



OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Outcome 1 - Fair Access & Transitions

People from deprived areas have fair access and are supported to succeed

The University has a long-standing commitment to widening access to university, articulated through its deep-rooted approach in delivering credible, high-quality interventions which work by inspiring, supporting and enabling people and their families to be confident and to engage in higher education. The University's commitment to widening and extending access to higher education, regardless of an individual's background is emphasised as a key objective in the University's refreshed Strategy which was launched in 2021-22.

This approach is articulated in the University's Access aims to:

- Build ambition: raise aspirations and develop ambitions.
- Enable access: mitigate barriers and create student-centred access pathways.
- Support achievement: support the development of skills-enriched graduates with the confidence and capacity to achieve their ambitions whatever their circumstances.

The University's admissions processes aim to be fair to all learners by taking full account of their circumstances when assessing any application. A key measure to provide fair access has been the implementation of access thresholds across the full range of undergraduate provision for applicants from MD20/MD40 areas, those who are care experienced and those who are at or have attended a SHEP school. The access thresholds are publicised both online and in the University's prospectus.

The University offers a wide range of financial and pastoral support to disadvantaged students to enable them to access higher education and to support their learning journey. This includes:

- School engagement staff embedded in Aberdeen City and Shire secondary 'Hub' schools (further detail on the new school engagement approach is set out below) to provide pupils with experiential learning of life at university, guidance, support with UCAS application submission queries, and to prepare for university study.
- Discounted accommodation for MD20, estranged and care-experienced students.

- MD20 students from outwith the region may be able eligible for one year's free accommodation within the University's student residence. In 2021-22, 21 MD20 students received one-year's free accommodation, with a further seven benefitting from a 25% discount.
- Not requiring a guarantor for University student accommodation, making it accessible for all learners and especially those learners estranged from family, care-experienced or from low-income families.
- Access to targeted scholarships and to discretionary hardship funding.
- Named contact support for care-experienced people seeking information on studying at the University.

The University will use Scottish Government funding to launch an updated Digital Provision Scheme in 2022-23. This will help to alleviate digital poverty by providing full-time and part-time MD20, care experienced and estranged students with the necessary digital equipment to engage in learning. It will also support the provision of enhanced digital skills for staff and students.

The University's commitment to widening access to higher education extends far beyond supporting deprived learners. A significant proportion (21%) of the University's Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants are disabled. 9.4% of the University's students come from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

The University recruited to target for controlled subjects in 2021-22 but under-recruited to the non-controlled courses against a highly competitive environment for the recruitment of Scottish domiciled students. The principal reason for the under-recruitment of Scottish domiciled students is due to a drop in applications from college students which is likely to remain a significant issue over several recruitment cycles. This position was exacerbated by the award of additional places from SFC to mitigate for teacher assessments and Brexit.

The University is not the only Scottish institution in this position and communication with senior SFC staff has been ongoing and will continue throughout 2022-23. The University has taken action to address under-recruitment, including increasing the resource for UK recruitment and for admissions, and creating a dedicated Conversion Team.

Care-experienced people have fair access and are supported to succeed

Tailored and specific support arrangements are in place to support care-experienced students at the University. These students have a dedicated Care Experience lead who provides advice and support at all stages of the learner journey. Contextualised admissions means that the University takes account of their individual circumstances when assessing entry requirements. The University provides care-experienced students with a variety of support. This includes financial assistance to attend interviews, selection visits and open days, and an enrolment support pack including stationary, food voucher, course book voucher and travel support. The University also offers 365-day accommodation in student halls for first year with a reduction in cost. Care-experienced students have the opportunity to benefit from a range of targeted scholarships and bursaries which form part of the University's strategic commitment to widening participation and supporting under-represented groups to access the University's provision.

Institutions outline how they will support the sector's delivery of the CoWA targets

The University remains committed to widening and extending access to higher education, regardless of an individual's background or circumstance. In 2021-22, the University enrolled 134 MD20 students accounting for 6.3% of full-time, first-degree entrants to the University against the national 10% CoWA target. While the University has not yet met the national CoWA target, its enrolment of MD20 students is significantly more than for some institutions that have achieved the 10% participation target.

Meeting this national target continues to be a challenge for the University principally due to the narrow focus of the metric given that there are a small number of MD20 postcodes in the North-East of Scotland. The University is therefore reliant on attracting MD20 students from outside the local area. The final report of the outgoing Commissioner on Fair Access recommended that a wider basket of institutional measures should be used to assess universities' progress on widening access, taking account of regional and local circumstances. Implementation of this recommendation would enable a wider group of learners to benefit from access support to higher education while also helping to recognise the totality of the University's efforts on widening access.

In November 2021, the University launched a new 'Hub' model for engaging with regional secondary schools, with further detail set out in the section below, on institutions' work with schools. This new approach, to be delivered in 2022-23, recognises that widening participation criteria markers are located in every secondary school, and is very much in line with the SFC's refreshed school SHEP model which categorises secondary schools as SHEP 1, 2 or 3. The 'Hub' approach is based on an intensive engagement model, bespoke to each secondary school. It involves the provision of a dedicated staff member from RGU working in the school on a sustained basis. This ensures that school learners and staff are exposed to further and higher education curriculum pathways from an early stage, as well as providing learners with experience of life and study at RGU. The initial focus of the 'Hub' approach in 2021-22 has been eight regional schools. In 2022-23, the 'Hub' model will be rolled out to schools across the region. The early results have been very positive, with the University's MD20 student applications and enrolments from the Hub schools having increased compared to 2021-22. Enrolments to the University in 2022-23 from Hub school students who had at least one of the widening access characteristics (MD20, Estranged or Care leaver) increased by 38% compared to 2021-22, resulting in the University enrolling its largest ever number of Widening Access students from the Hub schools.

Prior learning is considered and students are offered the best pathway for them

The University's approach to widening access is also underpinned by partnerships with colleges to create and maintain articulation pathways and transparent and effective RPL processes. In 2021-22 over 346 students joined the University from colleges across Scotland. The University's sector leading partnership with North-East Scotland College (NESCol) now has 60 course level agreements across all of our eleven schools. Face-to-face meetings between the academic discipline leads in NESCol and RGU will be re-instated in 2022-23 to help ensure pathways are contemporary and relevant to students, the region and the future workforce.

In 2022-23 work will be taken forward to further strengthen the University's strategic partnership with NESCol as part of the SFC North-East Scotland Regional Pathfinder. A pilot project will develop enhanced co-design and joint-planning arrangements which will deliver demand-informed, skills-aligned, and sustainable learner pathways for the region and beyond. The project will deliver new provision, improve efficiency and ensure a joined-up response to changing needs.

The project includes the following specific deliverables: a fast-tracked degree pathway in priority subject areas; enhanced alignment of apprenticeship pathways; the co-design and delivery of SCQF level 9 and 10 qualifications in key subject areas where no existing degree articulation route exists; the joint delivery of more efficient and sustainable co-branded undergraduate qualifications; a joint schools engagement approach to promotion and marketing of learner journey pathways to school pupils and their influencers; and enhanced support for under-represented groups. The pathfinder project presents a significant and timely opportunity for the University and NESCol to work together to advance key national strategies and policy developments, including the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, SFC's Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability, the Enterprise and Skills Review and the Cumberford-Little report. This important project will produce outcomes on post-16 education collaboration that other institutions will have the opportunity to learn from.

The University will implement its refreshed College Engagement Strategy in 2022-23. The University has expanded its dedicated support package for articulating students from all partner colleges including weekly tailored study skills sessions (covering, for example, transition from college to university, academic writing, using sources, communication and time management) and enhanced personal support. Building on the University's Hub model for school engagement, in 2022-23 the University will establish a college Hub programme. As well as supplementing the University's extensive partnership work with NESCol, the college Hub approach will enable the University to strengthen links with several partner colleges across Scotland. This will enhance articulation pathways, enable students at partner colleges to access RGU resources and facilities while studying at college through an enhanced Associate Student Scheme, enable the University to provide an improved support offer to students transitioning from college to the University, strengthen the University's ability to widen access to university among under-represented groups and promote Aberdeen as a vibrant student destination. In 2022-23, the University will enhance its longstanding *Degree Prep* programme which helps college students prepare for degree-level study as well as offering a range of support services so that it covers all articulating students across all academic schools.

Building on current RPL and flexible study processes, the University will also invest in staff in 2022-23 to enhance the infrastructure that surrounds the Flexible Studies Framework. This will enable learners who have left university or college with academic credit but no award to "upgrade" to a degree or masters level programme using a combination of interdisciplinary modules that align with their topic of interest or career ambitions.

Transitions and pathways for students are supported and signposted

Building on the live and future developments outlined in the preceding section, updated information about pathways to the University from partner colleges is publicised on the University website through the Degree Link programme. These pathways are fully supported through the Associate Student Scheme to help prepare students for university life while still at college, and the Degree Prep programme.

