food systems and how they may be mitigated by various strategies. SRUC as a Scottish Public Body has an obligation to report on its climate change mitigation strategies in a comprehensive annual report to Scottish Government. SRUC has a clearly defined environment policy and to ensure that this is implemented fully and effectively, across all its activities, and across all its sites, SRUC has defined and put in place the essential management structures, responsibilities and authorities.

SRUC has recently reported on its five-year Carbon Management Plan 2014-2020. The plan committed SRUC to a 40% reduction in carbon emissions and we are pleased to report that this has been exceeded in the period (Table 1):

**Table 1 SRUC Carbon Emission Data 2014 – 20**

Year	Co2	Reduction %
2014/15	9,263.0	0
2015/16	8,329.8	10.1%
2016/17	7,331.7	20.8%
2017/18	6,930.5	25.2%
2018/19	5,854.8	36.8%
2019/20	5,327.7	42.5%

Major initiatives that have allowed us to meet these commitments include:

- Estate rationalisation/office moves/new builds etc
- Carbon saving projects & behaviour/housekeeping initiatives

We are now developing our Carbon Management Plan 2020 – 25 aimed at ensuring SRUC meets the targets in The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets), (Scotland) Act 2019 to achieve a 75% reduction by 2030 with a focus on achieving net Zero by 2045.

In formulating our new carbon management plan we aim to build on and strengthen the gains achieved in the previous period but add additional activity in terms of:

- **Energy Performance** ensuring that our estate meets and exceeds the requirements of new regulation including ensuring our rented domestic accommodation complies with the Energy Efficiency (Domestic Private Rented Property) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 setting targets so that all rented properties must achieve an EPC rating of D by 2025
- **Decarbonisation of the electricity supply** on a Scotland wide basis will help with one aspect of emissions reduction. However, the reliance on fossil fuels for space heating is a more challenging area. Going forward, enhancement of thermal efficiency of SRUC buildings, coupled with the use of heat pumps, will be a key feature in the carbon management plan. For any new buildings, a commitment to the highest efficiency standards, and heat pumps as the default initial heating solution, will help to limit expensive conversion costs in future, although initial costs will be higher.
- **Rationalised Estate** - we will also continue to investigate opportunities for a rationalised fit for purpose estate, which focuses on key themes such as agile working, space culture, the use of technology to enable our buildings to operate intelligently and flexible/connected spaces, which will transform the way we operate. The COVID pandemic has proven that home working can be delivered whilst ensuring service delivery in certain areas is maintained and these initiatives will enable the built estate to contract and with it reduce the carbon footprint accordingly.
- **Transport.** The rapid and sustained increase in the use of digital conferencing via various platforms has dramatically reduced the carbon footprint of our travel during the current COVID pandemic. We will seek to maintain and embed these savings in our new ways of working going forward.
- **Legislation.** Petrol and diesel cars will be banned from being sold from 2030 onwards, we will develop of a strategy to provide electric car charging points within SRUC facilities as well as developing electric vehicle policies for staff and student transport.
- **Farms emissions.** In its consultation paper of 2019, the Scottish Government recognised the challenge of emissions reduction in agriculture and certain industrial sectors and

proposed that to achieve the “net zero” target, those emissions would need to be balanced by other “negative emission solutions”. Given SRUCs significant strength in depth in research and consultancy in this area we wish to be seen an exemplar of good practise. Thus, we have formed an expert group to review emissions on our farms and advise on approaches to ensure that the sustained reduction in fam based emissions is part of our new carbon management plan

## 9. High Quality Research and Innovation

The Research Strategy for SRUC has been redeveloped to reflect our changing structure and adoption of a faculty delivery structure and to ensure SRUC’s research activity is both internationally competitive and impactful. Research at SRUC aims to deliver high quality challenge focussed findings to help understand and transform the world around us, locally and globally. Working in partnership with industry, policy and society our staff and students will collaborate to design, develop and deliver our underpinning strategy of driving real world change to the challenges we face. Our key Objectives in our Strategy are;

**Delivering research to drive innovation and change in the natural economy:** Research is evolving to a model that breaks down traditional “boundaries” between disciplines; academia with industry and society; and geographies. New ways of cocreating and doing such transboundary research are emerging regularly and are required to address these societal challenges and social concerns. We will build on an outstanding base of research and practitioner scholarship within all our disciplines, and in the interdisciplinary spaces that develop from them. From this, we deliver knowledge and ideas that inform policy, support enterprise, deliver innovation, and enrich culture and society. Our excellence in innovation will be exemplified by growth in scale and diversity of our research portfolio (funders, project leaders, single discipline to interdisciplinary, academic to industry informed and led).

