

RE-P-2020-03-Annex B

University of Chester

HEIF accountability statement

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

Return date: 21 May 2021

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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.

(max 2 pages of A4)

The work carried out for our KEF submission highlighted both areas of best practice and areas for improvement, and the KEF results emphasised the significance of our engagement with external partners, including businesses, the public/our communities, and local regeneration partners. Following this, we are working on our Action Plan for the KE Concordat development year, evolving our approach to KE in line with our strengths and putting in place plans to address areas of improvement. All of this has informed our emerging strategic objectives for KE, which focus on positioning our work within a sustainable framework that allows us to measure the impact of our work, to support a process of continuous improvement.

Our Institutional KE Objectives

In developing and delivering knowledge exchange activities, we are seeking to achieve the following strategic objectives:

1. To develop and communicate a culture and framework that will empower students and staff to engage in effective and best practice KE activities (including two-way engagement). This includes co-creating experienced and recognised communities of practice, and ensuring that KE activity is sustainable as well as impactful.
2. To establish the University as an exemplar in KE, providing strong leadership in achieving progressive, sustainable and inclusive positive impacts for our communities, economies, cultures and environment, on both local and global scales. As an exemplar, we will have clear mechanisms for understanding, measuring and evaluating our impact, and will be valued by our stakeholders as an organisation that listens and is open, relevant and responsive.

The delivery of our HEIF funded KE activity is embedded within our new institutional [Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy](#) and its four core themes; Health and Wellbeing, Culture and Society, Sustainability and Environment, and the Regional Economy.

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Institutes, chosen to encapsulate our strengths, align with the government's priority sectors of health and wellbeing; Net zero and the green industrial revolution; people and culture; and the importance of place in levelling up opportunity, to focus on the impact on our local and regional communities.

In line with this new strategy and its core themes, four Research and Knowledge Exchange Institutes are being formed and will deploy a proportion of HEIF funding, to deliver an agreed programme of KE activity. This delivery, and the monitoring of progress and impact, will be supported by both the central Research and Innovation Office (RIO), but also other KE support staff from Strategic Economic Development and Commercial Operations, who provide business engagement, project development/management and other relevant skills. Academic staff from within the Institutes will both champion and deliver KE activities to meet our objectives. Our researchers will work within and across institutes to deliver inter and multi-disciplinary Research & KE activities to work towards removing barriers to interdisciplinary research to realise the benefits of diverse perspectives and technologies, as identified in the UK's R&D Roadmap.

An example of this activity will be the use of HEIF to meet the full economic cost (fEC) gap for those worthwhile consultancy and contracted research projects, usually with the third sector, that do not cover fEC and therefore are not sustainable for the University to engage with. We are proposing a corresponding approach for non-KE/research activities with other University funding.

People are central to our strategy and this includes ongoing support and training for researchers at all levels, from Postgraduate Taught students through to Professors. A new Institute is currently in the early stages of creation to offer these services. We also recognise the important contribution that Research technicians make, and we support and comply with the UKRI's technician commitment.

The student experience and contribution is central within both the University's institutional ['Citizen Student' strategy](#), and in the R&KE Strategy where students are provided with opportunities to engage in research and KE at all levels of their studies. This interaction will be both directly, to include the opportunity for students to be employed to deliver KE

activities via the University's Unijob scheme, and indirectly through the focus on research and KE informed teaching.

Partnerships

It has never been more important to build and maintain strategic partnerships to contribute to the country's regeneration during and beyond the pandemic, and our KEF results highlighted that this is a particular strength for us.

As the only university in its LEP area, the geography of Cheshire and Warrington (C&W) has always been central to our approach to KE. We have a long-standing commitment to being the university of choice for local businesses and have strong relationships with local NHS Trusts and police forces. This concept of 'local' has also included areas of Shropshire, Wirral and North Wales as part of the local functional economic area. Beyond this, the University has always operated as part of the North West.

To establish strategic priorities we engage with stakeholders including the LEP (the University has board-level representation), local FE Colleges, Mersey Dee Alliance and key local employers. This process has not only helped to identify short to medium-term priorities to address, but also helped establish an on-going dialogue to inform longer-term plans.

