

**RE-P-2020-03-Annex B**

# University of Sunderland

## HEIF accountability statement

**Narrative return template for HEIF funding period  
2021-22 to 2024-25**

**Return date: 21 May 2021**

Return as Microsoft Word file to: [KEPolicy@re.ukri.org](mailto:KEPolicy@re.ukri.org)

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## Question 1 – Strategic objectives

Summarise the institutional strategic objectives that relate to knowledge exchange and guide your plans for HEIF.

We expect institutions' plans for HEIF to be guided by strategic objectives for knowledge exchange. However, there is no requirement for institutions to submit or maintain a standalone knowledge exchange strategy document.

We appreciate that KE objectives may be found in a specific KE strategy document or they may be contained as part of other strategic documents such as teaching, research or overarching institutional strategies.

Whatever form your knowledge exchange objectives are in, please provide a precis of the main objectives here so that we can see the strategic context that guides your plans for HEIF and forms the basis for your monitoring and delivery of intended benefits.

We welcome the inclusion of hyperlinks to published strategies and plans that may be referenced in the summary.

*In answer to this question, you are free to use text or tabular format but please ensure that the question response is contained in no more than two pages of A4.*

The University of Sunderland is proud of its tangible impact, which is the result of passionate, research-active academics, world-leading research and close partnerships with businesses – from multi-nationals to SMEs. The University's [Strategic Plan 2020-25](#) establishes a clear statement of intent that builds on the University of Sunderland's strengths – and is both ambitious and relevant for a 21st century global university.

Students are placed at the heart of everything the University does, and its status as one of the top universities for widening participation is testimony to long-running work to raise aspirations and promote social inclusion within the North East region and London. This was reinforced by the award of The Times/The Sunday Times University of the Year for Social Inclusion 2021.

Our Strategic Plan envisages a University that is:

- Student-focused – offering transformative experiences to talented students from all backgrounds;

- Professions-facing - developing highly skilled, ready-for-work graduates, and
- Society-shaping – making a difference to industry and society through our research, innovation and practice.

The society-shaping objective is the key priority that shapes our Knowledge Exchange (KE) and HEIF activity. Additionally, this activity impacts upon the student experience, and can further support wider society and the economy through the production of highly skilled and employable graduates.

Currently, we are developing and consulting on a supporting plan for research and knowledge exchange, and are undertaking a self-assessment as part of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. This work will lead to a new strategic approach to KE that will build on our excellent impact and KEF highlights to deliver on our society-shaping mission.

The current approach to HEIF at Sunderland has been to invest in a dedicated team that generates a range of projects and partnerships, leveraging both University and external resources to deliver a range of KE outcomes.

The key University KE objectives are:

*Investing in KE capacity and capability* – this is achieved by a combination of research and development activity with sessions to raise awareness of funding opportunities (e.g. KTPs), build understanding of specialist areas (e.g. IP), and ‘sandpits’ and similar events to stimulate collaboration.

*Building the development of labour market skills* – as a truly civic institution, the University plays a major role in local labour markets through our Sunderland and London campuses.

Our academic programmes with work-based learning opportunities engage with employers from all sectors to provide tailor-made short courses and apprenticeships to support workforce development. Our recent success in leading a consortium which won a £14m ESF workforce development project reinforces our key strategic role in supporting regional skills development.

The University is engaged on a programme of partnerships-building with both FE institutions and the private sector to reinforce the impact of workforce skills development. To augment this role, the University will continue to build on the success and experience

acquired by placing over 1000 graduates with local employers, promoting higher level skills, greater employability and localised graduate opportunities.

*Graduate enterprise innovation* – Highlighted in the KEF as the top regional university for graduate start-ups, the University of Sunderland attracts European, Santander Universities, and charitable trust resources to support the entrepreneurial aspirations of our students, graduates and staff. In addition to our Enterprise Place facility, we have also established a Digital Incubator with support from Research England and North East LEP. The Incubator has enabled digital and media students and graduates to work on business ideas in a dedicated and equipped space.

*Research and expertise* – The University’s developing plan for research and knowledge exchange enables prioritisation of investment in areas of expertise to generate impactful research and knowledge exchange activities. The University is committed to investing QR and HEIF resources to develop and deploy world class research expertise with local, national and international partners, practitioners and funders. The objective is to secure a significant increase in the depth and extent of expertise engaged in impactful projects and programmes, with a resulting increase in our KE income and impact.