Acknowledging the educational disruption students faced due to Covid-19 restrictions and the added strain on their wellbeing, RGU launched the Welcome Leadership Group. The project brought together students and professional and academic staff to co-create an innovative Student Welcome to ensure a supportive and smooth transition for those joining and returning to university. The Group oversaw the introduction of a range of enhancements to institutional Welcome arrangements for the start of the 2021-22 academic session. These included the introduction of a new Welcome survey intended to measure student satisfaction with Welcome arrangements and associated support and the Transitions Track – a series of targeted emails sent out weekly to all new students aiming to issue key information at the point it would be most well received. The University's new approach to the Student Welcome elicited high levels of engagement and student satisfaction with over 1,100 students responding to the University's Welcome survey. This showed that 88.7% of students were satisfied with the Student Welcome; 92.3% expressed their satisfaction with Transitions Track e-mail communications, and 85.2% said that they were satisfied with the Welcome resources. The University will build upon these developments to enhance Student Welcome arrangements. The excellence of RGU's staff and student collaborative Welcome work in 2021 was externally recognised with the University receiving a AdvanceHE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) in 2022.

Institutions work with schools, SFC funded programmes and local communities to support successful pathways and effective transitions for students

As highlighted in earlier sections of the Outcome Agreement, following a strategic review of school engagement and outreach provision, in November 2021 the University launched a new Hub model for intensive, tailored engagement with schools, with an initial focus on widening participation to higher education among eight SHEP regional secondary schools. As well as developing a bespoke offer for each individual school, the University's Hub model incorporates the University's *Northern Lights* and *Access To* experiential academic learning and schools' engagement programmes which cater for both early and senior secondary school learners. By embedding University staff in the participating secondary schools, the University is able to build and maintain enduring and supportive relationships with school staff and learners. This sustained engagement and staff investment is yielding very positive early results. Compared to 2021-22, there has been a 128% increase in the number of learners (almost 350 students in total) completing the University's SFC-funded *Access To* learning and outreach programme for S5/S6 learners, while there has been a very impressive 350% increase in the number of S1/2 students participating in the *Northern Lights* programme, with approximately 800 learners due to participate in the next phase of Northern Lights programme which commences in January 2023.

Feedback from each 'Hub' school has shown clear commitment to the Hub, praising the enhanced learning support it provides to schools and learners, particularly the bespoke nature of the offering. During 2022-23 the University will build on this impressive performance by extending the reach of the Hub school approach to include all secondary schools located within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire region given that widening access markers are present in all schools. Key strategic developments in 2022-23 will include:

- Increasing participation on the SFC-funded 'Access To' programme to 800-1000.
- Increase Northern Lights participation to 800 for 2023.
- Increase embedded 'Hub' structure from 10 to 31 regional schools by August 2023.
- Establish a Primary Engagement pilot programme.
- Increase the University's schools' outreach beyond the region, with a particular focus on extending the reach of the SFC's Access to Creative Education Scotland (ACES) to the Highlands and Islands.
- Focused collaboration with third sector partners to support widening participation learners.
- Development work focusing on the incorporation of wider student support provision, such as Student Life services into the University's school offering.
- Developing new initiatives such as summer programmes, credit awards and early intervention practice which support improved pathway mapping.

Outcome 2 – High quality learning, teaching and support

The student experience of learning, teaching and support is protected

Continuing to provide a high-quality student experience has been crucial as the University transitioned to a model of blended online and on-campus learning as the restrictions of the pandemic lifted. A comprehensive review of the Future of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (FTLA) alongside a major review of the University's portfolio has been undertaken to enhance the student experience and outcomes, along with work to improve student attendance and engagement. The review has been co-created with all sections of the University community, most importantly with students. Recommendations from the University's strong performance in its 2021 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) are being implemented in 2022-23 through the FTLA project.

As a key component of FTLA, the University will introduce the following co-created standards at the start of the 2022-23 semester to guide and enhance the teaching, learning, and assessment activity of RGU into the future:

- Standards for Blended Learning to articulate the University's distinctive approach to the delivery of teaching and learning.
- Standards for Digital Learning to articulate the University's distinctive approach to the use of digital learning and to ensure a high-quality, consistent and cohesive experience for all students in the online aspects of their studies.
- Standards for Assessment and Feedback.

These standards reflect the University's strategic commitment to provide students with an excellent experience that will enable them to raise their aspirations and thrive in their professional careers as global citizens. These standards capitalise on the benefits of digital and blended learning and mitigate the challenges that can be faced in adopting a hybrid approach to learning. They have guided the preparation of digital skills education enhancement packages for staff and students.

The following related developments to enhance the learning and teaching environment, and student experience were undertaken in 2021-22:

- Implementation of a revised Academic Calendar to provide planning guidance and ensure opportunities for supported transition within and between stages of study.
- Completion of an audit and classification of Learning and Teaching spaces to ensure that staff and students are comfortable and prepared for the type of teaching they are timetabled to engage with.
- Implementation of Student Needs Audit Tool and Training Package to support the development of a Student Digital Skills Pilot for Attendance and Engagement Monitoring across the institution.
- Tailored frequency and content of internal student feedback mechanisms for each year group to gain specific feedback on particular areas of the student experience, such as their arrival and welcome to the University.

The University's very strong performance in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 demonstrates RGU's commitment to working with students to continually enhance the student experience to meet students' evolving needs. The University achieved an overall satisfaction rate of 82.8%, resulting in it being ranked third in Scotland and 10th in the UK for overall student satisfaction (excluding colleges, small, specialist and private institutions). The University was rated by students as the second top university in Scotland for 'learning opportunities' and 10th in the UK for 'teaching on my course'.

As highlighted earlier, the University's approach to co-creating with students an enhanced Student Welcome experience resulted in the University being awarded an AdvanceHE CATE Award in 2022.

There is rigour and quality in learning and teaching processes

As outlined above, through the FLTA review the University has undertaken significant activity to ensure the rigour and quality of learning and teaching processes. Enhancements to standards for blended learning, digital learning, assessment and feedback will be implemented in the 2022-23 academic year. Related developments have included:

- Introducing time for 'pause and reflection' in the academic calendar to offer students essential space to reflect on their academic progress and assessment expectations with course leaders and to provide feedback on their student experience.

- Investing in student services to ensure the University continues to be able to provide dedicated academic and pastoral support to meet the diverse needs of the student community.

The University's annual appraisal process has always been well regarded by external reviewers but enhancements have also been made to this process. The annual appraisal process now more closely links with School and Departmental planning to ensure that quality enhancement is integrated and resourced even more effectively than before.

Arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement support standards expected by students

In 2021, the University participated in the ELIR. This strongly endorsed the University's approach to quality assurance and enhancement support, especially in the areas of:

- Student representation and engagement
- Student support services
- Assessment and feedback
- Academic standards for postgraduate provision

ELIR recommendations have been actioned in 2021-22, with oversight and monitoring through the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Actions to resolve the criterion-referenced Grading Scheme have been implemented, briefing sessions provided and documentation reviewed and updated to ensure a consistent University-wide approach to the Grading Scheme. The University will now, through the institution wide FTLA project, introduce further standardisation of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.

Enhancement and improvement of learning, teaching and support is informed by data and evidence – including the outcomes of quality assurance

Business intelligence is used across the institution to inform and enhance the University's academic and support offer through the annual commissioning of the institutional appraisal exercise and course appraisal. The evidence-based annual institutional appraisal exercise reviews a wide range of institutional performance measures. The outcomes of this activity are collated and developed into a University-wide enhancement plan which, in turn, informs School, course-level, and student services' business plans that direct actions and investment to enhance student and staff outcomes. Work will continue throughout 2022-23 to enhance effective sharing of outcomes from the annual appraisal process between Schools and student-facing support services to further improve the student experience.

Areas of enhancement focus for 2022-23 will include:

- Students' digital, literacy and numeracy skills, and digital pedagogy among staff
- Student communication
- Enhancing the role of the personal tutor

Learning and teaching strategies are adapting to include approaches for digital and blended learning

As articulated earlier, through the University's extensive FTLA review, new Standards for Blended Learning and for Digital Learning will be launched in 2022-23, following extensive development and consultation with staff and students throughout 2021-22.

The introduction of the Blended Learning Standard will ensure that all students receive an engaging and inclusive learning experience, making effective use of in-person and online delivery. Using the Blended Learning Standard course teams have reviewed course organisation and delivery and, taking account of student feedback, are ensuring an appropriate balance of online and in-person learning at course, stage and module levels.

The Digital Learning Standard provides a roadmap to ensure all students learn in a consistent, cohesive, and inclusive digital learning environment, reflecting RGU's aims to provide an equitable and future-focused learning experience.

