Outcome Agreement SRUC

(Scotland's Rural College)

Academic Year 2022/23

February 2023

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Introduction

SRUC provides world class translational research, education, skills, and consulting. Our vision is to be a new Tertiary 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's ambition, to create a distinct new tertiary model which focuses on the natural economy continues to progress through a number of developments including SRUC progressing further through the scrutiny phase for the attainment of taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) and the continuing development of plans for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP). SRUC was ranked first (in partnership) in the Research Excellence Framework and SRUC research underpinned 8 out of 11 impact case studies (ICSs) submitted during the process and we continue to progress our ambition for a tertiary based School of Veterinary Medicine.

There have been changes in key senior colleagues at SRUC over the past year – Linda Hanna was appointed as Chair of the SRUC Board in April 2022 and brings a breadth of leadership and economic development expertise which she has built throughout her career. Linda's network and expertise is hugely relevant to SRUC's goal of embedding enterprise at the heart of our mission through working collaboratively to convert the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss into new opportunities for society and the economy.

There have been new appointments at Director level with Andrew Lacey confirmed in the role of Vice Principal - Commercial, Dr Mary Thomson appointed in a newly created post as Vice Principal - Skills and Lifelong Learning and Dr Susannah Bolton to the new post of Vice Principal – Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange. These new appointments are designed to support how SRUC engages positively with key strategic initiatives including Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation and the UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Strategy 2022-27: Transforming Tomorrow Together.

SRUC will continue to prioritise student support, experience, and achievement at all levels. Gains were witnessed this past year – SRUC has improved its world ranking for life sciences in the 2023 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings by Subject - moving from 301-400 to 251-300 in the world. SRUC student Rhona Campbell-Crawford won the prestigious UK 2022 Agriculture Student of the Year at the British Farming Awards. The successful funding of Dairy Nexus – a transformational project to foster innovation in the dairy sector based at Barony Campus, and SRUC will continue to achieve and support its community in Scotland and beyond.

SRUC recognise that change will not cease, either internally within SRUC or externally in this post Covid journey to economic recovery. The external strategic environment has witnessed significant change and SRUC has fully contributed through thought leadership in the natural economy as well as continuing to make significant contributions to both the development of Scotland's new tertiary-led quality framework, as well as to the development of Scotland's new suite of HN NextGen qualifications in the core areas of Agriculture, Horticulture and Agricultural Technology. All affirm and amplify the importance of the role SRUC must play in building on existing strengths around the natural economy.

In this Outcome Agreement for 2022/23, SRUC seeks to give assurance on the use of SFC funding and to demonstrate how we will deliver with impact across a range of priorities:

- Support and promote the **achievement** and **retention** of our students through a blended delivery model
- Ensure the **wellbeing** of staff and students through these challenging socio-economic 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.

Partnership working is a vital component of SRUC's strategy and aligns closely with our place-based strategic pillar. SRUC is working in collaboration with Borders College as part of the SFC sponsored Pathfinder project in the South of Scotland to develop a unified prospectus for the land-based sector to promote learner progression and the retention of skills within the region.

In the Borders area, as an addition to the Pathfinders project we are actively involved in discussions around co-location of activities in the Newton St Boswells area as well as joint attendance at public events (e.g., regional shows and Parliamentary events). As well as mutually beneficial cooperation in areas of activity such as staff training and assessors, we are taking a coordinated approach to the delivery of programmes such as tourism, hospitality and rural business management and the Pre-apprenticeship pilot in Agriculture (Section 5). SRUC are also about to advertise for a joint post with Borders College - a business development officer to 'Creatively identify strategic funding opportunities and new partnerships which are aligned with the aims of the pathfinder project and increase the skills base in the land-based sector in the South of Scotland.

In the South-West, SRUC are active members of the Crichton Campus Leadership Group and have Board representation on the Crichton Foundation. There are various programmes of work under development with organisations on the Crichton Campus including the Open University, Crichton Trust and the Crichton Foundation on topics that range from shared interests in staff and student accommodation through to joint course development. SRUC are also very active members of South of Scotland Enterprise - SoSE – and are members of the Regional Economic Partnership, the Education and Skills Strategic Co-ordination Group and we are involved in numerous ongoing and under development projects.

1.1 Supporting Students

As a tertiary institution, SRUC is near 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 rural economy for an appropriately skilled workforce by recognising the importance of the learner journey and focusing on positive purposeful destinations.

As encapsulated in our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2020-2025, SRUC's learning and teaching in 2022/23 has continued to be blended. This approach is based on solid pedagogic theory, which is embedded in the principles of the strategy, which was co-developed with learners and colleagues across SRUC during 2019/20.

We have adopted Sharma's[1] definition of blended learning – meaning learning and teaching that comprises a blend of face-to-face and online learning, technologies, and teaching approaches – integrated with Laurillard's[2] active learning approach. The composition of the blend flexes according to subject and SCQF level, comprises of high quality on-campus practical learning, combined with high quality on-campus, small group, interactive, classroom-based learning, and high-quality online teaching. In line with previous years, all new and returning students have been encouraged to complete our digital requirements form so that we can support and provide those students in need of devices or connectivity with appropriate equipment. We have also continued our weekly all student email where each week we highlight themes to support students including funding and support, wellbeing as well as topical issues such as personal safety.

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[1] Sharma, P. (2010) Blended Learning. ELT Journal 64 (4): 456–458.

[2] Laurillard, D. (2012) *Teaching as a Design Science: Building Pedagogical Patterns for Learning and Technology*. Routledge.

1.2 SRUC Students Association (SRUCSA)

SRUCSA and SRUC continue to grow their working partnership. Regular updates with the Provost and Principal have continued to keep SRUCSA up to date on SRUC activities and vice versa. SRUCSA have also served as a sounding board for delivering suitable communications to students, keeping them informed. The true partnership role that SRUCSA have played and will continue to play is vital as SRUC works to respond to the cost-of-living crisis and climate emergency.

Alongside the usual student voice, representation and advocacy work of SRUCSA, there will be a particular focus this year on enhancing learner communities through social activities, from SRUC-wide activities like the Winter Wonderland event planned for semester one, to faculty-focused activities such as Welcome Week socials, to small activities, such as the organisation of occasional yoga classes. Online events will also continue to be delivered. Additional funding streams (e.g., National Lottery Funding, Aldi Funding etc) will be sought to support this activity. A temporary Community Coordinator post is also anticipated, utilising funding made available owing to the strikes of 2021/22.

SRUCSA have grown their social media presence over the past few years and will continue to do so over the next academic year to support connection across campuses and beyond.

SRUCSA will also build on last year's activities. For example, there will be a focus on implementing the recommendations arising from the 2021/22 Enhancement Theme project on student-led communities in 2021/22, aiming for a growth in such community activities as clubs and societies. There will be a continuation of the gender-based violence work begun in 2020/21, advocating for changes to campus and estates following the site walkarounds conducted in 2021/22, and undertaking the remaining walkarounds yet to occur. There will be a continuation of the Careers work of 2021/22, co-delivering Careers events with SRUC and launching the MyJourney project – a suite of videos that highlight the various career paths SRUC staff have undertaken, showing that there is no wrong way to find the perfect job.

SRUCSA will continue to champion for an excellent student experience, supporting students where that has not occurred, through advocacy work and support of students through complaints / discipline processes, and recognising staff where that has occurred through the annual student led "SRUCSA Awards".

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 meant SRUC shifted to online support whilst retaining some on-campus support depending upon the restrictions in place.