*Commercial impact enhancement*– having focused our IP portfolio, and with the support of Northern Accelerator funding, we are committed to developing our specialist areas of expertise to develop IP and commercial benefit. Following our first spin-out, the University is experiencing an exponential increase in academic interest in the development of additional commercial avenues for research and practice. This includes the more traditional science subjects but also subject areas such as health and social care, creative industries and the social sciences that may have wider applications.

*Embedding structures for public and community engagement* – engagement with local communities is a definite strength at the University. Our objective will be to establish both development and support structures to ensure maximum benefit of this engagement for our research and practice and for the communities that we serve.

*N.B. the notional proportions of HEIC identified in Annex C are initially based on current percentages, with allocations in future years assuming an increase in HEIF allocations.*

## Question 2 – Use of HEIF

### How do you intend to use your 2021-22 to 24-25 HEIF allocations?

As detailed in [RE-CL-2020-04](#) and RE-P-2020-03., in order to enable institutions to effectively respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, we will use the 2019-20 HEIF Annual Monitoring Statement submitted in February 2021 to gather information about the use of HEIF during 2020-21,

In this accountability statement return we would like to know about your plans for HEIF for the remainder of the funding period 2021-22 to 2024-25. Please include indication of the planned timescale of the activity e.g. 2021-22 only; ongoing or 2022-23 onwards.

Please use the response layout grid provided overleaf, to provide the following information:

- a) Describe the key activities supported by your HEIF allocation.
- b) Include specific reference to how you expect HEIF to support these activities – i.e. specific expenditures: funded posts, academic staff buy out, internal competitive projects; and the proportion of the activity that is supported by HEIF (e.g. x1 business development post 50% HEIF funded).
- c) How these activities relate to the government priorities and RE-OfS strategic objectives outlined in paragraphs 9 and 10 of RE-P-2020-03. Where student benefits are achieved, please include an indication of the number of students benefiting.
- d) Which strategic KE objective, as outlined in question 1, does each activity relate to.
- e) Indication of the timescale for each activity (e.g. 2021-22 only, ongoing or to be confirmed)

*In answer to this question, please use the response grid provided and ensure that the entire question response is contained in no more than six pages of A4 or A3.*

**Question 2: Use of HEIF**

(Max 6 pages of A4 or A3)