Staff have the skills and support to deliver a high-quality learning, teaching, and support experience for students

To support the introduction of the new Standards developed through the FTLA review, the University will launch a CPD offer in 2022-23 for staff in the implementation of the new standards.

In addition, with new standards being introduced for blended and digital learning, the University will undertake an audit of the digital skills of staff so that they receive the support required to enable them to continue to deliver a high-quality teaching experience for students. The University's campus Moodle will also be significantly reviewed and updated to ensure that staff have easy access to resources, materials and guidance to support their learning and development needs which, in turn, helps to ensure a high quality and supportive online and face-to-face learning environment for staff and students.

Students have good experiences of transitions into and through tertiary level learning

As outlined in earlier sections of the Outcome Agreement, the University undertakes extensive activity to ensure that students experience a supportive and smooth transition into and through tertiary education. Key contributions to this, include:

- The University's enhanced approach to engaging with schools on a sustained and tailored basis to support learners into further and higher education, particularly those under-represented in higher education.
- The University's extensive and longstanding experience of working closely with colleges, notably NESCol, to provide a dedicated support package for articulating students.
- Strategic partnerships with NESCol and Degree Link colleges that provide planned and coherent curriculum pathways, supporting students during their college studies and in their transition to the University.

- The University's contribution to the SFC North-East Regional Pathfinder, which will have a specific focus on enhancing the provision of coherent education and skills pathways for learners. This includes a specific pilot project in 2022-23 between the University and NESCol which will develop even stronger co-design and joint planning arrangements between the institutions to deliver demand-informed, skills aligned learner pathways to support regional need.
- In 2022-23, under the refreshed College Engagement Strategy, the University will develop a college Hub approach that will strengthen and extend the University's strategic links with partner colleges throughout Scotland in support of enhanced outreach and articulation arrangements.
- In 2022-23, the University will extend the reach of its *Degree Prep* programme to support students transition from college into the University in all subject areas.

Students are supported in their mental health and wellbeing

The University has a sustained commitment to support students' mental health and wellbeing in partnership with the Students' Union and underpinned by the Joint Student Mental Health Partnership Agreement. This sets out the University and the Union's commitment to improving the mental wellbeing of all students and staff, including promoting positive outcomes and support strategies to maximise the student and staff experience.

The University has a comprehensive range of support services available for all students. The Counselling and Wellbeing service provides a safe space for students to access counsellors and wellbeing advisors for support on any issues or concerns. The University has used SFC funding to provide additional counsellors to enhance the support that the University is able to provide. This has significantly reduced student waiting times enabling the service to be delivered to an increased number of students in a timely manner.

There are approximately 1,000 students who have disclosed mental health as an impairment. The University's Inclusion Centre supports students with reasonable adjustments such as alternative exam arrangements. The Centre also provides a mentoring service for students with mental ill health, autism and ADHD. The mentors meet with the students on a weekly basis during term-time to support them in their studies. Around 100 students benefit from mentoring which is funded through the Disabled Students Allowance for eligible students. Mentoring also allows the University to keep a "watching brief" on students who are considered vulnerable or at risk, as missed appointments are followed up and escalated to the management team if appropriate. The Counselling and Inclusion teams work together to manage risk. Going forward, the University is developing a mental health strategy and action plan. The Counselling Service works with the Union Peer Support Group to offer training and support. The Counselling service is working with the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice to offer workshops on Vicarious Trauma and also works on bespoke activities with our other Schools to enhance student wellbeing. The University continues to provide all RGU students with free RGU Sport membership throughout their time at the University. This recognises the benefit of exercise for mental, physical and social wellbeing. This free provision is also playing a part in mitigating the ongoing cost of living challenges being experienced by students.

Outcome 3 Partnership, Participation and Student Experience

Effective partnership arrangements exist between institutional leadership teams and student bodies

The most recent ELIR exercise undertaken in 2021 demonstrates that the University has a well-established and effective approach to working in partnership with students. Students' views are central to University decision-making and contribute to strategy development and implementation. This has included, for example, the University's focus on equality and diversity being shaped by student feedback.

Student representatives are invited as full members of several University governance committees, including the Board of Governors, Academic Council and the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee to ensure that the student voice is reflected in decision making. There are close links between the University's Executive and the Student Union Presidents, with regular meetings and dialogue which further embeds a partnership culture where students are able to discuss issues or concerns at any point in the semester.

Student partnership is valued across the institution and plays a key role in enhancing the student experience

The University aims to continually enhance its student experience through partnerships with students and, in particular, the Students' Union. The Student Partnership Agreement is jointly owned by the Students' Union and the University and includes annual objectives agreed collectively. Student Voice meetings are held quarterly and are led by the Students' Union with Executive and senior manager attendance and the VP Academic Development and Student Experience meets with the Students' Union Presidents monthly.

Students have been intrinsically involved in the University's major FTLA project, co-developing new standards to guide and enhance the University's teaching, learning and assessment activity. The FTLA project is co-chaired by the Student President (Education and Welfare) and each working group has student representation. Student focus groups were conducted to ensure all the standards were co-created.

From 2022-23, a new Student Experience sub-committee will be established, following the merger of two former committees. As part of its work, the Student Experience sub-committee will run a series of seminars to facilitate more in-depth discussion of particular topics, including attendance and engagement, and equalities.

The University's approach to collaborating with students to enhance the student experience has received national recognition, with the University being awarded a CATE from AdvanceHE in August 2022. The Award demonstrates the University's commitment to working with students to deliver a positive student experience – even during a challenging time.

Outcome 4 Learning with Impact

Students are supported to successfully complete their courses

The comprehensive FTLA Review involves a strand of activity focused on improving student attendance and engagement so that students are fully supported throughout their learning journey, and to enable appropriate early intervention and follow-up to address student need. Students and staff have been fully engaged in this work.

The University piloted the ATTNDR app, developed by staff from the School of Computing through the RGU Start Up Accelerator Programme, for monitoring student attendance and engagement with four Schools in 2021-22. It will be introduced as an all-School pilot in 2022-23. This development will support the University's strategic aim 'to ensure a high-quality student experience', specifically 'to provide appropriate support to enable students to be resilient, succeed in their studies and grow as individuals.' As well as enabling the monitoring of student attendance, ATTNDR is supporting the University's ambitions to improve student retention, outcomes, and health and wellbeing by being the first line stage in a comprehensive student support process that intervenes when it is identified students are not engaging optimally. The roll out of the ATTNDR app demonstrates the University's commitment to innovation to provide effective support to students. Staff and student-facing resources will be developed to support the functionality of the ATTNDR app, including the implementation of 'how to' guides and videos to help support staff and students.

Students are supported to progress to positive next destinations

The University has an enviable track record for supporting learners into positive destinations. In 2022, RGU was the top ranked university in Scotland and third in the UK for graduate outcomes (excluding small, specialist institutions) with 96.1% of graduates in employment or further study 15 months after graduation (HESA, 2019-20). This represents an increase of nearly 4% compared to last year's performance and is testament to the University's commitment to equipping students with the essential knowledge and skills to thrive as highly employable graduates.

Institutions implement appropriate support arrangements for graduating cohorts who will experience a challenging labour market in coming months/years

The University's teaching and learning framework emphasises core underpinning employability skills including digital, critical thinking, interdisciplinarity, complex problem solving, leadership and teamwork. Not only does this support students to transition into work, but it also ensures that learners have critical meta and transferable skills that will support lifelong successful outcomes.

The University's Centre for Employability and Community Engagement (CECE) continues to provide and develop services to enhance the student experience and optimise student employability skills. The CECE is partnering with all Schools in the University to deliver excellent placement experiences for students and provide career management support advice and guidance. The centre works in partnership with academic colleagues to help students to fully engage with the multiple platforms and opportunities that exist, and to support students to develop the attributes required for the workplace. The centre has recently been complemented

with the addition of community engagement as a context for developing students' interpersonal and employability skills.

In recognition of the important employment attributes developed through extra-curricular activities, in 2022-23 the University will develop the RGU+ initiative to optimise students' employability and develop them as excellent global citizens. RGU+ will actively encourage the uptake of volunteering opportunities, placements and study abroad and will offer all students the opportunity to participate in a credit or non-credit bearing 'beyond the classroom' programme of community and public service work. RGU+ activities will reflect the themes of sustainability and entrepreneurship, with students gaining knowledge and skills including complex problem solving, digital competence, entrepreneurial spirit and a sustainable mindset. RGU+ will provide students with valuable additionality, preparing them so that they can thrive in a rapidly changing labour market.

The University continues to provide opportunities for students to study abroad as part of their programmes. In addition to participating in the Turing Scheme, the University will explore further partnership and funding opportunities to support bilateral mobility initiatives and transformational learning experiences that complement learning at RGU. These developments will be embedded within RGU+ to enhance the totality and coherence of that package.