2.1 SRUC ensuring the wellbeing of students

A new Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be finalised in 2022/23, following extensive development work and consultation in 2021/22. In the meantime, SRUC will continue to support student mental health and wellbeing through:

- **Face-to-face (virtual or physical) general support**: each faculty has dedicated student support workers, safeguarding managers, and Year Tutors. These staff are supported themselves through regular fora and staff development opportunities.

- **Targeted counselling and occupational therapists**: SRUC employ in-house occupational therapists and provide access to external counselling. This flexibility of use enables us to ensure our diverse range of students receive the support they need.

- **Online support**: through partnership with the charity SANE, an employee assistance helpline, and subscription to SpectrumLife SRUC's students and staff have access to online support, ensuring support is not limited to SRUC working hours.

- **Student belonging**: SRUC endeavours to support students to feel part of a learning community. A key part of this is our Peer Support project and student societies, which bring students together. The former of these provides training for volunteer leads.

- **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.

2.2 Healthy Workplace & Wellbeing Strategy

SRUC is currently finalising a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for its staff. Improving staff health and wellbeing necessitates looking at all aspects of working life, and to enable SRUC to achieve this, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy form part of the overarching People & Organisational Development Strategy.

In addition, the following support is in place for staff:

- **Occupational Health** – providing support that is confidential and tailored to the individual's need - how we support staff to access the right support in the right way.

- **Mental Health First Aid** – We have a trained cohort of Mental Health First Aid responders who provide an initial response to staff in distress and understand that this help is given only until other suitable or professional help can be found.

- **Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)** – SRUC currently has two EAP's accessible to staff which gives staff not only 24 hr instant support when they are dealing with life's issues or problems, but now also provides proactive lifestyle support giving staff access to fitness and diet support as well as financial discounts to support and promote general wellbeing.

SRUC is committed to ensuring that we have in place fair working practices and is committed to advancing the Fair Work First criteria as defined in the Scottish Government Fair Work First policy. SRUC's Fair Work First Statement can be found on our website Fair Work First (sruc.ac.uk) .

3. Fair Access and Transitions

SRUC is committed to widening access and participation and we encourage students from the widest possible range of backgrounds to participate in tertiary 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 through our recently updated contextualised admissions policy - contextual-admissions-policy web link.

Retaining students, particularly those who are vulnerable, is a key priority. In 2023-24 SRUC will progress discussions with COSLA to explore how we might begin to develop education and skills provision for the 'New Scots' programme. SRUC's Corporate Parenting Working Group (CPWG) oversee our support for care-experienced students. This group comprises staff from across SRUC and is co-led by two student support tutors with expertise in the area, and reports to Student Support and Engagement Committee. CPWG covers not just care-experienced students, but refugees, travellers, homeless students, estranged students, veterans, carers and survivors of abuse. A key focus of CP action plan (SRUC Corporate Parenting Plan) is on raising awareness of the support on offer among both students and staff. Further details are available at the Corporate Parenting leaflet: SRUC Corporate Parenting Leaflet.

A significant work stream during 2022/23 for SRUC is the reviewing and update of our Widening Access and Participation strategy. This activity, approved by the SRUC Academic Board, consists of

two phases – the first phase (the "as is" phase) of what SRUC currently lead and participate in, an analysis of the success of these activities, identifying where there are gaps, and then the second phase of confirming our approach in the future. The first phase has identified the most successful school activities for directly recruiting students were the NPA in Rural Skills at Aberdeen with a conversion rate of c.30%, Principles of Animal Care at Barony with a conversion rate of c.20%, and Introduction to Scottish Agriculture at Barony with a conversion rate of c.56%, with most school participants progressing to FE level of studies. Following this work, a new strategic approach to schools' activity has been agreed which focuses on the NPA Rural Skills award, with optional routes in Agriculture, Animal Care, Equine Studies, Forestry, Gamekeeping and Horticulture.

Work on the NPA is ongoing, with Agriculture being piloted during 2022/23 to approximately 50 school students. One of the first of the new Widening Access and Participation working group's tasks will be to agree target groups. It is very likely that this will extend beyond SIMD and other similar factors, to include gender and rural poverty.

Our successful approach to widening access to HE is primarily through encouraging progression pathways from FE to HE and within HE. At SRUC, over the three years 2017/18-2019/20, 22.5% of students articulated. Of those articulating students, the majority (70.7% of articulating students) entered via progression at SRUC, by completing a level of study and choosing to progress to the next level in the following year. A further 12% of articulating students had obtained their HNC or HND at SRUC and left the institution for at least one academic year before returning to study at a higher level of the programme. Only 17.8% of articulating students, equivalent to 3.6% of all students on undergraduate programmes during the years looked at, entered their programme as articulating students from other institutions, though this is not surprising as we are Scotland's leading land-based provider.

A vital component of supporting students to succeed is additional support at transition points. Currently we have our "Preparing to Study" at SRUC course, an online, interactive package to help new and returning students to continue developing the skills essential for successful study. We are investigating developing that further into a "Transitions" micro-credential. This year focus is on scoping what that might look like and we will be liaising with the University of Abertay, who are coming to showcase their course in March.

Programmes also have bespoke support for students transitioning between levels such as Applied Animal Sciences "Joining Applied Animal Science" self-study course, particularly targeted at those articulating from HND Animal Care to 3rd Year degree, or Rural Business Management's suite of study skills workshops, run during semester 1 of Year 3 to again support that transition.

Given the current socio-economic situation, we have also reviewed the role of funding support, specifically reviewing the evidence that additional funding (not core funds) has played in supporting students and the evidence is clear that although this funding may not support access, it is supporting participation. The next steps are to coordinate the development of a "what-should-be" strategy, including identifying target groups, prior to implementation.

4. High Quality Learning and Teaching

4.1 Student Success and Retention

While SRUC has a well-developed Learning and Teaching strategy in place with a longer-term ambition to move to a truly blended approach suited to the SCQF level and the nature of the individual programmes, 2021/22 was the first year that colleagues had the opportunity to start to trial this approach, but it was against the backdrop of ongoing disruption. The transition back to face-to-face delivery and in some cases a return to more traditional assessment approaches also presented a challenge for students, some of whom had very little or no experience of exams. This coupled with a buoyant employment market and vocationally relevant programmes created a situation where some students opted to leave SRUC prior to completion of their qualification. Consequently, it is not surprising that Further Education Performance Indicator data (based on internal calculations), suggest that in 2021/22 there was a decrease in the success rate of FE students enrolled on full time programmes with successful outcomes declining from 65.3% in 2020/21 to 58% in 2021/22, with

approximately 17% of students achieving partial success, an increase from 14.3% in the previous year. Withdrawal rates were also negatively impacted in 2021/22, with 25% of FE FT students withdrawing from their course, an increase from the previous year which was 20.4%. The overall success and withdrawal rates continue to be poorer than those achieved prior to the pandemic. A target for SRUC is to significantly improve the full time FE successful outcome level by a minimum of 6% and to reduce the withdrawal rate of FE students by a minimum of 5% from 2021/22 levels.

Of the students graduating with Honours the proportion graduating with first class degrees increased slightly (by 4%) for the 3rd year running, however the proportion of upper second-class degrees dropped (by 17%), while the lower-second class degrees increased (by 14%). The number of third year students electing to graduate (as a proportion of those who successfully completed the year) once again increased from 17% in 2020/21 to 21% in 2021/22. The BSc Agriculture programme also saw an increase in students leaving after year 3 with a general degree, with the proportion leaving increasing from 28% in 2020/21 to 40% in 2021/22. These students, many of whom started their journeys in FE or on HN programmes, are leaving to go to positive destinations but this issue of low progression was discussed at the annual quality dialogues with colleagues stating that many of the students return to their own farms or have clear employment pathways which is a factor in their decision making. The team did highlight that they will aim to increase awareness of a wider range of career pathways for Agriculture students to try and encourage progression to Year 4.