**Achieving research impact through delivery and partnership:** Research and innovation are essential drivers of a dynamic natural economy and must be informed by society and user communities. We must ensure that research can actually influence behaviour in the ‘real world’, linking knowledge with practice to inform how we best achieve impact and develop future research areas. We harness all our resources and partnerships to ensure the delivery of impact at scale and in place, locally and globally. Working with key internal and external groups we will build our capacity for the planning, delivery, evaluation and communication of impact as well as linking with the institutional enterprise and learning & teaching strategies to help embed research in their respective plans.

**Developing the intellectual capital to drive change:** Our activities in research and innovation at both academic and application scales should be central and distinguishing features of the education we deliver and the development of the talent base underpinning our natural economy. We will transform our postgraduate research activity through a Doctoral College that sits across SRUC leading to our PGR students becoming an integral part of SRUC research, delivering a cohort of skilled research-trained individuals to fuel a knowledge based natural economy. This will be enhanced through partnership with industry, policy and academic partners.

A key area that sits across our Research strategy is the initiation of a **Challenge Focussed Research Portfolio**. Changing global political landscapes present significant challenges and opportunities for all in research and education to address the major challenges we face as a society which include food and nutrition security from a healthy and safe environment in the presence of climate change. SRUC has a vital role in ensuring evidence and scientific insight informs how we respond to these challenges. **Challenge Driven Research Centres** will be the key collaborative research platform in SRUC bringing together academic, industry and policy experts to address and deliver to the key global and local challenges. They will be typically multi and interdisciplinary and will draw on experts from across SRUC, SAC Consulting and partners, further expanding the breadth of experience available for our student body.

- Driving Data and Digital Innovation

- Global Climate Emergency
- Safe & Improved Food
- Thriving Natural Capital for Scotland
- Future Food Systems

These prestigious centres will be based on the outstanding research and commercial strength of SRUC and ensure we help to shape the next generation of interdisciplinary research leaders and practitioners. We will have systems and structures in place to ensure delivery of excellent research and innovation from our Challenge Driven Research Centre, and that they have strong and synergistic connections to our core disciplines (academic and commercial) while also supporting interdisciplinarity.

## 10. Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

Our Knowledge Exchange (KE) and innovation activities for the year prioritise the key challenges facing the natural economy, helping the businesses with which we engage to work more sustainably and more profitably to overcome COVID challenges and meet net zero and environmental targets. Our KE and Innovation activities for this year support outreach to the industries most impacted by COVID. We are retaining a focus on virtual events and on-line resources for the year, although our consultants are able to continue to support individual business through essential farm business visits during periods of tighter COVID restrictions (Section 11). In planning KE methods for this year we have moved away from large events and prioritised small groups, retaining the flexibility to run KE activities with small groups in physical or virtual formats as local rules through the year allow.

A move to digital delivery methods brings advantages compared to physical events in making KE and Innovation activities more accessible to some audience sectors such as those in remote rural areas. It also facilitates the inclusion of students in innovative KE activities, with the easier inclusion in teaching programmes of live and recorded content, and students are now better able to attend industry facing seminars and evening meetings. Delivery methods accessible to students include workshops, farmer discussion groups and virtual tours of farms and trial sites. We recognise however that digital delivery does not suit all stakeholders and we have invested in additional staff resource to drive equality, diversity and inclusivity in our KE and impact delivery.

Food and drink businesses are having to adapt rapidly to COVID challenges, and our new product development team are working on innovations in new food and drink products and novel production systems, including vertical farming and aquaponics. To engage students and further support the food and drinks industry we are developing 'Thrive' in collaboration with Abertay and Queen Margaret Universities. This initiative is developing a food and drink summer school for students and recent graduates, teaching them how to navigate the innovation ecosystem and think holistically about the entrepreneurial journey. Engaging with industry speakers, students will understand the business start-up process and develop their skills of entrepreneurship.

