

Universities Innovation Fund

ROYAL CONSERVATOIRE OF SCOTLAND – 2 YEAR SUMMARY REPORT

October 2018

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland warmly welcomed the Universities Innovation Fund (UIF) initiative and the wider aim of achieving a step change in Scotland's performance in innovation and knowledge exchange. Now, two years later and having just commenced the third operational year of the UIF, there is no doubt that the increased investment is already resulting in a significant change of gear in innovation and knowledge exchange at the Royal Conservatoire.

Our overarching aims for the UIF investment are;

1. To develop further capacity for supporting innovation and KE within the Conservatoire
2. To draw on this additional capacity to make an effective contribution, commensurate with our scale and expertise, to the agreed national priorities.

As part of the capacity building work catalysed by the UIF, and led by a new post of KE Manager which was made possible by the UIF investment, we have developed a raft of new offers since 2016 to enhance our innovation support to staff, graduates and students, supporting their creative enterprise ambitions and inspiring them to think about the widest possible application of their skills and talents.

Particular highlights in this strand of work include the development of *Make It Happen Month* for our students and graduates. Piloted on a small scale in November 2017, we created a month long series of evening events, workshops and seminars on getting ideas, projects, collaborations and companies off the ground. With over 180 attendances, the series was packed full of industry insights, sharing the latest developments and thinking and providing space to explore opportunities for our students' and graduates' wide range of expertise and capacities. *Make It Happen Month* creates momentum, energy and engagement in creative enterprise and offers some clear routes to implementation and success.

For our staff, we have broadened the scope and range of our staff research and knowledge exchange awards programme, the *Athenaeum Awards*, in order to support early-stage enterprise and innovation projects and to develop a pipeline of creative business propositions.

November 2017 saw the publication of *Movers and Shakers*, which shared case studies of our graduates and their own enterprising journeys and the lessons they have learned along the way. Other highlights include the success of a member of our production staff, Stephen Roe, as the recipient of the Conservatoire's first Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) Enterprise Fellowship. With a business idea that emerged from our Athenaeum Awards for Knowledge Exchange and some ongoing support and advice, he was a semi-finalist on Converge Challenge after which he went on to win the RSE Enterprise Fellowship. His success and his Fellowship (which is currently being hosted by RCS) has provided us with an in-house role model.

In making our contribution towards the nationally-agreed objectives for the UIF, we have worked particularly closely with Glasgow School of Art on a range of one off

events for enterprise students as well as on MODUAL the summer school for creative collaborators which was a partnership between RCS, GSA and University of the Arts, London. Our KE Manager has also contributed to the sector-wide development work developing under the auspices of the Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisations Directors Group.

Since 2016, our UIF-related work has enabled significant growth at the Conservatoire, allowing us to develop new and innovative strands of work, strengthen our partnerships with our HEI colleagues, add value to the creative economy enterprise and innovation landscape and be even more ambitious about the role we can play in growing Scotland's creative industries economic success story. The UIF is Making It Happen.

Appendix 1: Outcomes relating to enhancing our innovation support

In 16/17, RCS undertook significant development work towards achieving the stated UIF goals:

- We recruited a new member of staff with specialism in creative enterprise support provision to lead this area of activity.
- We undertook a light review of enterprise and its place in the curriculum, highlighting the deep connections with industry that underpin all of our undergraduate, taught post graduate and doctoral degrees programmes.
- We networked with our colleagues across HEI to learn from their experiences in terms of enterprise provision.
- We began offering business and coaching support to staff seeking to develop their business ideas and established a framework for this through our research and knowledge exchange awards for staff
- We tested ideas with staff and students, piloted projects and put plans in place to deliver a comprehensive suite of enterprise programmes, events and initiatives for the next academic year.
- We facilitated a workshop on Intellectual Property for all members of the Research and Knowledge Exchange staff team. Delivered by Cloch Solicitors to 8 participants.

In 17/18, we delivered the following activities and outputs to achieve our objectives:

- Facilitated the delivery of 2 Crowdfunding Workshops to staff as part of the Learning and Teaching Conference 2017. Workshop delivered by Twintangibles. – 40 attendances
- Published and widely disseminated [*Movers and Shakers*](#), a series of 12 case studies, looking at our graduates' entrepreneurial journeys, insights and specific challenges.
- Facilitated the delivery of the Cultural Enterprise Office's programme *Design Your Practice*, a business development programme for creatives. This took place over 4 consecutive Thursday evenings and involved 15 student participants.
- Scheduled a *Converge Challenge* information evening for staff and students. 5 attendees converted into three applications to the programme, with two applicants successfully shortlisted for the residential business development week.
- Facilitated an Industry Seminar with Solar Bear Theatre Company and our final year students from the BA Performance in British Sign Language and English in November 2017. With 100 invited guests from across the worlds of theatre, film and TV we explored the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead for our 10 graduates as they emerged into the profession. They graduated in July 2018 and 9 out of 10 graduates are now working professionally in the field of drama. Participants – 100.
- With Glasgow School of Art and University of the Arts London, we delivered MODUAL Kickstarter in Glasgow. A two-week intensive summer school for our students in digital collaboration and enterprise. 30 participants in Glasgow

worked collaboratively and digitally with 30 participants in London. Teams of 4 and 5 developed social enterprise ideas for launch on Kickstarter.