In 2020/21, 25% of Year 1 HE students left with a Higher National Certificate, this decreased to 22% in 2021/22 while the number of Year 2 HE students leaving with a Higher National Diploma, increased from 42% in 2020/21 to 46% in 2021/22.

Student retention was already included as an action in the Institutional action plan in 2020/21 but was highlighted as an area for development during SRUC's Progress Visit in May 2022. The issue of student retention, success and progression was discussed at some length with each of the programme teams during the annual quality dialogues in September 2022 and all Boards of Study have been tasked with an action to include withdrawals as an agenda item at each Board of Studies meeting to help maintain oversight of retention, reasons for withdrawals and trends across the programmes. Further to this the withdrawal process has been amended with programme teams required to refer students to student support to ensure all possible available support has been explored prior to a student's departure. SRUC are seeking to significantly reduce withdrawal rates during 2022/23.

In 2022/23, SRUC is undertaking an Institution-Led Review of Student Support Services. Preparations for this have already stimulated deeper reflections into the services provided to students and it is anticipated that this process will identify further areas for development that will lead to greater consistency across the sites and improved benchmarking of provision.

4.2 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy

SRUC's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2020-2025 comprises two pillars and ten principles. 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 comprise:

- 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

Implementation of the strategy's pillars and principles is supported through programme design at validation and revalidation stage, and through the multi-year Curriculum Review project. This project aims to:

- support programme teams to benchmark their curricula against a bespoke framework (SRUC's SEEDABLE Curriculum Framework).
- enhance staff understanding of the pillars and principles and how to implement them through an intense staff development programme based on the SEEDABLE framework.
- facilitate the development and implementation of programme team action plans for the further development of the pillars and principles.

SEEDABLE is an approach to curriculum design, assessment, and feedback, learning and teaching and learning enhancements that embeds sustainability and enterprise (SE), and equality and diversity (ED), enabled by active and blended learning (ABL). The SEEDABLE framework is bespoke to SRUC but draws on and adapts existing models in the sector (e.g., Bacigalupo's 2016 Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, Hanesworth's 2017 Embedding Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum Matrix and Sharma's 2010 Blended Learning Model).

Overseen by a cross-SRUC steering group, comprising membership from academic, professional and consultancy services, the Review will enter its second cycle in 2022/23, with a focus on two Boards of Studies: Golf, Greenkeeping and Hospitality, and Horticulture and Landscape. Alongside this, cycle one's programmes (Agriculture and Business Management) will continue to be supported in the implementation of their SEEDABLE action plans.

SRUC also continues to focus on supporting academic staff to take a digitally enhanced approach to learning, teaching, and assessment. 2022/23 will focus on supporting an increasing number of staff to adopt SRUC's Moodle Standards, on implementing our Digital Accessibility project to ensure all students are able to access their learning equally, and on supporting staff to adapt to blended learning in a face-to-face environment.

4.3 Digital Developments

At SRUC we believe that digital is a driving force to fulfil our full potential, and our focus on delivering our digital strategy continues. This year we will focus on:

Cyber Security: Security remains a focus. Multifactor authentication has been rolled out to all colleagues and students. Our focus has now shifted to mobile device management. Work continues upgrading our network and disaster recovery facilities, with a strategy to move to cloud services being developed. Related to Cyber security but far broader, refining SRUC's business continuity capabilities continue.

Student Journey: The recruitment to admissions aspect of this journey has been mapped and a programme of work agreed and is underway. The second part of the journey, when students are at SRUC has now been mapped and a programme of work will be agreed by the end of 2022. All aspects of the journey, including physical and virtual, will be reviewed, and enhanced.

Business Intelligence: Information is vital for managing our business. We have engaged with an external partner to help us explore what data we hold and how we can enhance our use of it. Work on student data and learner analytics has started.

Getting the basics right: We recognise that our ambitions must be supported with outstanding basics and so we continue our work on enhancing our student information management system, our VLE, and how we support students on a day-to-day basis.

4.4 Student Feedback

Feedback from students is gathered via a range of mechanisms: at the module level via end of module questionnaires, at the subject level via Student Liaison Groups, at the campus level via the annual Speak Week and termly Student Panels (both run by our Students' Association), at the cohort level via surveys (e.g., the Marketing and Induction Survey, National Student Survey, Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey), and at the institutional level via student representation on Academic Committees, including Academic Board, and via student-Board interaction through the Student Liaison Committee. SRUC's management and leadership of Student surveys are overseen by an advisory group which has cross-SRUC membership to support understanding that it is everyone's responsibility to increase engagement.

We received particularly high positive feedback in the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey this year, with an overall satisfaction rating of 94%. However, our response rate is still very low at 18%. Work will focus on bringing this response rate up, with the use of an intense two-week on-campus survey campaign in March 2023. This two week campaign will include visiting students in class (virtual as well as face-to-face) to encourage engagement, as well as the setting up of stalls on Campus for promotion. SRUC's Student Survey Communications subgroup has developed a bespoke communications campaign, including social media posts, physical resources (banners, posters etc.), as well as inclusion in weekly communications activities which will include a focus on the inclusion of "You Said, We Did". SRUC are introducing a survey portal to make it easier for students to access the survey that is right for them – with the eligibility requirements in particular for NSS making it difficult to target students for completion, the introduction of this tool should make life much easier and avoid any uncertainty. SRUC are also using incentives to increase completion rates, which will be included in the Communications. There will be a £1 donation per response to charity - the charity was voted for by class representatives and this year will be The Trussell Trust as well as the opportunity for students to win some online shopping vouchers.

The National Student Survey saw a decrease in responses from 82.21% in 2021 to 72.8% in 2022 and a decrease in student satisfaction from 76.1% to 71.58%. For both measures, this returns us to our 2020 levels. It is notable that this decline is impacted significantly by a very small number of programmes, which have been identified as requiring support in 2022/23 for improvement. Programme plans for improving NSS and SSES results and student satisfaction are expected to be incorporated into annual monitoring reports and quality enhancement plans, and these are interrogated at annual dialogues.

Both surveys indicate SRUC's strengths in teaching, learning resources, and learning opportunities. Both surveys also indicate common areas for development: in communicating with students, in feedback timeliness, and in students feeling like their feedback is acted upon. The appointment of a Student Communications Officer in early 2022/23 aims to address the former; while the devolving of feedback timeliness audits to the Heads of Department who have closer relationships with staff, aims to address the second. Regarding acting upon student voice, various mechanisms are in place for this, such as You Said We Did campaigns. A key change to the way in which SRUCSA runs Speak Week also aims to address this: Speak Week will move to a two-year process, with year one focusing on surveying and agreeing actions, and year two on implementation and communication of impact of actions.

Despite the areas for development in assessment and feedback and student voice, these scales in the NSS have remained stable from 2021/22. It is reassuring to see this considering their significant improvement between 2020 and 2021, suggesting changes made through the two SRUC-wide projects are continuing to prove impactful.

It is also reassuring to see Learning Resources improve following a declining trend over previous years, particularly considering the support put in place by our Information and Digital Services team in 2021/22 regarding digital skills. While the library resources questions did see an increase, we recognise that further work is still required in this area and a multi-year project on the future of SRUC's library services, initiated in 2021/22, is aiming to address this.

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. It generates 340,000 jobs and between 2019 and 2029, there is forecast to be a total of 65,400 job openings across land-based 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 2.4% by 2045 (source SDS sector skills assessment November 2022).