Through our 'Orchard' programme staff are developing commercial services that will support rural business with a suite of new diagnostics and laboratory tests developed from research projects. The test services developed, that will help rural businesses mitigate losses to animal diseases, for example through a test that will allow early indications of campylobacter in poultry, facilitating early intervention. Working with the animal supply chain, we are developing a commercial service which will offer a tool that will quantify animal welfare standards, and we will work with supermarkets and others in the supply chain to add value to best practice business and the animal sectors. We will also develop on-line training material using new techniques which 'nudge' for behavioural change and these will optimise delivery and impact on high welfare practice on farm. Our students will also benefit from this novel training content which engages them in impactful behaviour change concepts.

The dairy industry was one of the most impacted of the rural sectors by COVID and our innovation and KE priorities for this key Scottish sector include activities promoting precision approaches and the use of data driven platforms to track productivity and manage inputs, with a suite of activities planned with local business in the south west of Scotland. The dairy, beef and sheep industries are moving

forward to more environmentally sustainable methods and, to this end, we have planned KE projects to drive efficiencies. These include events such as 'Calf Crop' and 'Lamb Crop' that transfer research findings which aid decision making (in this case at calving and lambing) which reduce animal losses and improve welfare. Driving farm improvements in pasture-use efficiency, we plan a cohesive package of grazing knowledge transfer material. We hope to build on the image of Scotland's quality pasture-raised meat by encouraging more growers to improve grass-use efficiency.

The upswing in people visiting rural areas during the pandemic brings opportunities for local businesses, but also challenges in terms of protecting areas of natural beauty, managing high visitor numbers and irresponsible behaviours. We plan projects that transfer our research into natural capital by working with tourist related businesses to form local collaborations and local campaigns that promote responsible behaviours amongst visitors and collaborative business ventures.

Policy engagement remains as a key priority and we will help link industry to policy, supporting for examples Scottish Government farmer led groups working on post CAP policy incentives that meet net-zero challenges. KE and Innovation activities will also support key policy initiatives, for example around tree planting and carbon sequestration.

## **11. Supporting Scotland's Rural Sector through SAC Consulting Services**

SAC Consulting forms an important part of the knowledge transfer part of SRUC's role. While SAC Consulting does not receive any form of public grant toward education it does have contact with over half of the active farmers and crofters across Scotland, with approximately 8,200 annual subscribers to its services. Further, SAC Consulting runs many of the Scottish Government farm advisory or knowledge transfer projects and programs and, during the COVID pandemic constraints, the largest of these has reached over 4000 participants.

The above provides the context for the measures taken by SAC Consulting in order to provide continuity of service and to not let COVID slow down the momentum gained from previous years.

For its subscribers:

- Increased Customer contact – launched a monthly newsletter called Uearthed as well as Uearthed Local. Publications designed to bring subscribers closer to SAC Consulting services and to get them the required support.
- Continued Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund and University Innovation Fund funded work without delay, involving farmer groups online.
- The Scottish Enterprise Rural Leadership Program ([Link here](#)) moved online, with great success and engaged feedback, 100% of target enrolled across Scotland. This unique and challenging programme has a new virtual format and is now in its 14th year with over 630 graduates. The Scottish Enterprise Rural Leadership Programme is designed to equip rural business owners and managers with the confidence and skills to make bold decisions and to get the best from themselves, their business and their team.
- Immediate switch to delivery of remote IACS (single farm payment application processing) which was fully moved to phone, digital mapping and video meetings, securing over £300M of EU money to Scottish farmers.

One of SRUC's major advisory programs, the Farm Advisory service ([COVID-19 section on the FAS website](#)), was flexible and though not planned, it was able to quickly adjust to bring out COVID relevant advice, change gear to talk about Brexit preparations ([the Brexit section](#)). In much the same way it was an important part of the response to the beast from the east as it quickly adapted to help farmers and crofters through a shortage in feed and forage.



In April, the program went from face to face to digital and we now anticipate it will continue with a blended approach in future due to the big increases in participation (Table 2).

**Table 2: Participation rates in Farm Advisory Scheme Events**

Target measure	Target	Actual	Number delivered versus target	Percentage delivered versus target
Events	156	143	-13	92%
Event attendees	2,964	4,247	+1,283	143%
Average attendance	19	30	+11	158%
Publications	252	299	+47	118%
Videos	56	142	+86	254%
Podcasts	47	90	+43	191%
Online tools	13	16	+3	123%

This was all done remotely or, in the case of some videos, socially distanced.