Institutions ensure their curriculum and pedagogical offer remains fit for purpose and is responsive to changed need and demand

The overarching purpose of the University's major FTLA review, detailed in earlier sections of the Outcome Agreement, is to ensure that the University's learning, teaching and assessment frameworks and infrastructure meet current and future needs, whilst also having the flexibility to meet changing circumstances. This includes a substantive review of the University's curriculum portfolio.

To ensure RGU's courses remain responsive to the changing needs of society and future workforce, part of the RGU+ project in 2022-23 will focus on ensuring that sustainability and innovation are embedded across the University's entire portfolio. The University will also make changes to its engineering courses to reflect the changing needs of the energy sector and the transition to renewable energy for a greener future. Together, these curriculum developments will equip the University's graduates with the ability to influence and progress action in support of net zero commitments.

As part of the FTLA project, a review of the future curriculum will also be undertaken to ensure that the programmes offered are contemporary and prepare the workforce of the future.

There is a good understanding of the needs of business and industry, and Scotland's economic needs

The University makes an important contribution to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of the region. As a key component of this, the University has a very close working relationship with business and industry, particularly those within the region.

The University has developed an industry-informed approach to its curriculum provision and having undertaken substantial engagement in 2021-22 with business and industry bodies,

Opportunity North-East (ONE), local councils, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland, among others.

The University has identified energy and health and social care as two priority sectors of focus, in parallel to the cross-cutting themes of enterprise, digital and data, and net zero.

A specific example of the University's collaborative relationship with business and industry to support Scotland's economic and skills needs is the establishment in 2021 of the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA). It is a partnership between RGU, University of Aberdeen, North-East Scotland College, Skills Development Scotland and the Energy Transition Zone Ltd. It will provide a 'one stop shop' for industry to access a wide range of energy courses, skills development programmes and R&D capabilities in the partner institutions. NESA, with funding awarded through the Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund, is one of the key projects which will be taken forward in 2022-23 by the University and its partners through the SFC Regional Pathfinder.

The above outline provides a snapshot of the University's business and industry connections which is expanded upon in other sections of the Outcome Agreement.

There is a pipeline of appropriate skilled people for the labour market

Contributing to the Regional Pathfinder on coherent education and skills provision will be a key priority for 2022-23. The University will be involved in four pilot projects which are being taken forward with a central focus on meeting evolving regional workforce, skills and economic needs, now and into the future. The University, working with regional education and skills partners, will develop new and improved curriculum pathways that help ensure regional employers have access to the skilled personnel they require, including in key regional sectors, such as energy and health and social care.

Work-based learning and placement opportunities are a key feature of RGU programmes, and they are present in almost all of the University's undergraduate curriculum. Many of the University's courses are accredited by professional bodies. These connections with businesses, employers and representative bodies help to ensure that RGU graduates are work ready, as demonstrated by the University's performance in the Graduate Outcomes Survey.

The University's diverse education and skills portfolio includes extensive upskilling programmes which ensures that individuals can enhance their skillsets throughout their lives to meet the changing needs of the labour market, and to achieve their personal and professional development goals. In 2021-2022, additional funding from the SFC Upskilling Fund, National Transition Training Fund and the Scottish Government's £1.7m North-East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund (NEERSF) enabled the University to offer more than 1,200 fee waivers across 23 upskilling programmes. Fee-waiver places were available to those in work as well as those furthest from the workplace to provide inclusive support for the region's post-Covid-19 economic recovery.

RGU was among the first universities in Scotland to approve delivery of the innovative Graduate Apprenticeships, and the University continues to be a leading deliverer of GAs. RGU's GAs are co-designed by the University and employers. In 2021-22, the University recruited 201 GA learners

from 123 companies across seven GA programmes, including the new GA Masters in Cyber-Security, the only qualification of its kind in Scotland.

Outcome 5 Equalities and inclusion

Institutions assess the equality impacts of their policies and procedures to ensure students are supported to achieve their fully potential

The Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee working with the Equality Diversity Forum supports the delivery of the University's equality outcomes. This includes addressing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues identified in the Annual Appraisal process. Crucially, these groupings bring together staff and students. The University has appointed an EDI Adviser who is working with staff and students to develop and embed EDI throughout the University. This includes developing a new E-learning module on EDI for all staff which will be launched in 2022-23 to ensure that there is EDI ownership and understanding among all staff. During 2021-22 the University reviewed its equality and diversity policies, notably extending the scope and impact of the Dignity at RGU policy. Equality, diversity and inclusion data is monitored by the School Academic Boards and the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee and reported to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), as part of the Annual Appraisal Process. The University has recently made new appointments to Staff Equality Champions in the areas of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion and belief. These individuals will, in liaison with the Student Equality Champions, support induction, training, networking activity, and the creation of Equality Action Groups to increase wider staff engagement across all equality strands. The University will also progress work to apply for the Athena SWAN Charter.

OUTCOMES FOR RESEARCH

Outcome 1 Research Excellence

Institutions produce excellent research outputs

In the REF 2021, almost 70% of the University's research outputs were rated as internationally excellent or world leading. The REF results show that the University needs to prioritise strengthening its performance in the impact and environment components. Prior to publication of the results, the University had undertaken an extensive and inclusive exercise to develop a new Research Sub-Strategy which was approved by the Board in February 2021. The overarching aim of the sub-strategy is to create a sustainable, inclusive and interdisciplinary research environment. This will be achieved by bringing together a community of academic and professional services staff and doctoral students to work in partnership with external organisations, to address a range of local and global challenges. The four underpinning themes are:

- Environment, Energy and Sustainability: focused on addressing many of the global challenges set out in the UN Sustainability Goals, this theme brings together researchers who approach these issues from a breadth of disciplinary perspectives that include the life sciences, engineering and computing, the social sciences and business disciplines.
- Health and Well-being: this theme captures the University's research which both

promotes and protects human health and wellbeing in communities. It covers a breadth of research from long term conditions to new drug discovery and a wide range of disciplines spanning health, social and life sciences and pharmacy.

- Living in a Digital World: this theme covers a broad range of computational research from Artificial Intelligence to interactive machine learning and cybersecurity and explores the impacts and implications of digital for different domains including health, net zero, cities and creative practice.
- Inclusive and Creative Societies: this theme embraces a broad range of topic areas relating to social justice and creative practice, drawing together researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds including art and design, architecture, social sciences, law, and humanities.

In 2022/23 the University will finalise plans to make significant investment within research capacity in the interdisciplinary themes outlined above. This will include prioritising activities to deliver the following research outcomes:

Research intensity and inclusivity - increasing the proportion of academic staff who are research active

Research productivity – all research active staff will have a minimum workload allocation for research and an agreed research plan for this allocation

Research quality – all academic staff undertaking research are producing outputs of at least 3* quality

Research environment - there is effective support for PhD studentships and mentoring of early career researchers by more experienced staff

Research impact - there is early identification of research with the potential to achieve significant impact

The research impact reaches beyond academia

The collaborative National Subsea Centre (NSC) is a significant area of research focus and investment for the University. This is a multi-million-pound research partnership with the Net Zero Technology Centre (NZTC) to develop innovative subsea and marine technologies to enable a sustainable transition to net zero energy. The NSC brings together industry and academia to accelerate the changes needed to meet Scotland's net-zero emissions and economic ambitions. The NSC is well placed to contribute to the Scottish Government's forthcoming Energy Strategy and to the National Strategy for Economic Transformation. The NSC is focused on the following three strategic research programmes: Transparent Ocean, Integrated Energy and Net Zero Operations. In May 2022, the University announced a five-year Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Strathclyde to collaborate in research and technology development at the NSC, including a commitment to four PhD studentships each year. The NSC will be formally launched by Cabinet Secretary Michael Matheson in January 2023.

Throughout 2021-22 the University has sought to extend the reach of its research impact in remote communities. This has included the following developments:

- In partnership with Orkney Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local community, the RGU Orkney Project has established a transformational research hub in Stromness to drive and support collaboration and innovation in tackling the challenges of island life. Research activities are focused on the three broad clusters – smart islands, creative innovation, and sustainable quality of life.
- The University joined the University of the Arctic, a network of higher education and research institutions across northern regions which address global challenges of Arctic communities by providing unique educational, research and innovation opportunities to promote viable communities and sustainable economies and forge global partnerships. An early example of the University's contribution is reflected in its participation in the north2north mobility scheme, which enables exchange opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff across the north.