Our skills provision responds to the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland, and we are addressing workforce shortages through development of innovative programmes such as higher-level apprenticeships. We align our provision to the needs of rural employers and provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision. The Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan provides further context with agriculture, peatland restoration management 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. SRUC has a vital role in maximising opportunities for people to gain the skills needed in a new green economy and in connecting farming to primary food production, emphasising the importance of sustainable production, and participating in food and enterprise partnerships.

Against this backdrop SRUC is raising 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. SRUC's Vice Principal Skills and Lifelong Learning, leads on developing skills provision across SCQF levels 4-11 – to create a skilled Scottish workforce through upskilling and reskilling, particularly in relation to transition to net zero, integrated land management, climate, biodiversity, and sustainable food production. This ambition is supported by provision driven by the SFC funding streams such as the Upskilling Funding for Micro-Credentials and the Young Person's Guarantee. We anticipate that broader sectoral provision and employer engagement will continue to be supported by Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) activity. We are already utilising the Micro-Credentials funding to develop a bespoke peatland restoration project management CPD and future microcredentials delivery is likely to include carbon audit training and transitions support to widen participation. Wherever possible we will seek to respond to national initiatives.

SRUC are on schedule to meet our SDS contract during 2022/23. SRUC is developing a new higher level 'technical' apprenticeship to address sector skills gaps in agriculture, conservation and forestry and offer education and skills development opportunities to those in work.

The Work-Based Learning (WBL) Thematic Review steering group continues to work on the themes identified in the 2021 review, with a light touch thematic review scheduled for 2024. The review group identifies and shares good practice and innovation across faculties, departments, and support areas, along with areas for improvement. Actions that are currently being undertaken to address the outcomes of the review include a review of regional skills groups, production of benchmarking reports, establishment of a WBL digital learning network, and a key focus on providing enhanced digital materials to improve candidate support and performance. We have begun a programme of engagement with employers and industry through relationship building based on stronger and better communication and emphasising the importance of the three-way partnership between apprentice, employer, and specialist training provider.

In the North and South & West faculties we continue to 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). Both these programmes are founded on strong industry engagement and in 2022/23 we plan to work with the sector on progression to modern apprenticeships.

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, Food and

Drink Federation Scotland, Scottish Machinery Rings Association, Borders College, and the other land-based college providers across Scotland.

6. Equalities and Inclusion

Our Strategic Plan 2018-23 articulates the importance of offering choices equally - be they academic or vocational. Doing this relies on an inclusive approach to teaching, understanding the needs of all students and ensuring that our application, registration, and teaching processes identify and address the needs of potential and existing students.

Our Board oversees our equality activity, and we have a Board equality champion who attends the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). The EDIC is Chaired by the Vice Principal of Skills and Lifelong Learning and has responsibility for the delivery of our vision to embed a culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion within our organisation. Our dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead is secretariat for the EDIC.

The EDIC membership includes SRUCSA and Trade Union participants and representatives of specific action groups and employee-led equality initiatives. This enables the EDIC to act as a two-way conduit for staff and student issues, concerns, and communication. The EDIC is responsible for the review and development of related strategy, action plans and policy which, depending on the content, will either be progressed to the ELT and/or SRUC Board or be devolved operationally.

Data gathered and assessed for our pay gap reporting (gender, ethnicity, disability) and exercises such as developing our Equality Outcomes, helps our understanding and allows us to focus the content of the related Equality Outcome action plan. This, along with similar documents for British Sign Language and Gender Equality (Athena Swan), provides direction for our efforts along with our underpinning organisational values.

Our Equality Outcomes (2021-2025) are:

- Further embed equality and diversity in our management, leadership and governance structures and practice, ensuring external compliance and internal engagement.
- Provide an inclusive learning and working environment for employees, learners, and stakeholders in a culture that values all, is underpinned by dignity and respect and where everyone understands their responsibility in the delivery of that culture.
- Learners and employees from all backgrounds view SRUC as a welcoming and inclusive organisation where they will be supported to fulfil their potential and achieve high levels of success.

Our next external report on progress to deliver our equality outcomes and mainstreaming update will include our response to the anticipated national equality outcomes to be shared by the Scottish Funding Council in November/December 2022.

As part of our equality work, SRUC continues to deliver training to support shared knowledge and understanding on equality, diversity, and inclusion. Key topics include Deaf Awareness, undertaking equality impact assessments, British Sign Language, Mental Health First Aid, menopause awareness for employees and managers, and gender-based violence. Training priorities are identified in response to our equality priorities and people strategy priorities.

Conversations about equality also take place across a variety of media at SRUC with the aim of embedding equality into our day-to-day activity. We continue to mark particular recognition dates throughout the year following a planned timetable. Where possible we aim to coordinate activity with formal training and planned policy review. We have run Menopause training alongside celebrating Menopause Awareness Day and hosting our inaugural Menopause Café. We are currently writing a Menopause and Menstruation Policy which will be launched in early 2023. Our dedicated Equality and Diversity Yammer channel provides a central place for relevant communications and discussion.

Learning for All is one of the pillars of our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2020-2025, equality and diversity is embedded within this, Inclusive Learning Design being one of its principles. Equality Impact Assessments are now a mandatory part of the (re)validation process, and KPIs around diversity data are interrogated as part of annual monitoring. The Student Support and Engagement Committee provides a strategic focus to the work being undertaken to support student mental health and inclusion (as noted in section 2.1). The cross-institutional, cross-divisional Corporate Parenting Working Group has both SRUCSA and student representation and is working on the delivery of the three-year Corporate Parenting Plan published in 2021 (Section 3).

7. Targets

SRUC have submitted one year of projections for the revised list of measures. We believe they are simultaneously ambitious yet realistic – taking account of the additional challenges being faced as we not only pivot from the pandemic, but also recognise the socio-economic challenges facing Scotland's student population.

Within FE, particular highlights of the target include our aim to deliver 6.3% of credits to SRUC students from 10% of the most deprived postcode areas. SRUC do not believe SIMD is a useful indicator of deprivation in remote and rural areas and feel the 6.3% underplays the important inclusion role SRUC plays in remote and rural locations. SRUC has set an ambitious target for the proportion of full-time enrolled students, successfully obtaining a recognised FE qualification of 64% - against a background of decline for three years as a result of the pandemic and the employability of our highly vocational students. SRUC's figure for the proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying, remains extremely high (only 2.5% unemployment) and we have set a positive destination target of 96 %, which would be a 0.2% increase. SRUC currently sees high satisfaction according to the SSES (94%) and aim to maintain this level while seeking to significantly improve response rates.

Within HE, particular highlights include our target of 14% for the COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first-degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas, for the reasons outlined above. SRUC have a target of 80% for the proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2. This is a challenging target due to the HNC exit point and current high levels of employment.

SRUC saw a decrease in both NSS participation and satisfaction rates last year and are targeting a minimum +2% difference from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study next year to build on last year's strong improvements. Although currently above sector average, SRUC are also aiming to see an increase in response rate, returning to 2021 levels

8. Climate Emergency

SRUC has published our Climate Change Action Plan 2020–25. Over the period of this plan, SRUC has set a target to reduce total carbon emissions by 20%, as measured from the 2019/20 revised baseline year. This will result in an overall emission reduction by 2025 of 62.4% from the 2014/15 baseline. This will be achieved through initiatives including emissions reduction strategies which are outlined in the plan and a strategic rationalisation of the SRUC estate.

This sets a realistic and positive pathway to ensure SRUC meets and exceeds the Scottish Government's milestone target to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030.

