

University Innovation Fund 2023-24 Guidance



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Summary:	This guidance outlines University Innovation Fund arrangements for AY 2023-24. It sets out requirements, key priority areas for the use of allocated funding and self-evaluation requirements.
FAO:	Principals, Chairs and Finance Directors of Scotland's universities and the general public.
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University Innovation Fund 2023-24 Guidance

Introduction

1. This guidance outlines University Innovation Fund (UIF) arrangements for Academic Year (AY) 2023-24. It sets out requirements, key priority areas for the use of allocated funding (including the [UIF uplift](#)) and self-evaluation requirements.
2. The UIF AY 2023-24 will be a transitional year during which we will work with the sector to implement SFC's [Review](#) recommendations for knowledge exchange and innovation and introduce the University Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (University KEIF) from AY 2024-25.
3. SFC will hold a workshop with the sector in August 2023 to discuss the requirements for AY 2023-24 set out below, including the added value we expect institutions to demonstrate from the UIF uplift. This workshop will also mark the start of work with the sector over AY 2023-24 to evolve this underpinning support and create the University KEIF from AY 2024-25.

Arrangements for AY 2023-24

4. As part of their Outcome Agreement (OA)¹ submission, universities should submit an updated UIF plan for AY 2023-24 that outlines the specific activity that UIF supported resources will be directed at and identify proposed in-year progress measures.
5. The [current UIF outcomes](#) will continue to set the framework for the UIF and, as before, universities can prioritise these as appropriate. However, SFC expects the AY 2023-24 UIF uplift to be used to support the delivery of key strategic drivers in the [Scottish Government's Innovation Strategy](#) and spent on the delivery of '[The Entrepreneurial Campus: Higher Education As A Driving Force For The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem](#)', in a collaborative, sector wide context.
6. Universities are encouraged to use the outcomes to structure their plan with the additionality of the uplift clearly demonstrated and submit a minimum of two case studies to SFC in March 2024 to illustrate the impact of SFC's investment (see below).
7. The plan should be **no more than four pages in length** and attached to the OA submission.

¹ [Outcome Agreement Guidance AY 2023-24](#)

Requirements

8. The UIF plans should meet the following requirements:
 - Set out how the institution will use the UIF uplift to support the delivery of key strategic drivers in the Scottish Government's Innovation Strategy and Entrepreneurial Campus, in a collaborative, sector wide context.
 - Demonstrate a strong commitment to helping Scotland achieve its **green recovery ambitions, a well-being economy and just transition to a net-zero carbon society** such as through CPD, collaborative R&D, events, spin-out and start-up support. Pooling effort and resources to leverage funding into Scotland such as from UKRI or as activity related to Scotland's Inward Investment Plan is strongly encouraged.
 - Support and lead delivery of 'the Entrepreneurial Campus' through the UIF. AY 2023-24 plans must include collaborative efforts to begin the implementation of the long term strategy.
 - Support and lead delivery of key aspects of Scotland's Innovation Strategy, building on existing collaborative efforts particularly around Commercialisation Framework development.
 - Demonstrate a commitment to supporting the further development and implementation of SFC's Review plans particularly in relation to the University KEIF and becoming strategically closer to SFC infrastructure investments.
9. These requirements are in line with our Review implementation plans as we seek to co-design the University KEIF to begin in AY 2024-25.
10. UIF collaborative activities are expected to continue under the direction and prioritisation of Universities Scotland's Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group and the UIF Collaboration Manager. Universities should summarise their plans for engaging in this collaborative activity and using it as a means to support their KE strategies.
11. Universities should confirm their ability (or otherwise) to utilise and match fund the UIF Platform Grant.
12. Completion of the HESA HE-Business and Community Interaction survey and the SFC KE metric return remain a condition of grant for institutions to receive the UIF.
13. SFC will consider each plan on an individual basis and funding will be subject to receipt of satisfactory plans.

Self-evaluation report

14. Universities should include a short report on the use and outcomes of UIF AY 2022-23 at an individual and collaborative level in their OA self-evaluation report (due October 2023).

Case studies

15. Evidence of the value of increased investment in the UIF will be helpful in understanding the potential value of retaining the increase into future years. Universities are asked to provide more detailed illustrations of what they have achieved, individually and collectively, with increased UIF in AY 2023-24 and the way they are using the UIF to support the delivery of strategic drivers in the Scottish Government's Innovation Strategy and the Entrepreneurial Campus. Examples should be provided in the form of case studies which clearly illustrate the impact of SFC's investment in the UIF.
16. A minimum of two case studies should be submitted to SFC via the relevant [Outcome Agreement Manager](#) and copied to Victoria Borthwick, Policy Officer (email: vborthwick@sfc.ac.uk) in March 2024. Each case study should be between 250-500 words in length and should be provided in publishable form. At least one case study should relate to the delivery of Entrepreneurial Campus. The submission of case studies should be considered part of the Outcome Agreement process.

Further information

17. For further information please contact Fiona Bates, Senior Policy Officer (email: fbates@sfc.ac.uk) or Victoria Borthwick, Policy Officer (email: vborthwick@sfc.ac.uk).