Our KE Strategy for University Centre Shrewsbury has been shaped by the Marches LEP's priority of increasing innovation collaborations between businesses and the HE sector, with a focus on the two key strategic areas of environmental science and health innovation. This approach ensured complementarity with existing support schemes, alignment with our strengths and strategy, and reflected the business and employment profile of the area (both current and, crucially, future).

A key element of our strategy has been engagement with, and contribution to, many of the strategies and plans developed by LEPs, including Strategic Economic Plans, Skills Strategies, Local Industrial Strategies and plans for Digital Transformation and Clean Growth. Alignment with national priorities (such as the Industrial Strategy and Grand Challenges) was also influential.

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>Planned areas of HEIF supported KE activity</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>HEIF support</p> <p>How HEIF will be used to support the project?</p>	<p>HEIF priorities</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>Strategic objectives</p> <p>Which institutional strategic KE objective does this relate to?</p>	<p>Indication of timescales</p>
<p>Continued provision of central administrative support (costing, contracting, post-award) for internally and externally funded KE projects through the R&KE Institutes.</p> <p>Access to assistance to innovate for SMEs – single point of contact.</p>	<p>Research and Innovation Office (RIO), Strategic Economic Development (SED) and Commercial Operations staff focussed on KE activities – approx. 50% HEIF funded, circa 16 posts not FTE.</p> <p>HEIF will continue to partly fund staffing in externally facing areas to provide the crucial single point of contact for business and external partners.</p>	<p>Supporting Levelling Up and connecting people to opportunity through engagement with local and regional partners, and facilitating collaboration between industry, government and academia.</p> <p>Embedding of the KEF and KE Concordat to support HEIF funded projects.</p> <p>Access to assistance to innovate, and skills for SMEs</p>	<p>Objectives 1 and 2.</p>	<p>Throughout the funding cycle, support is being re-organised for 2021-22 to support the R&KE Strategy</p>
<p>The largest proportion of our HEIF allocation will be spent on delivering planned KE activities in support of our KE objectives – To build on existing strengths in Health and Wellbeing, Culture and Society, Sustainability and Environment, and the Regional Economy to deliver contracted research, consultancy</p>	<p>Project-based funding, agreed between the RIO and the RIs. To include new staffing, academic staff buy-out and non-staff costs.</p>	<p>Levelling up, COVID-19 recovery support for local and regional partners. Provision of Skills training and lifelong learning supporting the</p>	<p>Objectives 1 and 2.</p>	<p>2021-22 onwards</p>

<p>and relevant CPD to our communities locally, regionally and further afield. Ensuring this includes opportunities for students to engage and be involved in the delivery of these projects.</p>	<p>Establish an KE internal fund which explicitly fills the gap between funds available and fEC for worthwhile projects with non-commercial/third sector organisations to ensure the sustainability of engaging with these sectors. We are proposing a corresponding approach for non-KE/research activities with other University funding.</p> <p>Opportunities for students to be employed to deliver KE activities via Unijob scheme, which may be fully or partly HEIF funded.</p>	<p>Government's objective of investment in people.</p> <p>RE/OfS objective for students to benefit, we will monitor the extent to which students benefit</p>		
<p>Sustainable Futures Studentship Scheme – Part funded PGR studentships for research into the Government's net zero 2050 target and other proposals aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This scheme began in 2019/20 however it's roll out has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan to continue to support those projects already in place and to further support an additional small number over this HEIF funding period.</p>	<p>Usually 50% HEIF funded, 50% externally funded</p>	<p>Net zero, green industrial revolution, net zero emissions by 2050, addressing climate change. UN's Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>RE/OfS objective for students to benefit – we anticipate circa 18 students will benefit in total from this scheme</p>	<p>Objectives 1 and 2.</p>	<p>2019/20 onwards</p>