Owing to the very different nature of greenhouse gas emissions from SRUC Farms, we will be developing a separate net zero plan with high-level metrics feeding into the overall SRUC strategy that will build on the actions already identified in SRUC Climate Change Action Plan 2020–25. We have conducted baseline measurements to estimate emissions from our farms and we are undertaking a detailed scoping analysis to develop robust and meaningful emission targets which aligns with SRUC's ambitions to lead by example, to exceed stakeholder expectations and reduce our overall environmental impact on the planet. A working group of academics and consultants is

focussing on the prioritisation and implementation of measures to drive towards decreased emissions and increased sequestration on our farms.

Much of our research is focused on understanding greenhouse gas emissions in the natural economy. We have further developed the activities of our Global Climate Emergency challenge centre, which aims to find new systems-level solutions to tackle the worsening climate crisis. Collaborating with partners, we identify and implement interventions and ensure the adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change impacts.

Our UKRI Strength in Places Digital Dairy Value-Chain project is on track and aims to decarbonise the dairy industry in Scotland and beyond. In 2023 we will pick up a range of next steps, including future workforce and schools' engagement. Agrecalc a carbon footprint tool that enables farm enterprises to identify and measure emissions, benchmark key performance indicators, identify mitigation strategies and monitor improvements, has gone from strength to strength. We deliver Farming for a Better Climate, working with farmers and land managers to provide practical ideas to improve farm efficiency and reduce the farm carbon footprint. Through our research and outreach activities SRUC helps deliver net-zero emissions from food production while increasing the level of both efficiency and farm productivity.

9. High Quality Research and Innovation

SRUC's research, aims to deliver research for change. Working in partnership with industry, policy, and society, our staff and students will collaborate to develop and deliver our underpinning strategy of driving real world change to the challenges we face. The recent Research Excellence Framework confirmed SRUC's position as the strongest provider in the Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences. Our joint submission with the University of Edinburgh has been ranked as number one in the UK for research power, based on the quality and breadth of work. The SRUC research environment was classified world class or internationally excellent, highlighting the outstanding quality, equipment, and culture of the research base. 87% of overall research outputs were ranked world class or internationally excellent. Furthermore all 11 impact case studies submitted – eight of which were based on SRUC research – were classified as 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent in terms of their impact on wider society. Further details of REF impact case studies are available.

9.1 Research Ethics and Integrity

SRUC's Ethics Committee reports to Academic Board on the development, implementation and review of the institutional procedures and guidelines relating to the ethical issues arising from teaching, research, consulting, knowledge exchange and other related institutional activities. The committee is supported by a Research Integrity Officer who provides support for key Social Science and Animal Ethics processes as well as embedding wider research integrity in our operations.

The major ethical issues we face at SRUC is research involving the use of animals and research involving gathering the views and opinions of others. All such research is covered by clear policies, procedures and codes of practice, available to staff and students via our intranet. All planned research involving the use of animals must be approved via our Animal Experimentation Committee. Similar arrangements exist where research will involve gathering the opinions of others.

Building on project operational QA (ISO9001/2008 certificated by BSI), SRUC has established Research Integrity training and systems to underpin our research practice, to enhance the activities of our various ethical frameworks and professional codes of practice. During the past year we have implemented Research Integrity training for all research active staff and postgraduate research students with an aim for all research colleagues to have completed training by the end of the 2022.

Our research integrity site at SRUC is core to promoting how SRUC and individual researchers can find out more about the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This includes information on the concordat, information and training resources, research misconduct reporting processes, reporting as well as our research ethics activities. To help embed research integrity as a core part of our research

culture at SRUC we have established a short life working group to develop a new research handbook for SRUC staff and students. This handbook will go through governance approvals in April/May 2023 with launch to staff, students and public in summer 2023.

SRUC is committed to sharing its knowledge and expertise as widely as possible. SRUC encourages all research activity to follow Open approach including;

- Publishing Open access.
- Making the underlying research data, certainly the data used in the publication, available as an open dataset so that the conclusions reached in the publication can be checked and verified.
- Making the research software, used for analysis, available so that the research is reproducible.
- Using standard identifiers/processes which help discoverability and re-use of open outputs.
- Using ORCID to identify the authors and acknowledge funders by adding funding ID on research outputs.

Pure is SRUC's research management system (CRIS), which aggregates information about research activity (funding opportunities, applications, awards and projects) and it is a repository of research outputs – all in one place.

With a single repository of validated and verified information on SRUC's research, the data in Pure can be used to build reports, create robust researcher profiles, enable research networking and expertise discovery and more, all while reducing administrative burden for academics and support staff.

To support researchers to follow good data practices, means researchers and institutions can meet obligations to funders, improve the efficiency of research, and ensure data is findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR), and in 2022 we introduced FigShare as the SRUC research data repository.

Information on Open Research and all associated training resources are available to all staff and students on a dedicated Intranet site supported by a dedicated Open Access mailbox.

9.2 Post-graduate Research Training Environment

We provide our PhD students with support, training, and supervision, as well as meeting the requirements of our degree-awarding partners. We are partners in 3 Doctoral Training Programmes and hold an annual PGR conference – the winners of which represent SRUC at the annual SEFARI Postgraduate Student Competition.

A new Head of Doctoral College was appointed in 2022 and we have started a work programme to support our ambitions towards Research Degree Awarding Powers. We are in the process of updating our postgraduate research (PGR) student data systems. We have adopted Research Advantage, Unit-E for this, which is aligned to the rest of the student systems in SRUC. With involvement from academic staff, support staff and PGR students we are currently running four working groups for various aspects of our PGR provisions;

- PhD Programme Design
- Enhancing PGR Training Environment
- Supporting PGR student needs
- PGR Rules and Regulations.

SRUC's next Thematic Review of Research Postgraduate provision will occur in 2023. In preparation we have developed refreshed policies, procedures and academic governance structures, and reviewed PGR policies and procedures.

9.3 Career Support for Researchers

Staff and students are encouraged to participate in a range of development activities to enhance their teaching, learning and assessment skills, and to further their subject specialism - these activities are included within the broad definition of scholarly activity at SRUC. As we progress our institutional academic developments we will continue to review and enhance our research resources and development systems with a view to align with best practice in academia (e.g., Researcher Development Concordat, HREiR).

SRUC has adopted the use of the Vitae Research Development Framework for our research-active staff and PGRs. This allows individual development actions to be evaluated, and tailored programmes for researchers to be developed at all stages of their job progression. Training need analysis and planning, including domain specific and researcher skills, is a key component of the staff review process at SRUC (Making Performance Matter). During academic year 2021/22 with introduced a formal academic progression and promotion system which help staff and managers have informed discussions on research and broader training needs.

During academic year 2021/22 we grouped our researcher training information and resources our core research development and delivery systems. This means the key "how to" guides and training are located with the areas of research practice and quality assurance we undertake at SRUC. This has been integrated into the institutional induction guide and research intranet site covering

- Open Research – including Pure profile management and output deposition ORCID, FigShare training guidelines.
- Bid support – including Funding Opportunities, Bid preparation guidelines by funder, costing research, preparation of narrative CVs and post award management.
- Research integrity (discussed earlier).
- Quality Assurance Practices for research in SRUC.
- Research Governance and Strategy at SRUC.
- Doctoral College – including training and support for staff and students in research postgraduate training.

Researcher skills events are run throughout the year, including sessions on grant development, postgraduate (PGR) supervision, and data skills including research integrity/openness, and support for PhD students/early career researchers. During the second half of calendar year 2022 early career researchers participated in a series of training, support, and mentoring sessions on progressing research independence and achieving research impact.

9.4 REG funding case study

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 continued to evolve and develop its research and innovation ecosystem.