<p><b>Planned areas of HEIF supported KE activity</b></p> <p>Please provide an overview of planned KE activities or projects that will be supported by your 2021-22 and onwards HEIF allocations.</p>	<p><b>HEIF support</b></p> <p>How HEIF will be used to support the project?</p>	<p><b>HEIF priorities</b></p> <p>How does this relate to govt priorities and RE-OfS strategic objectives? (Including note of scale where student benefits are achieved.)</p>	<p><b>Strategic objectives</b></p> <p>Which institutional strategic KE objective does this relate to?</p>	<p><b>Indication of timescales</b></p>
<p>Investment in central Enterprise and Innovation team. This central team works across the University to develop projects and programmes and secures funding from a range of sources including ERDF, ESF, Research England and commercial income to deliver HEIF objectives and offset the costs of the team.</p> <p>In developing new projects and programmes the team engages with a range of external partners including Local Authorities, FE Colleges, LEPs and Combined Authorities, Health Authorities, and a wide range of third sector organisations and employers of all sizes.</p> <p>Project and programme activity developed, managed and delivered by the team includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work-based learning programmes, including degree apprenticeships and professional education activities for employers;</li> <li>• commercial buildings and events, housing SMEs, organising academic/business engagement and networking activities;</li> </ul>	<p>HEIF contributes to overall core cost of team, which levers in resources including ERDF, ESF, Research England and commercial income to support project delivery. The net cost of these activities after these sources of income is c£1m per annum, with HEIF contributing towards this cost.</p> <p>The team numbers 77 FTE which is predominantly staff engaged in delivery of activities such as premises management, enterprise support, events management funding administration and education and training. A new, special projects function (9 FTE) is being established in</p>	<p>HEIF provides a contribution towards the costs of a dedicated team which enables the support of the people, ideas and place objectives of Government industrial policy. It will also support the implementation of skill and innovation pillars of the Government's plan for growth. The work of the team will support RE/ UKRI priorities in driving innovation activity in priority sectors and the wider economy and maximising the impact of place-based innovation. The work of the Enterprise &amp; Innovation team also supports student employability through Knowledge Exchange initiatives such as</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>Throughout the period</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• research support to develop collaborative and impactful research projects;</li> <li>• commercial training, IT training and apprenticeships in support of local businesses;</li> <li>• graduate enterprise and placements, to secure jobs in SMEs and assist start-up activity;</li> <li>• ESF workforce development programme, which has secured circa £15m to provide targeted training provision to businesses in the NELEP area; and</li> <li>• KTPs delivering innovative products and systems for NE businesses.</li> </ul>	<p>2021/22 to specifically develop new initiatives and partnership</p>	<p>placements, internships and enterprise.</p>		
<p>Labour market skills development</p> <p>Our work based learning and internships teams work with employers of all sizes, including Health Trusts, large manufacturers such as Nissan UK, and a wide variety of SMEs to identify staff development needs, develop bespoke training packages, and place graduates to equip employers with the skills required to survive and grow. Delivery of programmes is commissioned in partnership with academics from across the University, associates and consortium partners to meet a wide range of skills development needs. This delivery is funded by a mix of:</p>	<p>HEIF contributes towards the net cost of the work-based learning team (24 FTE) after funding from ESF and the University and levers in external funding to skills and placements activities.</p> <p>HEIF funded staff (1 Assistant Director) oversees the work of the ERDF funded internships team.</p>	<p>The skills development project supports the skills dimensions of the Plan for Growth, driving productivity through developing and embedding higher level skills, and supports students and graduates to develop employability and entrepreneurial skills.</p>	<p>Building on our role in labour market skills development</p>	<p>Throughout the period</p>

<p>-apprenticeship levy and grant (all of our apprenticeship programmes are developed with active employer involvement);</p> <p>- ERDF to support the costs of placing graduates with SMEs (over 90% of those who complete their placement are kept on, supporting higher level skills, business growth and graduate retention in the North East);</p> <p>- ESF through our new £14 million North East Workforce Development Programme, which we manage through a consortium of FE and other training providers to support employer training; and</p> <p>- Employer contributions matching the above sources or on a commercial basis.</p>				
<p>Graduate enterprise support</p> <p>Our graduate and enterprise support provision is delivered wholly with external funding. Circa. 30 companies a year are created from a pipeline that touches many hundreds of students. The programme is underpinned by European (ERDF) funding and provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 months access to The Enterprise Place</li> <li>• Free hot desk facility and IT resources</li> <li>• Specialist Advice and Support Workshops</li> <li>• 1-1 Business Advice Sessions</li> <li>• 6-week Business Planning Course</li> </ul>	<p>HEIF funded staff (1 Assistant Director) initiated and oversee the activity of the team (which has 6.27 FTE) – there is a potential role for HEIF to fund post-ERDF in future years.</p>	<p>This initiative supports the people and skills dimensions of the Plan for Growth, and specifically supports students and graduates in line with OfS priorities</p>	<p>Innovating in graduate enterprise</p>	<p>Throughout the period – address potential funding gap from 2023 onwards</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £1000 Business Voucher</li> <li>• Peer to peer mentoring and networking</li> </ul> <p>Enterprise Place on our City Campus and the Digital Incubator at St Peters provide hot desking and collaboration space for entrepreneurs. Our support infrastructure has been further enhanced by securing University Enterprise Zone status for the Digital Incubator with funding from Research England and North East LEP, and a growth fund from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties (Charitable Trusts, Santander) that provides the most promising companies with further investment to accelerate their development.</p> <p>The future scale of this activity post 2023 is uncertain as ERDF comes to an end and it is anticipated that HEIF will play a role in developing and supporting the service to diversify its income base.</p>				
<p>Research and expertise development for KE – it is envisaged as part of our response to KEF and the KE Concordat that a range of organisational and professional development activities will be developed and undertaken to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a shared understanding of knowledge exchange activities, their benefits and the skills and knowledge required to undertake them;</li> <li>• Raise awareness of funding opportunities and specific domain</li> </ul>	<p>A plan will be developed to invest HEIF and other resources to support the development of Knowledge Exchange capacity and capability, with a view to leveraging in external resources and building external partnerships. HEIF will fund small scale non-</p>	<p>Development of our research and expertise seeks to increase our economic impact, through developing and applying innovation strengths.</p> <p>This supports the Plan for Growth and RE priorities.</p>	<p>Building our research and expertise</p>	<p>2021/22 onwards</p>