The research environment supports excellence and impact

Extensive work will be undertaken to strengthen research culture across the University. Key to this commitment was the introduction in 2021-22 of the University's first research culture survey which gathered feedback from University staff to make enhancements to foster a positive research culture. The University allocated funding for the survey from the SFC's additional research allocation to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on research. Strategic priorities for enhancing research culture resulting from this extensive survey work will be implemented throughout AY2022-23. An action will be implemented, focusing on several key areas, including enhancing collegiality, mentoring and support for early career researchers. The University will establish a Research Culture working group to progress and support the implementation of the action plan.

The University's efforts in enhancing its research culture have been positively reflected in the performance in the 2022 AdvanceHE Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). With an overall position of fifth out of the 58 universities which took part, the University has been ranked first in the categories for research culture and research skills, and second for supervision, support and resources.

Outcome 2 Research Sustainability (incorporates collaboration)

The preceding narrative articulates the range of ways in which the University will ensure the sustainability of its research through implementation of its forward-looking and long-term Research Strategy and includes exemplars of research collaboration.

Institutions implement the Research Integrity and Researcher Development concordats

Although the University is not currently a signatory to these concordats, it does (as detailed below) undertake the necessary activities associated with them. The new senior research leadership team is now putting in place a timetable of actions to ensure that we become signatories to these concordats and the associated actions for the next OA return.

The University's Researcher Development Programme (RDP) delivered over 100 principally online workshops, masterclasses and informal community events during 2021-22 following its launch in 2020. The very well-attended events have been organised in collaboration with experts within RGU as well as external internationally renowned scholars and trainers. The Programme has been enhanced by a new online booking system to improve ease of access for staff/students to all sessions and to track engagement, as well as having set up an automated certification system. This has proven very efficient and useful in providing students and staff with training evidence for the RDF Planner and personal CPD portfolios. Building on this success, the University will expand its offer with the launch of an online Mid-Career Research Development Programme in 2022-23 designed by EPIGEUM. The University will actively consider launching in-person sessions to complement its web-based RDP provision. In addition, a new Research Fellow working group will consider how the University can improve the career development of Research Fellows at RGU.

Support for PhD students

The PRES 2022 results demonstrate the strength of the University's project-specific and pastoral support for PGR students. In addition to the University's Researcher Development Programme outlined above, the University's Graduate School has launched a Supervision Excellence Programme of developmental and briefing sessions to support PGR supervisors to develop and enhance their personal practice as supervisors. The Graduate School has also made dedicated online and in-person provision for PGR students to come together in an informal setting to develop friendship and support networks.

OUTCOMES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SOCIAL RENEWAL

Outcome 1 Responsive institutions

Institutions make use of labour market intelligence and employer / industry engagement to adapt and align provision

Earlier sections demonstrate the University's close work with employers and industry to informing curriculum provision and delivery. The University's receptiveness and responsiveness to industry needs is reflected in the institution's portfolio development. Academic Development Committee (ADC) is attended by external partners and informed by industry experts and uses this intelligence to shape and make decisions about curriculum review, enhancements and new products. Labour market intelligence and the University's extensive employer networks inform the development, delivery and assessment of courses so that they meet both current demand and anticipate future need. The University's relationship with industry and employers was strongly endorsed in the ELIR. The University's contribution to the North-East Regional Pathfinder will be a key priority in 2022-23. Business engagement and analysis of their needs is a central component of the Pathfinder. This activity will further enhance the University's responsiveness to the evolving needs of the regional labour market, as well as supporting the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

Institutions play their part in upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce.

Earlier sections have highlighted the University's contribution to upskilling and reskilling. In 2021-22, the University deployed its SFC Upskilling Fund and National Transition Training Funds, alongside NEERSF funding to deliver 23 upskilling courses to more than 1,200 individuals. These courses covered a wide range of subject areas, including energy transition for business, data science, entrepreneurship, digital literacy in health and social care and commercial contracts for business. Notably, the courses had an emphasis on supporting those most disadvantaged by the pandemic.

As set out above, a key development in 2022-23 will be the University's contribution to the regional collaboration on NESAs to develop curriculum pathways to provide the workforce skills required by the energy workforce to meet Scotland's energy transition commitments.

People have the necessary meta skills and attributes to succeed

The University's Learning and Teaching Framework supports the development of graduates who possess highly developed and valuable personal attributes, as well as professional expertise, skills, judgement and knowledge. This is increasingly important in an environment where employers are seeking employees who can think critically, communicate clearly and problem solve. This existing provision will be further enhanced through the University's major review of learning, teaching and assessment, and portfolio development.

In alignment with the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, embedding an entrepreneurial mindset and culture is an area of strength for the University, where the University's dedicated Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group is stimulating and fostering entrepreneurship across the University and the region. Entrepreneurship and innovation is a cross-cutting theme of the University's FTLA review, and the University delivers a range of tailored entrepreneurship courses to meet the needs of different sectors. RGU's Start-Up Accelerator programme is supporting early-stage entrepreneurs from the North-East to create innovative, scalable products and services, while also supporting the region's post-pandemic recovery. The 2021-22 programme attracted close to 200 applicants across a range of areas including clean energy, vertical farming, fire safety, health data tracking, educational software and ethical and sustainable fashion. The competitive application process resulted in 36 entrepreneurial teams being selected and receiving:

- £5K equity-free funding per team and additional prize funds, totalling £250K
- 5-months of training
- A minimum of 10 hours of one-to-one mentoring with industry experts
- Occupancy of a free city-centre co-working office space
- Access and use of communications tools and digital resources
- Promotion and chance to pitch at the final Startup Showcase event, which involved input from the Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training

As a result, 26 new businesses have been launched with more in the pipeline and 19 full-time equivalent jobs have been created in 2021-22.

A fifth cohort of the University's successful Start-Up Accelerator programme focusing on sustainability and sustainable development was in 2022-23, sponsored by The Wood Foundation. The University was shortlisted for UK Outstanding Entrepreneurial University at the prestigious THE Awards 2022.

Institutions help find pathways for people without work to study and move into employment

As detailed earlier, the University's upskilling provision has prioritised supporting those furthest from the labour market so that they are able to develop attributes and skills to secure successful outcomes. Public funding enabled the University to provide fee-waivers to more than 1,200 people in 2021-22 so they could access the University's suite of upskilling courses. Developments in 2022-23 will include the University's work with HMP Grampian to support offenders nearing the end of their sentences into employment. The pilot projects being progressed through the Regional Pathfinder will also make a valuable contribution to providing people without work with the confidence and skills to enter and remain in the workforce in key regional sectors, including energy and health and social care.

Fair Work – Institutions to advance and promote Fair Work practices as employers.

During 2021-22, the University implemented policies and initiatives to improve the working lives of staff and promote a healthy work-life balance. The University voluntarily pays the Real Living Wage. Other developments have included:

- Introducing a hybrid working policy as the University transitioned to on campus teaching and working to provide staff with greater flexibility in their working environment.
- Introducing a 35-hour week across the organisation, bringing all contractual working hours in line with teaching staff; and harmonising annual leave entitlement across the University.
- Becoming a signatory to the Scottish Business Pledge.

The University will continue to keep these developments under continuous review in 2022-23 with a view to further enhancing fair work practices and mitigating cost-of-living pressures on staff where there are further opportunities to do so.

Outcome 2 Confident and highly capable work-ready graduates

There is a pipeline of technically skilled people for key industries where skills gaps are identified

As detailed earlier, the University has a long and enviable track record of providing skilled people who are work ready:

- The University's very strong performance in the most recent Graduate Outcomes survey.
- The University's close working relationship with employers and industry, including in the design and delivery of courses, helps to ensure that graduates meet employers' skills needs.
- Work-based learning is a key feature of the majority of the University's programmes, and many courses are professionally accredited.

- The University's centre for employability is partnering with all Schools to deliver excellent placement experiences for students and provide career management support advice and guidance.
- The University's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group takes a 'whole university' approach to inspiring entrepreneurship and innovation. Embedding entrepreneurship is also a cross-cutting theme of the Future of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Review.
- In 2021-22, the University recruited 201 Graduate Apprenticeship learners from 123 companies across seven GA programmes, including launching a new GA Masters in Cyber Security, the only Masters of its kind in Scotland.
- In 2022-23, the University will develop 'RGU+' to optimise students' employability and citizenship skills by actively encouraging the uptake of credit and non-credit bearing 'beyond the classroom' activities, including volunteering, placements and study abroad opportunities.
- The collaborative Regional Pathfinder is a critical development for 2022-23 which will ensure close working between education and skills providers and industry in meeting the current and future workforce needs of key sectors, including health and social care, and energy.

Programmes should equip graduates with the skills, knowledge and capabilities to be successful in their chosen career.

This topic has been covered extensively in earlier sections of the Outcome Agreement.

Effective support should be in place to enable students to understand their careers options, to self-assess and to undertake career planning.