In recognition of SRUC's vision to be Scotland's enterprise university at the heart of our sustainable natural economy we have appointed Dr Carol Langston as Director of the Enterprise Academy for the Rural and Natural Economy. Working with students, academics, and entrepreneurs, as well as our wider communities, the academy's goal is to accelerate the uptake and delivery of sustainable enterprise while developing enterprising mindsets and enhancing the business skills of the next generation.

Building on the success of borderlands funding for the Dairy Nexus project at our Barony campus in Dumfries and Digital Dairy Chain project also at Barony (the only Scottish project funded in the most recent round of strength in places) we have funded the development of a new Centre in Biorefining & Advanced Materials research to drive further research into circularity and sustainability in the global circular bioeconomy.

To support the development of our ERDF funded [Rural Animal Veterinary Innovation Centre (RAVIC)](#) and new [School of Veterinary Medicine](#). REG funded Professor John Berezowski has worked with colleagues to develop the [Centre for Epidemiology and Planetary Health](#) (CEPH). CEPH will provide a major focus for research excellence in disease surveillance including zoonoses, diseases which can be transmitted from animals to humans.

Research at SRUC is being cited more than ever before – placing it [third in Scotland and 121st globally](#) - according to the latest Times Higher Education World . But we know that it is not our research output alone that is making a decisive impact. At SRUC, we are in the privileged position of working with students throughout Scotland and with businesses directly engaged in the natural economy. We have provided [£57.5m of business value to SMEs](#) – more than any other UK higher education institution. To continue to drive our engagement we are implementing a new publication and open access strategy to ensure our research continues to drive innovation both in Scotland and globally.

10. Knowledge Exchange and Innovation - University Innovation Fund (UIF) Plan

The SRUC UIF plan for 2022/23 is focused on supporting stakeholders through a green recovery and a just transition to net zero carbon. It also supports a well-being economy through innovations which facilitate financial investment in our natural economy. The transition to net-zero and improved sustainability targets in agriculture create opportunities and challenges and we continue to prioritise within our UIF plan for 2022/23 activities which accelerate SRUC innovations relating to novel, efficient and sustainable production systems out to our business networks, including the 14,000 SMEs we interact with. There is an urgent need to scale up investment in nature-based solutions in Scotland to tackle the climate crisis and nature emergency, and our UIF plans will support a well-being economy by continuing to co-develop initiatives where there are opportunities to fund carbon mitigation and sequestration projects. This year we will also enhance the entrepreneurial opportunities available to students.

The current UIF outcomes have set the framework for UIF projects at SRUC for 2022/23 and we will continue to engage in the Universities Scotland's Research and Commercialisation Directors Group (RCDG) and with the UIF Collaboration Manager to develop our collaborative activities and our knowledge exchange and innovation strategy. In agreement with RCDG, SRUC contributes to each of the UIF outcomes from a natural economy / primary food / land-based sector perspective. Most of our UIF projects contribute to multiple outcomes but are grouped under the main outcome to which they contributed to, in the text below.

Projects and activities funded through our UIF Platform Grant will continue to be match funded by SRUC. In addition, we maintain and develop our collaborations with other HEIs and where appropriate, we always try to partner with stakeholders such as Scottish Enterprise Agencies, levy boards, companies, and others to add value to activities.

Our evaluation of UIF activities in 2021/22 has informed adjustments to our 2022/23 plans. We will build on successes, such as our Enterprising Change Makers programme with students and we will develop our place-based projects which simplify engagement with local businesses and Enterprise Agencies. We will also use UIF funding to support our Research Challenge Centres and promote them as easy access points for the HEI knowledge and expertise relevant to the natural economy sector. We will facilitate additional stakeholder events so that our Executive Leadership Team can co-develop innovation projects and enhance strategic links with industry networks and key stakeholders. We will also work to strengthen the established reputation of our Rural Policy Centre, which in 2021/22 worked to consolidate our links with Scottish and UK policy makers and give us greater insight into policy direction at a crucial time for the farming and land use sectors.

Hybrid delivery worked well in 2021/22 in terms of broadening engagement from SME's and remote rural businesses, but a return to face-to-face events was also well received and so we will continue to deliver collaborative knowledge exchange activities through a variety of formats.

10.1 Outcome one: Demand stimulation

We will increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for HEI services through two key approaches, centred on our Research Challenge Centres which will provide a focus for tackling complex challenges, and our Rural Policy Centre who will run a series of campaigns.

The SRUC challenge-driven research centres (Climate Change, Safe & Improved Food, Thriving Natural Capital) will use UIF support to strategically align and integrate activities across SRUC to leverage new partnerships and income, and deliver social, economic, and environmental impact. The aim is to realise this ambition in a series of events that both publicise their role and expand academic-industry partnerships and networks. We are at an ideal time, following release from Covid restrictions, to launch and showcase the roles of the centres and to encourage internal and external engagement, to ensure SRUC's strategic planning is grounded in the vision to support the solving of the crises of climate emergency, biodiversity loss, food safety and security and a just transition for rural communities to a natural economy. We will announce the strength of our joint offer, refining initial ideas with our stakeholders through a series of live Knowledge Exchange (KE) Roadshows held across the country, with additional linked engagement activity between our executive team and stakeholders.

These activities will be made policy relevant by the work of our Rural Policy Centre (RPC) with outputs including thought leadership pieces and blogs, research briefings and policy spotlights, web updates and social media posts. The RPC will run five core campaigns in 2022/23 :-
- Tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies through promoting sustainable behaviours across rural Scotland;
- Achieving sustainable and inclusive future food systems;
- Enhancing our understanding of (private and social) entrepreneurship to inform a range of policy agendas (e.g. the National Strategy for Economic Transformation [NSET], innovation, business approaches for sustainability, diversity and equality and up/reskilling and widening access, in support of an inclusive, education-led economic recovery for Scotland) and a range of SRUC activities, including exploring (rural) entrepreneurial opportunities for students through close working with SRUC's Enterprise Academy;
- Informing future land use and land management in Scotland;
- Engaging and working collaboratively with academics in other HEIs locally in Scotland as well as globally, to critically consider ways to improve the research-policy interface in relation to the rural and natural economy in Scotland and beyond.

10.2 Outcome two (simplification/commercialisation):

We will improve business access to the knowledge and expertise in SRUC and HEI collaborative partners (in particular Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and UHI) by continued operationalisation of industry, HEI and civic partnerships in place-based initiatives such as the SeedPod in Aberdeenshire (supporting innovation in Scotland's food and drink industries) and the Rural Animal Veterinary Innovation Centre (RAVIC) which will enhance collaborations in epidemiology, zoonoses, infectious disease control and veterinary surveillance. The Dairy Nexus in the South-West of Scotland will also be supported, and we will use UIF funding to maximise knowledge transfer with a series of KE activities which help to catalyse collaborative relationship development.

In addition, we will use UIF funding to support a wide range of KE activities throughout Scotland which accelerate HEI research out to businesses within the natural economy and utilise our business engagement with the farming industry. Market challenges, rising input costs and sustainability and net-zero targets make this a time of change in the farming sector and we will focus KE activity on key sectors such as suckler beef, dairy, beef, sheep, and arable production. Research evidence that increases production efficiency through better animal survival rates, improved nutrient management plans and increases in breed efficiency will be disseminated through a programme of activities including 'Graze Debates', 'Calf Crop' and 'Lamb Crop' events and we will hold a high-profile conference for the dairy industry. We will provide online resource giving easy access to HEI research on soil health and innovations in integrated and sustainable arable production systems. We will continue to engage with significant collaborative stakeholder events such as ScotGrass and Arable Scotland and extend our activities to other input intensive systems (e.g., Potatoes in Practice) and land uses (e.g., extending our carbon calculation and sustainability metrics to golf course businesses). These projects aim to give farmers and other land users the tools they need to make positive changes to their business and help steer the sector to a profitable low carbon future.