## **SRUC Interim Outcome Agreement – SRUC Response to Current Emergency**

- ***Which stakeholders are you working with to ensure that course provision remains responsive to shifting needs of employers/industry?***

Stakeholder engagement occurs at different levels within SRUC – from the strategic engagement with national initiatives such as the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland ISG, Skills for Farming Group and the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan to the course and subject specific engagement that has continued with long-standing employer links through, for example delivery of land-based engineering apprenticeship programmes with New Holland and Claas. SRUC also engages with employer representative groups such as NFUS, SMRA (representing machinery rings) and organisations such as the Institute of Agriculture Management.

SRUC, through its consultancy arm, SAC consulting, provides direct feedback from practitioners across a range of areas including farm businesses, environmental and food chain employers and this is augmented by direct employer engagement through, for example, the roll out of the flexible workforce development fund and engagement with businesses as employers of Modern Apprenticeship candidates.

The Programme lead for Forestry at SRUC Barony sits on the Scottish Government supported Scottish Forestry & Timber Technologies Skills Group and has also established an Industry Liaison Group (with representatives from e.g. Lantra, Confor) specifically for the Forestry programme at Barony and regular meetings have also been established with colleagues in Confor and Scottish Forestry to discuss developments and training opportunities in the wider industry.

SRUC is currently also in the process of undertaking Institution-Led Review in four areas i.e. Work Based Learning; Golf, Greenkeeping and Hospitality; Veterinary and Animal Sciences and Horticulture and Landscape. These reviews are at various stages of progression but all have or will be undertaking stakeholder engagement with current students, Alumni and industry representatives to inform both the review of current provision and feed into the planned revalidation of awards associated with these subject areas.

- ***What specific needs employers/industry have identified, both short-term and longer-term, and how you are adapting or shifting your provision in response? (with particular reference to courses starting in January/February)***

There are several examples of these across SRUC's curriculum area. The engagement with forestry industry stakeholders in particular has indicated the need to broaden out course provision in two ways (a) the expansion from the current FE provision into HE needs to focus on the type of applied skills obtained and HNC/HND level and (b) the need for a wider range of short course provision which adds to but goes beyond basic chainsaw use and maintenance. This has led to the development of an HNC/HND in Forestry and Urban Forestry being offered at SRUC Barony from September 2021 and to consideration of the development of new short courses (e.g. use of drones in forestry, advance aerial rescue techniques).

Agricultural and forestry sectors are considering the Climate Emergency and the related skills challenges. One of the major issues raised in last 12 months is need to move toward zero carbon, an example is Dairy Growth Board 2030 strategy [Link](#). Environmental issues, including climate emergency, are integrated throughout modules and the SRUC Carbon footprinting tool AgreCalc [Link](#) is used to provide examples of the carbon footprint of different farming systems. At higher level courses students can use the tool to explore the effects of changes in management systems on the emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

In the Modern Apprenticeship area, since March 2020, SRUC saw a delay to the uptake of apprenticeships however there are positive signs from January 2021 of employers taking on MA candidates and the additional support through Apprenticeship Employer Grant (AEG) has been very beneficial in this. The higher profile of MA opportunities and marketing campaigns may also be encouraging potential employers to come forward. One area under development in Scotland that we are picking up a significant potential interest in is the new MA in Veterinary Nursing (VN). The withdrawal of City and Guilds from VN qualifications has left a gap and SRUC and employers welcome the development in Scotland of a MA framework. The development of Technical Apprenticeship (SCQF8) in Agriculture is also being considered – in response to industry demand.

SRUC has recently submitted three development opportunity requests to SQA. These include requests to revalidate the Higher National Agriculture and Professional Golf awards and to develop a new Agricultural Technology award. The HN Agriculture award was the subject of extensive stakeholder engagement in 2018, which identified the need to modernise the units in line with developments in the sector and to enable smoother articulation to degree level provision. The Agricultural Technology award acknowledges the specific advances in technology in the sector as being distinct from the traditional agricultural awards and seeks to attract new entrants with specialist knowledge and skills in response to this growth area.