The employability hub is continually enhancing the service it provides to students so that they receive excellent support to plan and understand their career options. This includes careers consultants that can help students to explore career options, source opportunities and understand and develop their own employability, alongside year-round events and course specific industry and employer engagement opportunities. The University's e-hub provides a suite of online tools and resources covering all stages of career planning and professional development. The University's Entrepreneurship Summer school provides new graduates with support and guidance about start-ups and freelancing.

Wherever relevant or beneficial, students should have opportunities to engage in work-informed or work-based learning.

Work-based learning is a key feature of the University's programmes. As outlined earlier, further enhancement will be implemented during 2022/23 through the FLTA project and the portfolio reviews, and with the development of RGU+.

As a leading provider of Graduate Apprenticeships, the University works with employer partners in the design and delivery of these programmes, enabling students to earn and learn simultaneously, thus supporting their personal and professional development.

Outcome 3 Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

HEIs are focusing and prioritising their knowledge exchange and innovation activity on the top priorities of a green recovery, a well-being economy and a just transition to a net zero carbon society The University continues to deliver on its strengths in knowledge exchange to support economic development through developing partnerships to support innovation across public, private and third sector organisations. In 2021-22, the University exceeded its target for Innovation Vouchers (IVs) and Advanced Innovation Vouchers (AIVs), securing 22 and 7 respectively, which demonstrate the success of the University's strategy to encourage longer-term collaboration with organisations. The University has also exceeded its target for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) worth a value of £2.22m. The University's knowledge exchange activities have also been boosted by £1.7m NEERSF funding to support the region's post-Covid recovery through coordinated partnership working. The University's success in securing knowledge exchange funding reflects the continued importance of this funding mechanism in supporting organisations to develop and adapt to address post-pandemic economic challenges. KE examples this year, include: a project with Innovate UK and PhysioMedics Ltd to develop a diagnostic conversational AI tool for elderly populations; a project funded by the Data Lab, Shetland Islands Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise looking at ferry passenger and freight modelling for Shetland; and three carbon capture projects with Canadian company McAlpha and the Net Zero Technology Centre (NZTC).

Knowledge exchange is a key outcome from the University's thought-leadership activity, as exemplified by the government and industry interest in the findings of the University's *Making the Switch* Report on the future shape of the offshore renewables workforce. While knowledge exchange with industrial and academic partners to address the industry challenges presented by Net Zero and energy transition is a key focus of the NSC.

Institutions are evolving their strategies for knowledge exchange and innovation and working with key stakeholders, for example enterprise agencies to progress the priorities of a green recovery, a well-being economy and transition to a net zero carbon society

The University is further increasing its focus on regional and national engagement, working with enterprise agencies and other key organisations, including SMEs and Interface, to maximise opportunities for local business and public organisations in key strategic areas, including health and energy transition. This is informed by RGU's industry-informed sectoral plan. This will be further supported through the preparation in 2022-23 of a sub-strategy for economic, social and cultural development. The University has been working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, with NEERSF funding support, on the development of a health and social care skills framework and pathway tool for the region, which is due to deliver by the end of 2022. A key area of activity for 2022-23 will be enhanced regional partnership working through the Regional Pathfinder, aligning curriculum and skills pathways with industry needs.

Outcome 4 Collaboration

Institutions consider and pursue meaningful opportunities for collaboration which fit their mission and vision and supports the delivery of coherent, sustainable provision and research

The University is proud of its reputation for collaboration with a wide range of partners in support of regional, national and international ambitions. This includes:

- The University's longstanding strategic relationship with NESCol on articulation and curriculum pathways, which will be further enhanced in 2022-23 as a core component of the Regional Pathfinder. This will deliver new provision to anticipate and respond to changing skills needs.
- Productive research collaborations with government, industry and academic partners as part of the National Subsea Centre which will be formally launched in 2023; and through RGU Orkney's community-focussed interdisciplinary research.
- Key community engagement partnerships which support local and regional needs. These include:
 - RGU's Streetsport initiative run in partnership with the Denis Law Legacy Trust which is delivering free sport while helping to develop the aspirations and employability of young people.
 - The establishment of RGU's Grampian Law Clinic which is providing free legal advice to members of the local community who cannot access legal services elsewhere.
- The University contribution to key partnerships in support of the region's economic and social prosperity, including Opportunity North-East, and building on MoU signed with Codebase who will have increased national and regional footprint through the establishment of Techscaler hubs.

Institutions consider collaboration on estates assets that could: improve local coherence and sustainability of provision; reduce carbon emissions and be part of place-based approach to economic recovery

The University continues to give significant attention to reviewing and developing its Estates and Digital strategies to support post-pandemic operations while reducing carbon emissions. As part of its work programme, the University's Carbon Reduction Board is reviewing the potential for major collaborative renewable energy projects on campus. The Regional Pathfinder provides an opportunity for enhancing place-based collaboration in support of regional priorities. The University will, for example, lead a pathfinder project in 2022-23 which will consider more effective use and sharing of regional healthcare simulation assets to support the recruitment and development of the region's health and social care workforce.

Outcome 5 Climate Emergency

Universities demonstrate innovative approaches in their response to the climate emergency.

The University's strategy, in which sustainability is a key enabler, articulates the priority that the University is placing on 1) Minimising its carbon footprint; and 2) Influencing and supporting regional, national and international partners and stakeholders to meet climate and sustainability commitments. The University has appointed a strategic lead for embedding sustainability across the University curriculum. An implementation plan will be developed during 2022-23 to move to a position where sustainability forms an explicit part of the curriculum content of every course, and to catalyse the development of new course provision that supports the energy transition agenda.

The University's Carbon Reduction Commitment Project Board was established in May 2022. The programme has focused on developing a communications strategy, reviewing potential major renewable energy projects and informing the University's approach to transport and travel, ensuring that sustainability and carbon are considered alongside expenses and procurement.

The University was successful in being awarded competitive funding from the first tranche of the Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund. The University will use this funding support in 2022-23 to take forward the development of a Digital Innovation Lab for the North-East and Moray that will support the construction sector to decarbonise through the retrofitting of existing buildings and intelligent design of new buildings. The University has also been awarded Just Transition funding as part of the NESA consortium to support a pilot project in 2022-23 which will develop a qualifications pathway to provide the skills needed to support energy transition as part of the Regional Pathfinder.

The University's Energy Transition Institute launched the highly anticipated and influential Regional Offshore Energy Workforce Transferability Review, *Making the Switch*, in May 2022. This considers the future shape of the energy workforce to meet Scotland's low carbon energy commitments. The report findings have been extensively drawn upon by decision makers, including Ministers, MSPs, MPs and industry bodies. The University will use the review findings to inform the development of its own course provision. The review has extensively influenced NESA developments, including the Regional Pathfinder pilot project.

Colleges and universities outline how they are engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The University recognises the importance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and much of the work being undertaken, including that outlined above, accords with the goals. The University will, for the first time, submit to the 2023 THE Sustainability Impact Rankings as part of its approach to further enhancing the links between the University's actions on sustainability and the contribution to the SDGs. The University will continue throughout 2022-23 to more explicitly align its activities with the SDGs.

Annex B: Research Case Studies

Case Study 1: Project Title: SelfBACK - App-delivered, Tailored, Self-management support for adults with low back pain

Project Overview

The selfBACK study was funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and involved a multi-national consortium of experts in low back pain, healthcare innovation, app development, computer science and artificial intelligence, led by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The RGU team, a collaboration between computing and health sciences, led one of the seven work packages and contributed to several key aspects of the project, including predictive monitoring analysis and establishing feasibility and acceptability of the app. RGU's research in case-based reasoning (CBR) in the area of electronic health records formed the basis for the decision support themes that were developed through the selfBACK project.

Investment

Internal funding was used to encourage RGU's collaboration with NTNU through support for departmental seminar speakers from NTNU. These visits in turn led to discussions that resulted in RGU's involvement with NTNU to form the selfBACK consortium. Additional pump-priming funds were used to develop RGU's CBR research theme. The selfBACK grant totalled ~5M Euro, with RGU receiving £420K.

Activities

In the selfBACK study, a smartphone app was developed that provided individually tailored self-management support to adults with low back pain. RGU's researchers integrated wearable technology to monitor whether a patient is following a plan of exercise and stretching developed according to guidelines. AI algorithms that can reason with multi-modal data were used to help monitor if a patient was adhering to a given plan and if not, look at how we can build automated prompts and triggers to encourage them to do so.

The app included three main components: evidence-based information and advice on low back pain and self-management, specific strength and flexibility exercises, and physical activity monitoring to encourage regular physical activity. RGU were instrumental in developing the physical activity monitoring component, and initial feasibility and acceptability testing of an early version of the app with people with low back pain. RGU also collaborated on the main trial which showed that people with low back pain who used selfBACK in addition to usual care had reduced pain-related disability at 3-months compared to people who did not use the app.