<p>expertise (e.g. on IP) to encourage the development of KE activities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of recruitment processes and criteria to consider the recruitment of academic staff with KE expertise and experience.</li> </ul>	<p>staffing costs to undertake communication and training, including an institution-wide Research and Knowledge Exchange conference in 2022</p>			
<p>Research commercialisation - we are committed to developing our specialist areas of expertise to develop IP and commercial benefit</p>	<p>Provision of match for Northern Accelerator to lever in proof of concept and spin out support funds.</p>	<p>Research commercialisation contributes directly to UKRI/ RE priorities and indeed HEIF will lever in RE Connecting Capabilities Fund resources. The activity will develop new and innovative products and processes, contributing to Government strategy objectives.</p>	<p>Enhancing our commercial impact</p>	<p>2021/22 and 2022/23</p>
<p>Embed structures for public and community engagement</p> <p>As the evidence we collect for HE-BCIS shows, the University undertakes a large amount of public and community engagement across its research and practice. The purpose of this objective is to develop training, advice and resources which will enable and support staff to undertake this work.</p>	<p>Small scale resource for development and support sessions for staff working with/ wishing to engage with the public and local communities.</p>	<p>The public and community engagement work responds to the KEF and KE concordat. The work also supports the levelling up agenda by engaging with local communities in one of the less prosperous regions of the UK.</p>	<p>Embedding public and community engagement</p>	<p>Throughout the period</p>

### Question 3 – Monitoring success

How do you manage your HEIF funding and monitor the success of your activities against the strategic objectives set out in question 1, and in line with delivering Government priorities?

Describe the policies, procedures and approach you have in place in the context of your strategic objectives to:

- i. manage your HEIF spending
- ii. measure progress
- iii. evaluate outcomes and
- iv. identify lessons learned.

*In answer to this question, you are free to use text or tabular format but please ensure that the entire question response is contained in no more than four pages of A4.*

As discussed above, the current function of HEIF is to fund a central team which then generates a range of projects and activities, leveraging funding from elsewhere.

The key mechanism for managing HEIF therefore, is the annual planning setting process, agreed between the University Executive and the Enterprise and Innovation senior management team (SMT). Monthly budget updates are prepared by the finance team and monitored through this SMT to ensure spend is tracked appropriately.

Reporting on progress is to a series of internal groups:

- An annual planning meeting with the University Executive;
- Reports for decision on new project proposals to Strategic Development Board;
- Regular updates to the University's Research and Innovation Group;
- Oversight of specific areas to dedicated groups and committees, for example the Work-Based Learning Steering Group and the Enterprise Working Group;
- Equity Panel, who consider all matters in relation to research commercialisation.

More recently a dedicated Knowledge Exchange (KE) Group has been established, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Commercial), with a remit to review all KE and HEIF funded activity. Started in March 2021, the group has already made recommendations on our HEBCIS return and has considered the KEF outcome.

This group is looking in particular at the KE elements of the new plan for research and knowledge exchange, actions to drive improved KEF performance, and the self-assessment and action plan for the KE Concordat. As part of the Concordat, an early focus of the KE Group is to consider evaluations and ensure continuous improvement in our KE work.

Evaluations are commissioned on KE projects, considering project operation, impact and process issues, and making recommendations for future activity. Increasingly we are developing periodic and longitudinal evaluation to ensure that lessons are learnt during the project lifetime rather than waiting until after completion. Examples of recent interim evaluations include the Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing Project which was independently evaluated as having a gross economic impact of over £43 million GVA and 1517 FTE jobs, and our Enterprise and Internships project, in which 95% of beneficiaries reported an increase in their entrepreneurial skills, with 93% grading the support as “high quality”.

To supplement this work, periodic economic impact studies have been undertaken – in 2019 Biggar Economics reported a UK impact of £706 million GVA and 8,200 jobs.