		over the HEIF funding period.		
Ongoing improvement and refinement of systems to reduce burden, improve efficiency and better capture impact and the outcomes of KE activities.	Improved project management/ CRM/ engagement and data capture systems for reporting (partly HEIF funded).	Review of Research Bureaucracy and Methods - reducing burden and improving efficiency. RE/OfS objective for students to benefit - indirect impact on business engagement for placements for level 5 students undertaking WBL – circa 1400 students engage.	Objectives 1 and 2.	2020/21 onwards
There has been a re-envisioning of our IP strategy, to focus the approach towards working with commercial partners who can licence for exploitation, rather than holding, and protecting our own portfolio.	We anticipate a modest amount of HEIF will be utilised to maintain and progress our existing small IP portfolio.	Review of Research Bureaucracy and Methods - reducing burden and improving efficiency	Objectives 1 and 2.	2020/21 onwards
KE training and opportunities for KE Professionals, academic staff and students	HEIF will be used to fund key subscriptions and access to training and best practice for KE e.g. Praxis Auril	RE/OfS objective for students to benefit, we anticipate circa 50 students will engage.	Objectives 1 and 2.	Ongoing
Entrepreneurship training for students. The Venture Programme assists students to develop the skills, knowledge, confidence and	HEIF contributes to fund the Venture Programme.	RE/OfS objective for students/recent graduates to engage	Objective 1	Ongoing

<p>connections for their business journey. To enhance enterprise skills, business start-up support or pursue a freelancing career.</p> <p>Venture events are open to all University of Chester students and recent (within 2 years) graduates.</p>		<p>in this programme, circa 150.</p>		
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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.

(Max 4 pages of A4)

Management of HEIF spending and measurement of progress

The University has established policies and procedures surrounding the application for, negotiation of, and use of external funding in order to ensure proper management of resources and activities: e.g. Research Governance Handbook; Procedure for Applying for External Funding; Policy on Processing Applications for External Funding; Policy on the Allocation of Income from External Grants and Contracts; and Guidance on Grant/Contract Authorisation processes.

When setting the programme of KE activity for the R&KE Institutes this document, Research England, OfS and Government priorities will inform our approach. Targets and benchmarks for KE activities will be set for the Research and KE activities.

The activities will be managed, monitored and evaluated via the R&KE Institutes and guided by the R&KE Strategy and KE Objectives. Strict monitoring is applied to funds internally awarded by the Institutes, who take into the account track record of applicants. This is to ensure that the funding is spent as agreed and milestones are met. Monitoring occurs in-project at specified (twice-yearly) intervals and post-project to evaluate outputs and impact. This project monitoring will be facilitated by the KE/Impact Team in RIO, to include the scale of benefits to students. This in turn will be reported and considered quarterly by the Senior Executive Team and termly by the R&KE Committee. The R&KE Committee has overall responsibility for monitoring University performance in research and KE. The R&KE Institute progress reporting will help to inform research and KE key performance indicators, which then contribute to the faculty business planning process.

Research (and KE) Institutes will also monitor quarterly their programme of KE activity for success and improvement. This will include an awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that under-represented groups are supported to engage with the research and KE strategy.

The Research and KE strategy itself shall be reported on annually and will be reviewed and revised at least every three years.

To enable increased accuracy and availability of reporting, to inform progress monitoring, the University is investing in project management and current research/KE information systems.

Externally we will monitor our performance through the annual HE-BCI survey and KEF exercises, both internally and by benchmarking across the sector. More broadly, our KE Concordat Action Plan (currently in development) will identify priority targets for us to achieve, which will also support monitoring and evaluation of activity. These data returns, along with periodic Economic Impact Assessments, are used by the University to establish baseline inputs and returns.

Evaluating outcomes and identifying lessons learnt

We have identified, as part of our preparation for submission of the KE Concordat, a priority for continuous improvement of our KE engagement.

We will develop further our customer relationship management processes to include regular customer/partner/beneficiary surveys and to take account of feedback to make improvements. This will be facilitated by both the project team and the RIO's KE/Impact team to ensure successful delivery and to discuss future interactions.

We will be more actively engaged with for example Praxis Auril, to share and benefit from best practice across the sector. We will also continue to engage and learn from our public and private sector partners through advisory and governing body membership.

The R&KE Institutes will be expected to utilise Logic Models and the Theory of Change to support the full cycle of project planning, delivery and evaluation. This will ensure that intended impacts are clear at the outset of any R&KE activity, improving resource planning and allowing for relevant data to be collected to support summative evaluation. Co-created Logic Models will also support a team approach to formative evaluation, allowing the Institutes to assess progress at any point within the planned activity and adopting an environment of continuous improvement. Progress monitoring of the R&KE Institutes, facilitated by the KE/Impact Team in the RIO, also provides the opportunity to learn from experience and integrate this learning into future plans.