We will also showcase the knowledge that SRUC has developed in innovative new food trends and signpost how businesses can develop innovative products to meet emerging demands. We will also showcase to industry and consumers the journey SME's and entrepreneurs have been on in partnership with SRUC, creating innovative food products using Scottish local ingredients.

10.3 Outcome three (simplification/greater innovation):

SRUC will make strategic use of our sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the natural economy. Carbon management is essential to green-recovery decision making and to accelerate business innovations that are verifiably low carbon and biodiverse we will include a series of UIF supported activities that relate to our widely used carbon calculator Agrecalc. To widen outreach, we will include initiatives with an urban community farm, which is a response to the growing challenges of climate change, biodiversity collapse and lack of access for all to healthy, fresh, affordable food. We will also link to new innovations in local and vertical farming.

The collection of trustable digital evidence of restoration activities and their impacts on biodiversity requires novel digital measurement methods. As such, we will highlight digital methods for measuring biodiversity and pilot training in the set-up and implementation of digital measuring technologies in the landscape. This has additional potential for crowdfunding mechanisms and providing new philanthropic economic opportunities for entrepreneurial land managing SMEs.

To support the circular economy, we will work with key Scottish businesses to promote the development of renewable materials from underutilised diverse sources, e.g., open events for biomass crops and collaborations with industries using hemp as a novel crop. We will continue to develop long-term strategic partnerships with biorefining related industries, universities, and relevant stakeholders to use agricultural and dairy waste and transform them into high-value sustainable materials for the circular economy.

10.4 Outcome four (entrepreneurialism):

Our UIF plans for 2022/23 will support the development of SRUC as an enterprising university campus, with 3 connected objectives which enhance new areas of enterprise and entrepreneurship activity across our campus and through our ecosystems. UIF plans will inspire and support all staff and students and incorporate collaboration with HEIs, SMEs and businesses to meet UIF outcomes by enhancing the entrepreneurial opportunities for staff and students. Objective one will increase developmental opportunities and entrepreneurial training and education by launching phase 2 of our specialist CPD program (Enterprising Change Makers). Objective two will enhance and scale-up our student enterprise program of actions across the SRUC network, including an enterprise competition and mentoring support from business contacts (particularly from our alumni network) to strengthen student business networks. Objective three will build and grow an active cross-institution KE network

focusing on enterprise, which aims to help identify, champion, and boost cross-institution and externally linked SME enterprising activity.

In collaboration with Abertay and QMU, we will participate in the Thrive program - an annual week-long, intensive summer school delivered with a wide range of industry partners, followed by a program of specialist events and online resources throughout the academic year. The program is designed to equip participants with the collaborative, practical, creative, and entrepreneurial skills that will support them in making the shift from being a student/graduate to becoming a successful professional

UIF activity from our Rural Policy Centre is threaded through all the outcomes, but for outcome four we plan to expand the RPC's relationships with students, many of whom are working on highly relevant, current policy issues and who will be involved this year in writing blogs and thought pieces for the RPC.

The Innovation Hub at SRUC has a programme of innovation and internationalisation activities planned for 2022/23. Within this, our UIF funded Orchard programme enters its fifth year of scouting innovation within SRUC. The Orchard seeks to identify and develop new ideas that have the potential to be commercialised or that can generate new income by attracting new alliances with industry, grant funding and studentships. It offers professional enterprise training and one-to-one coaching and mentoring throughout the process. Any member of staff, student or alumni can participate in the training and be supported to enter innovation competitions in Scotland.

We will celebrate and reward engagement in KE and innovation activities by supporting participation in enterprise and innovation competitions such as CONVERGE, Scottish EDGE and RSE. To complement this, our Orchard programme will seek to form a new partnership with an existing innovation network to have wider impact in the sector. This approach aligns strategically with the efforts by all HEIs and SFC to encourage the formation of start-ups. The outcome of the projects could be collaborations with industry; licensing technology or spin-out and will also have much to offer in terms of KE outputs.

10.5 Outcome five (international):

Our international links remain strong and using UIF support in 2022/23 we will expand our international work to share good practice to promote and engage Scotland internationally. SRUC has spent 15 years developing the Agrecalc farm-carbon calculator, based on world leading SRUC research and the practical experience of SAC Consultants. Agrecalc has over 7,500 farm users mainly in Scotland and the UK and to accelerate this growth, Agrecalc must collaborate with research institutions on a global basis to ensure the best and latest science on carbon calculation and mitigation is being utilised in the tool. Agrecalc can play a growing global role by adapting to overseas agricultural systems and conditions so that more farmers can make use of the science and practical insights that Agrecalc provides to cut their carbon emissions too. We will fund a collaborative visit to Argentina to develop contacts with INTA (National Agricultural Technology Institute) and identify where SRUC research and consultancy expertise within Agrecalc can be better tailored to the needs of agriculture in Argentina. Lessons learned will also allow Agrecalc to deliver more features to aid in carbon reduction for users in Scotland and the UK.

10.6 Outcome six (inclusive growth and social impact):

We will use UIF funding to support inclusive growth and social impact by making sure our activities are as widely accessible as possible and will expand our stakeholder networks to encompass art and creative industries, community initiatives and a greater number of NGOs. We will use a diverse range of methods to aid uptake and help inclusion including workshops, webinars, hackathons, farm walks, videos, and podcasts. Extending our networks from our 'STEAM' core, we will work with the creative partnerships we formed during 2021/22 as partners in the Dandelion project (funded by EventScotland) to develop a legacy from this national sow, grow and share festival.

We will develop the citizen and participatory engagement that the project initiated in local and community food growing settings. We will also develop a programme of engagement centred on the use of novel controlled environment systems - for example linking miniature demonstration-controlled environment growing cubes with the vertical farming initiatives at our main campuses.

We will also continue to work with community farms and gardens where SRUC students have benefited from paid placements in 2022. Finally, we will continue to develop initiatives that support and increase private investment in social good outcomes, and we will showcase SRUC's impactful projects in collaboration with the Global Ethical Finance Initiative (GEFIi) and the Scottish Conservation Finance Pioneers Group (SCFPG).

10.7 Outcome seven (equality and diversity):

Building on current and good practice, SRUC will ensure positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff, students and all who are affected by the use of the UIF funding. We will monitor and evaluate metrics for KE activities and engagement in internal and external development and training opportunities and ensure these are consistent with those in our institutional strategy led by our Equality Inclusion and Diversity Committee. Our UIF plan supports the sustainability and enterprise (SE), and equality and diversity (ED) approaches set out in our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2020-2025. We will use active and blended learning approaches to UIF project delivery, and staff and students involved will access institutional training opportunities, with key training topics this year including mental health support, Deaf Awareness, equality impact assessments and British Sign Language.

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

11.1 Farm Advisory Service (FAS)

The Farm Advisory Service is the national advisory programme in Scotland. The work is awarded to SRUC via competitive tender. FAS has a strong brand identity and is highly regarded by recipients, industry, and stakeholders alike. To date FAS has delivered 1,273 events – both face to face and digital to 28,843 attendees as well as providing publications, videos, podcasts, and online tools. There have been 4,838,633 webpage views on FAS website.