- **Which groups, or issues, are you particularly seeking to respond to e.g. those recently becoming unemployed, young people entering the workplace for the first time, those who have previously been furthest from the job market, upskilling, reskilling, retraining?**

Historically in Land Based Engineering and Forestry, the focus has been on young people entering the workplace for the first time and upskilling existing employees in the industry, while in Wildlife & Conservation Management there has been a focus on both young people entering the workplace for the first time and reskilling of mature students looking to change career paths. In the Forestry programme we had plans in place to work with the Princes Countryside Trust during 2020 to raise awareness among unemployed young people (16-24 age bracket) of career opportunities in forestry but the ongoing pandemic prevented that. The Scottish Government aspiration for a Green Economic Recovery from the pandemic and to help address climate change should provide some opportunity to engage more with those seeking reskilling and retraining, especially in forestry and wildlife spheres.

In Agriculture too, the focus tends to be on young people and particularly on encouraging those that perhaps do not have a background in agriculture to consider the broad range of opportunities available. Initiatives such as the agriculture pre-apprenticeships and the Growing Rural Talent programme aim to encourage a wider group of young people to gain qualifications and progress in the sector.

- **How you are managing the work-based learning and practical aspects of course provision and ensuring students are prepared for the workplace given ongoing constraints during this year.**

Work-based learning delivery to a greater extent has continued through COVID albeit with restrictions on visits to workplaces and campus / off-the-job elements though some MA qualifications have been hampered by employers putting staff on furlough. Feedback from a sample of our employers and apprentices undertaken by SDS as part of formal review was positive as to SRUC's approach.

Prioritisation of practical apprentice training enhancements and campus blocks for training / assessment purposes are essential to complete current candidates though apprentices and employers are mainly understanding and accepting of the ongoing situation.

In reality meeting practical requirements in many of SRUC's FE and HE vocational qualifications, traditionally delivered on Campus, has been challenging – practical aspects of taught courses have been pared back to the essentials for the qualification but even then have proven difficult to deliver given periods of face-to-face teaching restrictions and subsequent limits on number of students able to access campuses. There has been an increased use of industry based specialist inputs into programmes and many examples of the normal practical experience being recorded to share with students through digital formats.

Specific challenges have been felt by the very practical programmes – forestry, land-based engineering, forgework and veterinary nursing. Veterinary nursing at both FE and HE levels have been challenged due to availability of placements and the diversity of practical experiences that have been available on placements. RCVS has strict regulatory requirements to meet accreditation, though flexibility has been shown to reduce the number of hours required to be in the workplace. SRUC staff, students and employers have worked hard to ensure students meet the necessary requirements and we hope that with short extensions over the summer, the vast majority of completing students will meet the necessary requirements.

- **How are you maintaining the quality of the student learning experience and how are you monitoring student engagement with their programme of study with the college or university?**

SRUC has worked closely with its validating Universities, Awarding Bodies and both Education Scotland and Quality Assurance Agency Scotland to stay abreast of changes in the sector and implement changes in line with the advice and guidance emerging from these organisations.

Following on from the full pivot to online/ blended learning in April 2020 which necessitated significant changes in learning, teaching and assessment approaches across the board, SRUC has continued to implement this approach for 2021. The Boards of Studies have been integral in underpinning the approach to this academic year and have served as an important forum for discussing changes to programmes at all levels and ensuring that there is parity of student experience across all campuses. Both the Registrar and the Quality Assurance Lead have attended key meetings of the Boards and will continue to do so for the rest of this academic year.

At the start of the academic year, programme teams delivering degree programmes were issued with refreshed guidance for the conduct of remote assessments. Changes to assessment approaches were discussed and agreed by teams across the sites, ratified by the Boards of Studies, internally moderated and submitted to the external examiners for external moderation prior to use. Normal post moderation activities have continued and a new focus on assessment and feedback monitoring has been implemented to address the ongoing issue associated with the timeliness of resulting.

For programmes awarded by SQA, the Quality Team have participated in all Quality Focus Group meetings and have actively supported programme teams to implement the alterations to assessment approaches introduced for this academic year. Programme teams have actively sought ways to integrate and adapt assessments using the established internal verification procedures and the pre and prior verification services offered by SQA. Programme Teams actively contributed to the recent exercise to identify programmes at risk

of non-completion due to ongoing restrictions and as a result have contributed to the development of subject specific guidance for the completion of the academic year, which will help to promote achievement (under extremely difficult circumstances) in the land based sector which is heavily practical based.

Similarly, the Quality Co-ordinator has been closely monitoring the guidance issued by the other Awarding Bodies i.e. City and Guilds, IMI etc. and have supported teams to implement the guidance as it has become available.