Outcomes and Impact

selfBACK has produced several high impact publications in medical and computing science journals, and the findings have been presented at national and international conferences. SelfBack is now being commercialised as a Digital Therapeutics company based in Denmark. The app is recognised as a medical device. As part of the SelfBACK H2020 project licensing agreement, RGU has a 7.8% stake in any profit due to commercialisation of selfbark.dk. Furthermore, SelfBACK has also been shortlisted for the Horizon 2022 impact award.

As a result of the selfBACK project, the RGU team has conducted several follow-on studies on digital intervention development and testing, funded mainly by NHS and EPSRC, including physical activity for older people, exercise adherence after joint replacement surgery, and supporting student mental health and wellbeing. Through selfBACK, the RGU team has managed to link up with the Edinburgh-based PhysioMedics company; with whom we now have a further InnovateUK funded project in the area of conversational AI for older adults, which in turn builds on the “GetAMoveOn: Conversational AI for Digital Behaviour Change Mapping for Active Ageing”, EPSRC funded project in collaboration with University of Aberdeen and University College London.

Case Study 2: Project Title: Holistic Data Driven Service and Supply Chain Optimisation

Project Overview

Service and supply chains have become highly complex in recent years as advanced engineering services increasingly operate across multiple sites and jurisdictions to support global markets. The Net Zero Operations Group (NZOG) at Robert Gordon University (RGU) use optimisation algorithms and machine learning to support robust, resilient, lower-carbon industrial operations through the energy transition.

The project investigated how the operation of supply chains could be optimised by:

- reducing data fragmentation between supply chain components
- supporting joint optimisation to remove conflicts and improve supply chain resilience
- providing methods for holistic optimisation of supply chain level objectives and constraints, including emissions reduction

The project was a PhD studentship for Akinola Ogunsemi carried out by NZOG at RGU.

Investment

The project was jointly funded by BT and The Data Lab. SFC REG funding was used to provide the student with an additional year of stipend in order to successfully complete the research and to mitigate Covid-related disruption.

Activities

The student worked with the Sustainable Resource Management and Operations team at BT to develop an ensemble classifier to match fields across multiple large databases. This enables supply chain relationships to be identified at the data level, reducing data fragmentation and enabling better communications.

The student created a mathematical formulation of holistic supply chains as a linked optimisation system and developed three optimisation algorithms for such systems. He implemented this in software and developed benchmark problems for the research community to build on. The software is also available for industry applications.

The student carried out a practical study of multiple linked systems based on realistic examples from production supply chains.

Outcomes and Impact

The project has produced software and algorithms for further academic study and for industrial application.

Three academic papers have been published from the work. The most recent paper will be awarded the Rob Milne Best Application Prize at the Forty-second SGAI International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and will be presented to the conference at a plenary session in Cambridge in December 2022.

The ensemble algorithm to reduce data fragmentation is the subject of two patent applications (EU and US) by BT and the academic team.

While the research is recent, it is already attracting interest for industrial application. The Net Zero Operations team is working with a large offshore contractor on a potential follow-up application project at the National Subsea Centre to optimise the offshore energy supply chain realising carbon reduction, improved resilience and cost efficiencies.

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	2,261	2,239	2,308	2,425	2,377	2,389	2,885	2,302	2,133
B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes		669	734	802	705	655	644	616**	525
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		429	513	532	457	432	448	346**	210
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		64.1%	69.9%	66.3%	64.8%	66.0%	69.6%	56.2%**	47%
C COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	136	132	136	142	146	117	160	134	157
COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	7.0%	6.7%	6.4%	6.5%	6.7%	5.2%	6.1%	6.3%	6.5%
D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	16	16	18	22	20	29	34	41	32
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	1.2%	1.2%	1.8%	1.4%
E Total number of full-time first year SDUE	1,974	1,919	1,952	2,101	2,183	2,190	2,248	2,133	
Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	1,818	1,779	1,813	1,962	2,016	1,999	2,071	1,941	
Proportion of full-time first year SDUE retained	92.1%	92.7%	92.9%	93.4%	92.3%	91.3%	92.1%	91.0%	
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	1	1	3	2	5.5	8.25	9.72	8.95	3%
G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey									
The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				1029	1142	1,006	1,020		
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				1010	1084	983	984		
G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment				98.2%	94.9%	97.7%	96.5%		
The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				780	805	733	750		
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				585	575	533	525		
H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers	1948	2080	1982	1939	2089	1973	2093	1,988	

NOTES

* Please note that 2021-22 data are estimates only prior to the release of published data. Where estimates are not possible, then the table is left blank, as data is not yet available.

** Please note that the estimate for Measure B is highly likely to change as this relies on the National Articulation Database which has not been published for 2021-22.

1. 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.

2. The numerator and denominator will not necessarily give the exact proportion expressed in the target. These are all estimates.

3. NSS 2023 will include 'overall satisfaction' question for Scotland, Wales and NI only. It is possible that no benchmark calculation will be made. The University would welcome discussion about this measure

4. Data highlighted in yellow shading are targets for 2022/23, with the exception of :

Measure E: the most recent data (published by HESA in March 2022 and then modified by SFC to show full time SDUE) is for 2019/20. The target relates to the new data set to be published in March 2023 (for full time SDUE who entered first year in 2020/21)

Measures G1 and G2: These data are from the Graduate Outcomes Survey. The target for performance in the Survey to be published in July 2023, for those who graduated in 2020/21

ANNEX D: University Innovation Fund Plan for AY2022-23

Introduction

Through 2021-22, RGU collaborated with other universities to consider new approaches to exploiting research and innovation capabilities to aid Scotland's economic recovery, including through pan-HEI groups addressing mission and challenge-based funding, entrepreneurialism, city and region deals, research skills for business engagement, modern universities, internationalisation and KE Concordat. This active engagement will continue in 2022-23.

Given our location, RGU is acutely aware of the need for business, society and the University to transition in response to the climate emergency and will incorporate this in UIF outcome priorities in 2022-23. Through 2021-22, RGU was in receipt of Scottish Government North-East Economic Recovery and Skills Funds (NEERSF) through SFC - securing £1.7M of the £14.1M allocated to the North-East. Money was allocated by regional partners choosing projects for support, with all RGU's proposals accepted. RGU shared £23,000 of its secured funding with University of Aberdeen to ensure both universities provided a consistent approach to widening access in their projects.

RGU has leveraged its UIF and NEERSF funds, partnered purposefully and allocated its own resources to deliver on its 2021-22 UIF plan, as demonstrated below. The University Board and Executive have stated their commitment to accelerating and widening impact through further investment and focus in 2022-23.

Outcome 1 (Demand Stimulation)

Working with Enterprise Agencies, Scottish Government and Business Networks, Interface and others helping increase the demand and quality of engagement for business and the public sector for university services.

In 21-22, RGU further increased its focus on regional and national engagement, working with enterprise agencies and other key organisations to maximise opportunities for local business and public organisations.

Key priorities 21-22 and results were:

1. Secure & deliver NEERSF projects - all completed except health & social care projects
2. Grow National Subsea Centre - dedicated staff appointed & research projects secured
3. Maximise opportunities from RGU's Energy Workforce Transferability Review - new regional report, 'Making the Switch', launched in May (part-funded through NEERSF), attracted significant interest from Scottish and UK Government officials, Ministers and MPs/MSPs and ETI Director now adviser to both Governments
4. Secure £1.5M of KE awards - £2.45M awards secured with 38 businesses and a 100% IV application success rate

Key priorities 22-23 will be:

- Address RGU's industry-informed sectoral plan and contribute to a just and fair transition by working with regional and national partners to deliver sustainable and impactful initiatives in the areas of health and energy including Regional Pathfinders, NESAs and completion of NEERSF projects and thereby stimulating demand
- Maximise opportunities from RGU's Making the Switch Review and deliver OEUK Supply Chain Review. RGU will grow its reputation and inform future development at a government, regional and University level in relation to investment and the skilling of the current and future workforce to maximise opportunities from energy transition
- Secure 40 KE awards - working with Interface, Innovation Centres, Innovate UK and others to promote and deliver KE to support economic recovery and further develop the RGU pipeline of organisations engaged in terms of number, depth and visibility

Outcome 2 (Simplification/Commercialisation)

In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface and others demonstrably simplify business access to knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities.

RGU simplifies access to knowledge and expertise by aligning with key government initiatives and mechanisms and by conducting business directly with industry.