Since 2021 we have added a particularly successful addition to the traditional programme of face-to-face events in the form of a YouTube hosted TV channel "FAS TV", designed to help fill the gap in farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing that we facilitated pre Covid. Each thirty-minute episode brings the farm tour experience to life and features farmers and crofters across Scotland who show their farm and share their knowledge and experience. The focus is on facilitated peer-to-peer learning.

During 2022/23, FAS TV has been further enhanced by the additional delivery streams of FAS Radio and FAS Connect. FAS Radio is both live interviews and podcasts arranged by themes, FAS Connect is 1-2-few discussion and benchmarking groups where the content is driven by participants, starting where they value it most and driving change via group working. The whole programme of events has now a complementary digital element which has grown participation and repeat attendees. This continues the aspiration of the programme which is to find innovative ways to put the right content in front of the right recipient at the right time, supported by developments to the FAS App and website.

FAS is the largest of our advisory activities and we are particularly proud of the culture of continuous improvement and innovation we bring to the programme. All performance metrics are in the green with high levels of engagement from individual stakeholders and industry bodies. The current FAS programme is due to conclude in March 2023, with a funding decision expected in Dec 2022 to extend by one year to March 2024.

11.2 Scottish Farm Business Survey (SFBS)

The SFBS is a cornerstone of Scottish Government's Agricultural Statistics work commissioned annually by RESAS and completed by SAC Consulting's team of Farm Business Analysts (FBAs). The delivery of the survey is awarded via competitive tender. At the time of writing, we have not received confirmation of successful tender for 2023 onwards and the information below is based on a successful award.

The survey gathers granular economic and environmental data, in the form of carbon auditing in Agrecalc, from over 400 Scottish farms annually. The FBA team has continued to embrace a digital approach to the delivery of the survey initiated by Covid. The team aims to build on this by introducing a full digital approach to the survey beginning with a phased transition starting 2023. The intention is to create links from farm accounts on the very popular XERO accounting platform to wider farm information, combining in a database that provides the dataset in the form required by government.

The context within which the SFBS is completed is changing fast due to the perfect storm of change that is driven by Brexit, Making Tax Digital (MTD) and changes in agricultural policy in response to our climate and nature emergency. The SFBS structure, therefore, must change in response to make it fit for the future. MTD is transforming farm accounts from paper to digital, with subsequent data gathering opportunities, but also data quality issues, as this transformation rolls out over the next 5 years. This presents opportunities to make more and better use of SFBS data. We will utilise SAC Consulting's expertise and current service provision of Xero digital platform for bookkeeping to help inform this change.

RESAS has recently begun its Agristats transformation programme. In close discussion with them we have established that the SFBS is a cornerstone of their work and will stay. Modernisation of the SFBS will be done in line with their transformation programme assuring its alignment to their work, and ensuring we are in position to win future SFBS contracts.

We aim to provide more timely insights with the farming year into the impact of changing agricultural policy on the economic sustainability of farms within the survey. We will align the SFBS structure so that we can add on nature auditing and other key environmental measures as and when they become available. This will allow us to track environmental, social, and economic sustainability on Scottish farms in real time. This can provide data insights not only for Government but also for farmers.

11.3 Advisory Service Subscription

For our 8,000 advisory service subscribers we offer support and insight to farmers as they grapple with uncertainty on future agricultural policy. We expect 'conditional' payment mechanisms will become the norm, that farmers will be asked to baseline their activities and then be assessed on the outcomes as years go by. Recent policy announcement and consultations support this view. We expect the outcomes will be whether productivity has improved, emissions reduced, and biodiversity increased. We are focused on preparing customers for a smooth transition and supporting the complex decisions they need to make. Our membership subscribers now received a revitalised online and paper-based publications bringing them closer to our research and consultants beyond their local team. Feedback is positive and we shall complete a further subscriber survey January 2023 to inform next steps and requirements from our subscriber community.

12. Further information

Further information is available from Dr Kyrsten Black, SRUC Registrar; Kyrsten.black@sruc.ac.uk

![SRUC logo]

At the heart of the natural economy

College Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
A	Credits Delivered (Core)	19,446	18,670	23,273	23,167	22,469	21,873	21,882	22,719	**22560**
	Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	414	0	0	0	0	0	■	
	Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	19,446	19,084	23,273	23,167	22,469	21,873	21,882	22,719	**22560**
B	Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	1,305	1,111	1,341	1,217	1,168	1,296	1,219	1,437	**1450**
	Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	6.7%	5.8%	5.8%	5.3%	5.2%	5.9%	5.6%	6.3%	**6.40%**
C	Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0	73	81	127	591	793	802	965	**1000**
	Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	2.6%	3.6%	3.7%	4.3%	**4.40%**
D	Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	2	8	38	41	94	69	75	31	**129**
E1	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	66.2%	71.4%	70.1%	68.3%	70.1%	63.6%	65.3%	58.5%	**65%**
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	489	497	647	567	531	512	566	459	**506**
	Total number of FTFE students	739	696	923	830	757	805	867	784	**778**
E2	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	88.1%	91.5%	92.4%	92.6%	93.9%	88.4%	89.1%	87.20%	**90%**
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE	3,563	3,446	3,001	3,466	3,914	1,936	1,000	1017	**1620**
	Total number of PTFE students	4,046	3,768	3,248	3,743	4,170	2,191	1,122	1166	**1800**
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	0	■	
	Total number of FTHE students	0	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	0	■	
	Total number of PTHE students	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	■	
F	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses	0	76	58	61	15	53	43	47	**48**
	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	0	40	26	20	12	22	23	18	**26**
	Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	-	52.6%	44.8%	32.8%	80.0%	41.5%	53.5%	38.3%	**54.20%**
G	Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	472	445	508	484	395	345	405	380	
	Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	445	423	489	450	381	311	388	350	
	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%	96.5%	90.1%	95.8%	96.0%'	
	Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	0	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	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%	note	91.2%	-	87.5%	94.1%	**95%**

Please note that 2019-20 figures for measures E, G and H and all 2020-21 figures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
A Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	892	858	865	850	867	801	1,016	961	**867**
B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes		46	23	39	28	15	35	47	**48**
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		29	22	33	26	15	35	18	**26**
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		63.0%	95.7%	84.6%	92.9%	100.0%	100.0%	38.30%	**54.20%**
C COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	24	22	15	21	20	15	31	14	**11**
COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	10.5%	8.3%	7.5%	10.4%	10.5%	10.1%	13.5%	5.1%	**10%**
D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	1	4	5	1	2	1	0	15	**12**
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	0.1%	0.5%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	1.6%'	**1.4%'**
E Total number of full-time first year SDUE	836	823	791	776	743	716	711	644	**588**
Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	716	683	637	626	636	599	582	504	**537**
Proportion of full-time first year SDUE retained	85.6%	83.0%	80.5%	80.7%	85.6%	83.7%	81.9%	78%	**91.30%**
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	-12.25	-12.95	0.02	-4.47	**0.5**
G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey				310	324	238	**355**	330	**320**
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				298	303	234	**350**	325	**315**
The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				96.1%	93.5%	98.3%	**98.5%**	99	**98.5**
G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment				82	95	56	**100**	102	**105**
The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				44	40	32	**58**	60	**63**
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				53.7%	42.1%	57.1%	**58.0%**	59	**60**
H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers	662	445	720	609	692	502	718	576	**650**

Please note that 2018-19 and 2019-20 figures for measures G1 and G2, 2019-20 figures for measures F and H and all 2020-21 figures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years.

Outcome Agreement between Scotland's Rural College and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2022-23

On behalf of Scotland's Rural College

Signed:

Print name: Professor Wayne Powell

Position: Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 31st March 2023

Signed:

Print name: Linda Hanna

Position: Chair

Date: 31st March 2023

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:

Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 26 July 2023