Procedures for external verification/ moderation were adapted at the end of the 2020 academic year to support remote access to student evidence within the virtual learning environment. These processes will once again be implemented in 2021. SRUC also works with the Awarding Bodies to set up access to materials via Teams and to set up meetings with colleagues and externals using Teams as the preferred meeting platform. Feedback from students has been actively encouraged through the normal unit/module reviews available for all units/modules in Moodle and this has been further enhanced by the introduction of the “My Voice” platform. This enables student feedback to be gathered on an ongoing basis throughout the year and has resulted in some valuable feedback for teaching colleagues in relation to what students have enjoyed and what they would like to change. This is in addition to the normal student liaison group meetings which are conducted at a programme level during each semester. SRUC is also currently in the process of gathering student feedback via both the National Student Survey and the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey.

### **Monitoring Student Engagement**

At the start of the academic year, modified guidance for the monitoring of student attendance and engagement was issued to all colleagues. SRUC is cognisant that the ongoing circumstances have had a varying but significant impact on all students. To take account of this, two new positive attendance marks have been added to the register options i.e. “*Attended live online class*” and “*Engaged online material*”. Colleagues were advised that where possible student attendance at “live” teaching sessions should be recorded as “*Attended live session*”, however where a student is not able to attend the live session, engagement with online materials and activities should be monitored via the virtual learning environment i.e. provided the student has engaged with the materials during the week subsequent to the session then they would be marked as “*Engaged online material*”. Where students have not actively engaged, this should be flagged to the Year Tutor as per the normal attendance procedures and followed up in a supportive manner in the first instance to ensure that the students are coping with the altered approach to teaching and learning.

## College Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21
A Credits Delivered (Core)	19,446	18,670	23,273	23,167	22,469	22,747
Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	414	0	0	0	0
Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	19,446	19,084	23,273	23,167	22,469	22,747
B Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	1,305	1,111	1,341	1,217	1,168	1,183
Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	6.7%	5.8%	5.8%	5.3%	5.2%	5.2%
C Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0	73	81	127	591	445
Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%	2.6%	2.6%
D Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	2	8	38	41	94	94
E1 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	66.2%	71.4%	70.1%	68.3%	70.1%	70.1%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	489	497	647	567	531	600
Total number of FTFE students	739	696	923	830	757	855
E2 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	88.1%	91.5%	92.4%	92.6%	93.9%	93.9%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	3,563	3,446	3,001	3,466	3,914	3,000
Total number of PTFE students	4,046	3,768	3,248	3,743	4,170	3,200
E3 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of FTHE students	0	0	0	0	0	0
E4 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of PTHE students	0	0	0	0	0	0
F Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses	54	53	50	47	0	60
Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	24	28	26	19	0	80
Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	44.4%	52.8%	52.0%	40.4%	-	40.4%
G Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	472	445	508	484	0	500
Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	445	423	489	450	0	450
Proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	94.3%	95.1%	96.3%	93.0%	-	93.0%
Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proportion of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	-	-	-	-	-	-
H Percentage of students overall satisfied with their college experience (SSES survey)	-	97.0%	87.6%	N/A	91.2%	91.2%

## University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21
A Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	892	858	866	850	867	867
B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	37	49	26	41	0	313
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	34	29	25	35	0	290
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	91.9%	59.2%	96.2%	85.4%		85.4%
C COWA measure: Total number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants	228	266	199	201	190	123
COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	24	22	15	21	20	14
COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	10.5%	8.3%	7.5%	10.4%	10.5%	11.4%
D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	1	4	5	1	2	2
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	0.1%	0.5%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
E Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants	836	823	791	776	743	659
Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	716	683	637	626	636	640
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	85.6%	83.0%	80.5%	80.7%	85.6%	85.6%
F The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey	-5	-9	-7	-14	-12.3	-10.0
G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey	0	0	0	310	0	320
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination	0	0	0	298	0	1
The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				96.1%		96.1%
G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment	0	0	0	88	0	88
The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment	0	0	0	44	0	46
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment				50.0%		50.0%
H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers	662	445	720	609	692	692

We had 23 students start at year 1 with HN qualifications gained over the last 2 years. 11 of the 23 had g

13 from outwith SRUC

## **Short update on SRUC 2020-21 UIF plans for SFC**

As previously reported, this year we have supported a move to digital engagement with our knowledge exchange and business engagement activities and we have continued to review uptake and impact – we see greater numbers of small business in remote areas engaging in events, with positive feedback on flexibility with timings as well so, for example, farming businesses find it easier to integrate events into their working day. We have supported 43 business and policy events with UIF funding so far in 2020-21, promoting findings from research projects ranging from improved productivity in crops and animals, through to initiatives adding value in supply chains – for example through trading in social impact bonds.

