

My connection with SICSA:

I am representing Abertay University at SICSA meetings. My role is to engage staff with SICSA relevant information at the University and share pertinent staff perspectives with other SICSA representatives at the scheduled meetings to influence further SICSA activities and themes.

This response is formulated with input from Deans of Schools (School of Design and Informatics, Graduate School) and Division Leaders (Cybersecurity, Computing & Mathematics, Games & Arts).

Section 1: Initial research pooling initiative

Q1a. What has been the impact of the initial research pooling initiative?

The pooling initiative has supported Abertay University to effectively network with partner institutions to secure funding for research and knowledge exchange activities in the Computer Science domain to support local infrastructures in the Tayside area and beyond. This is evidenced by two major R&D Centres led by Abertay (total £35M), the first being the Cyber Quarter (£23.4M) as part of the Tay Cities deal (<https://www.abertay.ac.uk/news/2018/abertay-to-lead-new-117m-cybersecurity-centre/>) and the second in the area of games, InGAME (£11.5M) (<https://www.abertay.ac.uk/news/2018/abertay-to-lead-multi-million-pound-games-innovation-partnership/>). Both projects will benefit Scottish Universities and government bodies (Cybersecurity) and industry (InGAME) with research innovations and knowledge exchange activities that will contribute to the next and future REFs, and generate research output and impact for Scotland.

The pooling initiative makes a broader and important contribution to RKE through supporting international research exchanges and events for staff and research students including subject specific networking events, summer schools and DemoFests which Abertay participates in regularly.

Q1b. What lessons can be learnt from the research pooling initiative?

The most cost effective mechanisms of SICSA to date were the SICSA funded PhD studentships. Abertay deployed its SICSA studentships strategically, focusing on cybersecurity. The work arising from those studentships contributed to our agenda that has led to the CyberQuarter.

Less cost-effective but also important were the SICSA staff posts, which allowed us to make high quality appointments in strategic areas (computational modelling and interactive visualisation) that underpinned our InGAME application.

Neither of these opportunities were in place for the second phase of SICSA funding and so phase 2 has had less of an impact. The summer schools and DemoFests have continued to work well across both phases.

Section 2: Pooling now and in the future

Q2a. In the current research landscape, what is the perception of, and role for, the pools?

The role of pools is essential for networking on national level (Scotland). The University is committed to be part of the SICSA pool, as opportunities for funding and scholarship are essential for the research community.

As the Scottish landscape evolves it becomes more complex – pools are now sharing the RKE space with Innovation Centres and Scottish Graduate Schools. Abertay would like to see more events that are cross - Pool / Graduate School / Innovation Centre / Scottish Enterprise / Interface / ... in recognition of the increasingly interconnected problem spaces in which RKE takes place.

For Abertay, this is especially the case in the cyber security and games areas, where industry collaborations are vital to inform the University's teaching and research portfolio. The importance of the cybersecurity theme in particular continues to increase, with cyber threats and breaches reported regularly in the media, threatening political, societal and economic security. Thus, this theme is of particular importance to Scotland. While the pools are theme oriented, it should be recognised that interdisciplinary work can still be aligned with those themes. For example, it would be desirable to more formally align research pooling with innovation centre calls, i.e. openly support collaboration between universities on innovation projects. Furthermore, we would hope to see the Research Pools and Innovation Centres provide enhanced support and coordination for cross institutional Industrial Strategy bid preparation within Scotland.

Q2b. Should research pools have a continuing role in the Scottish research base?

Yes. Collaborations between institutions should be supported to stimulate research at, and enhance reputation of, Scottish Universities. See note in 2a

Section 3: Anything else

Any further perspectives on the introduction, implementation and impact of research pooling are welcome.