- Supported Stephen Roe, a member of RCS staff to become the [first ever RSE Enterprise Fellow from the Conservatoire](#).
- Delivered a special Year of Young People partnership event with Dundee Rep, Scottish Drama Training Network and RCS around our student production *Spring Awakening*. We invited drama and musical theatre students from FE colleges to a special afternoon performance at Dundee Rep and a Q&A pre-show discussion with cast and creative team. 150 student participants.
- Piloted *Make It Happen Month* in November 2017 for students. A month-long series of curated workshops, events and seminars about getting projects, ideas and creative enterprises off the ground. Events included:
 - *Writing Killer Funding Applications* – 30 participants, delivered by Glow Arts.
 - *Fully Connected* – Keynote and Conversation with Julia Hobsbawm. 50 participants (staff and students).
 - *Crowdfunding Workshop* – 10 participants, delivered by Twintangibles.
 - *Take Your Show to the Edinburgh Fringe* – workshop and information evening in association with Edinburgh Fringe and Scottish Drama Training Network – 30 participants.
 - *Getting to Know You* – a networking evening on collaborating and collaboration in partnership with Glasgow School of Art, as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week. 60 participants.

Appendix 2: Progress on our contribution to the Strategic Outcomes for the University Innovation Fund

CONTRIBUTING TO STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The Royal Conservatoire is making a clear contribution to the agreed Strategic Outcomes (SOs), commensurate with our scale and expertise, building on initial insights and discussions around Priority Actions for 16/17 and 17/18. Some of these contributions are made in partnership, either with individual institutions or consortia, or through our working with agencies and groups such as Interface or the Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors Group (RCDG); others require specific work within the Conservatoire.

SO 1: Demand Stimulation

“We will work directly with Interface and other partners to drive demand stimulation in the distinctive context of the Creative Industries and develop a strong project pipeline.”

Progress: RCS continues to raise awareness of Innovation Vouchers to our staff and seek opportunities to help staff to develop their ideas. Looking ahead to 18/19 we will work with Interface to pilot an initiative that explores a specific voucher for innovative practices.

SO 2&3: Simplification and commercialisation; simplification and greater innovation

“Our proposal to scope a performing arts Innovation Exchange space speaks directly to these outcomes.

In the short term, we will also seek a partner HEI (or HEIs) to assist us in maximising the effectiveness of our innovation support, including the development of an effective ‘shop window’ for KE at the Conservatoire. The KE Manager will lead on this work.

As noted above, we will develop a new strategy for KE and innovation, drawing on insights from the data generated by our new Research Information System. This strategy will give particular attention, from the institutional perspective, to Strategic Outcomes 2 & 3. The Head of Research and KE will lead on this work.”

Progress: RCS has prepared a tender for a feasibility study for an Innovation Exchange Hub. We expect to appoint a consultant by the end of November, with a completed report by March 2019. The Conservatoire’s show window for enterprise support is now well established, with *Make It Happen* as the strand for students and graduates and an account management approach for staff with business propositions that come through the Athenaeum Awards.

SO 4: Entrepreneurialism

“Again, our proposal to scope a performing arts Innovation Exchange space is made in the light of this strategic outcome. We will also work with Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and others including Queen Margaret University in developing an approach to entrepreneurialism that is tailored to the Creative Industries, and look particularly at how we can enhance the current ladder of support for the sector.”

Progress: RCS has created an enterprise brand for students and graduates – *Make It Happen*, referenced above, which will be significantly ramped up in 18/19. We have worked in partnership with Glasgow School of Art on student-focused events for

Global Enterprise Week in 2017. In 18/19 we will work alongside other institutions with creative practitioners to share approaches and insights on how to best support staff, students and graduates to develop and grow.

SO 5: International

“We will contribute through our membership of RCDG to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by Heriot Watt University. In parallel with this, we will explore with colleagues at Scottish Development International (SDI) and Connected Scotland whether the Royal Conservatoire can take a role in the shared work of promoting and engaging Scotland internationally, contributing to the cultural diplomatic effort to ensure that Scotland’s voice is distinctive internationally. “

SO 6: Inclusive growth and social impact

“We will contribute through our membership of RCDG to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by Stirling University. As part of our contribution to this, we will lead discussions across the sector on inclusive growth in the cultural sector, facilitating a workshop series with HEI and industry partners.”

SO 7: Equality and diversity

“We will contribute through our membership of RCDG to the sectoral work in this area that will be led by the Open University in Scotland, feeding in our particular experience of innovation in this context (our unique BA Performance in British Sign Language and English, for example, was an outcome of an Innovation Voucher with d/Deaf theatre company Solar Bear).”

Progress: RCS will continue to work with colleagues across the HEIs on 5, 6 and 7. We have strong international partnerships with institutional colleagues across Europe through networks like ELIA (European League of Institutes of the Arts) and others. We delivered a successful symposium in November 2017 to connect our BA Performance in BSL to the wider creative industries to look at how the sector can work more regularly with performers from the deaf community and RCS will now become a member of Scotland House to extend our presence in London.