Key priorities 21-22 and results were:

1. Invest in the business section of the RGU website and increase social media engagement - stage 1 developments completed
2. Roll out commercialisation resources and processes on the back of new IP Commercialisation Policy - opportunity assessment templates rolled out for all types of commercialisation activity and positive IP Commercialisation audit report received
3. Implement good practice from KE Concordat - Research Team joined discussions with Business and Economic Development but work in planning and recording to be done
4. Host Interface and North of Scotland KTP Office and use this to further build relationships with other HEIs - continued increase in activity with Interface and significantly closer working through North of Scotland KTP Centre following appointment of new Head. Active engagement in RCDG UIF Business Development Group and other RCDG groups, therefore able to share/gain best practice

Key priorities 22-23 will be:

- Prepare a University sub-strategy for economic, social and cultural development with identified process for organisations to access services
- Further develop the business section of the RGU website, include more resources (on the back of RGU Knowledge Bites for Business) and increase social media engagement to ensure ease of access for businesses and other organisations to University services
- Roll out commercialisation resources and processes across the University – build on work from 2021-22 to increase engagement and thereby the number and size of projects undertaken (depth and breadth), particularly for knowledge exchange activity
- Implement good practice from the KE Concordat – in 22-23, RGU will undertake identified developments and sign up to the full development year
- Continue a sectoral-based approach to business development and other engagement, recognising challenges and opportunities due to the pandemic and climate emergency, and underpinned by RGU's industry-informed sectoral plans

Outcome 3 (Simplification/Greater Innovation)

In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface at a national level make use of their sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy (including beyond non-STEM)

RGU continues to deliver to the national agenda through participation in collaborative regional initiatives in areas such as energy transition, entrepreneurship and health.

Key 2021-22 priorities and results were:

1. Continue to build NESAs, working with Uni of Aberdeen, NESCoL, SDS and ETZ Ltd - Chaired first full year of NESAs, established a delivery group and secured a number of collaboration agreements with major partners including Scottish Power and Storegga

2. Working with partners, develop and implement the NEERSF proposal - significant partnership working and secured £1.7M for RGU projects in areas such as energy transition, skills, entrepreneurship, health and social care
3. Participate and contribute to relevant groups, committees and boards such as Aberdeen Prospers and the AGCC Policy Group - significant increase in activity with local partners in the region and with national organisations as the University considers how to best address NSET priorities

Key priorities 22-23 will be:

- Build on the RGU sectoral plans to ensure there is strategic sectoral engagement and activities that align with these critical priorities with innovation at its core, drawing in national and regional organisations for support as appropriate
- Consider opportunities for innovation through the Just Transition Fund to address low carbon mission challenges such as the decarbonisation of construction
- Contribute to NESAs and the Energy Regional Pathfinder, working with University of Aberdeen, NESCoL, SDS and ETZ Ltd to secure funding and provide an innovative approach to delivery of critical skills development to companies and individuals seeking to transition skills to renewable energies
- Working with regional and national partners, deliver on the health and social care NEERSF elements and the Health Regional Pathfinder, to ensure that the region and its constituent communities recover and prosper in a just and fair way by a shared and innovative approach to service provision

Outcome 4 (Entrepreneurialism)

Sector will have made significant positive change in the way entrepreneurial opportunities are promoted and delivered to students, staff and businesses

RGU will continue to stimulate and foster entrepreneurship within the University and will use its experience to widen its scope and stimulate entrepreneurialism and innovation thereby supporting economic recovery.

Key 21-22 priorities and results were:

1. Continue to embed entrepreneurship and innovation within RGU through expert Masterclasses for staff, students and businesses – 577 people attended 6 sessions with speakers including Mark Logan and Josh Quigley, world record cyclist
2. Work with regional partners, potentially through NEERSF, to significantly increase entrepreneurship activities within the region, resulting in community and business impact - £1.7M secured of which £324k was entrepreneurship-related and included a regional start-up accelerator resulting in 32 start-ups; 3 new entrepreneurship programmes in food & drink, hospitality and enterprising women developed based on model designed for creative entrepreneurship and delivered to 93 micro and SMEs; and Entrepreneurial Summer School attended by 35 recent graduates. Various programmes also delivered for Aberdeenshire Council throughout the Shire
3. Work with ONE and Codebase to support re-launch of ONE TechHub, post-pandemic, as a city centre base for entrepreneurship – increased engagement between all 3 organisations and MoU signed with Codebase before Techscaler announcement

Key priorities 22-23 will be:

- Embed entrepreneurship in the curriculum for RGU students and as a key element of RGU+. RGU+ cuts across many themes, including education for sustainable development, global citizenship and entrepreneurship, to ensure students are resilient, independent and confident thinkers

- Build the relationship with Techscaler and the development of an Industry Driven Entrepreneurship programme for the region in collaboration with ONE
- Contribute to national entrepreneurial campus discussions and lead on entrepreneurship developments within the Islands Deal TalEntEd programme
- Gain recognition for RGU in regard to its approach to entrepreneurship.

Outcome 5 (International)

In partnership with SDI, Connected Scotland and others pool knowledge and networks and shared good practice to promote and engage Scotland internationally

In 21-22, RGU adapted its approach to international engagement, due to restrictions on travel, focussing on maintaining existing relationships and adapting delivery models.

Key 21-22 priorities and results were:

1. Develop new international model for scale and replication and deliver in conjunction with Scottish national agencies – Model delivered but not replicated or scaled as partners wanted a return to face-to-face delivery asap (2 Summer Schools developed and ready for delivery in August 2022). Will look to build online model in 2022-23
2. Develop a new international plan reflecting reduced opportunity to travel, climate emergency, geopolitics & energy transition – plan developed and delivery commenced
3. Build relationships and secure three opportunities in either a country where RGU already does business or from a new country market – additional opportunities developed in Mexico, Guyana and West Africa however international activity was impacted by pandemic lasting longer than anticipated, significantly impacting mobility

Key priorities 22-23 will be:

- Collaborating nationally, develop new models of engagement for University services including economic development, research and TNE
- Re-establish and grow relationships in 2 key existing markets and build 1 new market, working with national bodies and through enhanced engagement with alumni
- Scale up and replicate online model for engagement, reducing carbon footprint and costs

Outcome 6 (Inclusive Growth and Social Impact)

Scale up support of the Scottish Government's ambitions for inclusive growth

In 21-22, RGU increased its support of economic development, addressing the relationships between health, wellbeing, social resilience, culture and prosperity.

Key 21-22 priorities and results were:

1. Develop a community engagement plan – plan developed but overtaken as community development now forms part of the University's strategic aims
2. Grow previous initiatives including submission of the Outline Business Case for the TalEntEd work package of the Islands Deal – Outline Business Case submitted
3. Build on successful programmes delivered by the RGU Look Again team, to support regeneration of the Aberdeen city centre and to engage with new audiences – significant engagement in various regeneration projects although city centre challenges have increased as in many cities
4. Support the Torry community, an area on RGU's doorstep which suffers from multiple deprivations, further exacerbated by the pandemic through:
 - a. Support of the Victoria Road School project as a community hub, drawing on staff and students through a salutogenic approach – significant delivery through the old community centre integrating health and well-being support as development of VRS restricted due to the pandemic

- b. Work with the Torry Development Trust and Aberdeen City Council to develop an embodied carbon plan for the Trust, in support of community wealth generation – plan developed and RGU start-up provided additional support
- c. Working with University of Aberdeen to roll-out best practice in relation to net-zero planning for community wealth creation – project delivered and report shared with City Council for further circulation

Key priorities for 22-23 will be:

- Continue to develop support for the Torry community through the opening of a Law Clinic based in the local medical centre offering free legal advice to residents
- Strengthen relationships with RGU's neighbouring community in Garthdee through a range of activities, including delivery of physio and art classes for residents
- Working with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeen Inspired to shape and develop the vision for the regeneration of the city centre and in particular Union Street

Outcome 7 (Equality and Diversity)

Ensure positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of UIF

The university is committed to building an inclusive environment and to promoting the importance of equality and diversity through actions.

Key 21-22 priorities and results were:

1. Appoint an equality, diversity and inclusion adviser and recruit 7 new Equality Champions to build good relations between different groups – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor in post. There are now 9 Champion positions (6 have been filled). Action groups have been created and are promoted on internal pages
2. Disseminate the Dignity at RGU Policy which has been revised to reflect the recommendations of the Equality & Human Rights Commission report – Policy is available on RGU website and dissemination happening across different channels
3. Consider RGU's application for national equality charter marks, recognising RGU's commitment to, and progress on, equality and diversity – A group is in place to manage applications for submission, with engagement with sector bodies

Key priorities 22-23 will be:

1. Develop RGU's application for the various national equality charter marks
2. Fill all remaining Equality Champion positions and provide the group with the support to effectively and positively promote equality, diversity and inclusion to all staff

Outcome Agreement between Robert Gordon University and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2022-23

On behalf of Robert Gordon University

Signed:



Print name:

Prof. Steve Olivier

Position:

Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date:

Signed:



Print name:

Dr Colin Hunter

Position:

Chair

Date:

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:



Print name:

Karen Watt

Position:

Chief Executive

Date:

26 July 2023