Since the last report we have reviewed our SRUC Orchard programme which supports staff and students to develop entrepreneurial ideas with UIF funds. Our Orchard Programme is established in a funnel model with a wide entry – investment portfolio style - in the expectation that a small number of projects will succeed, and the others fail fast. The projects are supported by training and mentoring throughout their life at the Orchard and once “graduated” from the Orchard and ready to commercialise, they are taken over by the SRUC Head of New Business Development, thus working in tandem to bring the new products or services to market. We launched this in February 2019 and to date, 39 entries were received in total, of which 16 were funded.

This year we had a fresh call for ideas and have also supported some of the early ideas with phase 2 funding. Projects successes supported with funding this year include a project on the use of miRNA's in the diagnosis of cardiac disease. A patent was applied for (Application No. 2014190.9) and SRUC supported the staff member to establish a spinout company (MI:RNA) 25% owned by SRUC. The concept attracted prize money from innovation and enterprise competitions totalling to-date £76k and is currently being pitched to investors. SRUC staff are carrying out validation work to deliver future services when operations begin. The project brought SRUC staff and students contact and experience in the Scottish innovation space, and SRUC are now recognised as an active participant at Scottish Edge; Royal Society Edinburgh; Converge; Scottish Enterprise (High Growth Spin-out programme) and the Scottish government 'Unlocking Ambition' programme.

A second UIF funded project used a research metric developed at SRUC to score animal welfare (Quantitative Behaviour Assessment) and built this in to an app and this year attracted its first customer commission – the retailer Waitrose. UIF investment of £71k, attracted income of £120k. This has a potential national and international client list and 36 have already expressed intention to license. In addition, it attracted major UK press interest including Countryfile, Farmers Guardian and the Grocer. It was also presented at the Waitrose Annual Conference, placing SRUC at the heart of animal welfare innovation.

Another successful project supported this year in partnership with business is a new support service for grazing management. This was trademarked as GrazeUp (UK00003449470) and new promotional videos were developed. This project is now ready to trade and UIF funds facilitated the training of a team to deliver GrazeUp and created marketing materials to promote and sell this new service.



A project arising from education in golf called 'SIGMa' (Sustainable and Innovative Golf Management) was supported to position golf education in line with Royal & Ancient strategy in sustainability. We are in discussion with a business partner for delivery of services to the golf industry, including adoption of new technologies to reduce inputs and preserve the natural environment. Other initiatives around skills and training in 20/21 include a new CPD course for Vet nurses (Copyright material) – ready to commence sales. This uses novel behavioural insights on 'nudging' to alter behaviours and will be developed to the business planning stage in the next few months. At our Barony campus we supported the development of a new tree nursery which is trading already and has a client pipeline in place. Student participation in this project has been high and in addition it has revitalised what was previously a derelict facility.

Project concepts that we are now developing in the remaining part of 20/21 include developing one or more of the SRUC farms into an exemplar Net Zero Farm, as a platform for industry and student engagement. We also have a number of projects in development to launch and bring to market new analytical services using biomarkers. This is an area of potential growth and further commercial training will be offered to the academics involved.

As part of the UIF programme we invest in an innovation and enterprise training programme, to train SRUC colleagues irrespective of whether they had running projects in the Orchard. During Phase 2, 40 colleagues attended training sessions, seminars and workshops. SRUC has just appointed a new Reader in Rural Enterprise and we will incorporate that expertise in shaping any future offerings to staff, students, alumni and the wider community.

Lastly – policy engagement remains as a key priority and we plan a relaunch of our Rural Policy Centre (RPC) after Easter. The RPC was established in 2007 however, the internal and external contexts in which the RPC operates have changed significantly since 2007. A number of key drivers mean that it is particularly timely to relaunch the RPC and we will help link industry to policy, supporting for example Scottish Government farmer led groups working on post CAP policy incentives that meet net-zero challenges. KE and innovation activities will also support key policy initiatives, for example around tree planting and carbon sequestration.

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