



UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

OUTCOME AGREEMENT

2021-2022

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY	4
3.	OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS	5
3.1.	FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS	5
3.2	HIGH QUALITY, LEARNING, TEACHING AND SUPPORT	7
3.3.	PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE	10
3.4	LEARNING WITH IMPACT	11
3.5	EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION	13
4.	OUTCOMES FOR RESEARCH.....	15
4.1	RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	15
4.2	RESEARCH SUSTAINABILITY	16
5.	OUTCOMES OR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SOCIAL RENEWAL.....	19
5.1.	RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS	19
5.2.	CONFIDENT AND HIGHLY CAPABLE - WORK-READY – GRADUATES	20
5.3	KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION	22
5.4	COLLABORATION	22
5.5.	CLIMATE EMERGENCY	23

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the University of Aberdeen's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for 2021-22. It sets out the University's commitments to delivering outcomes prioritised by the Scottish Government via the SFC, relating to Students, Research, and to Economic Recovery and Social Renewal.

As with the Outcome and Impact Framework published in early 2021 in response to Covid-19, this document is written at a time when the University, as with the sector at large, continues to work under constraints resulting from the pandemic, while in parallel, working to mitigate the adverse effects of Brexit on the sector. The University has also been working to begin delivery of its landmark strategic vision, Aberdeen 2040, published in March 2020 just prior to the first major lockdown. Aberdeen 2040 provides a framework to the University for its longer-term contributions to recovery from the pandemic and to society more broadly, and sets out a road map for institutional priorities over the coming years.

This document outlines in detail a range of measures the University has and will take to mitigate the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 over the short to medium-term, while in turn positively impacting the wider recovery. Under the priority Outcomes referenced above, this Agreement addresses a number of key areas, setting out the different activities, initiatives and actions it will continue to take forward over the coming years. These areas are as follows:

- **Outcomes for Students**
 - Fair Access and Transitions
 - High Quality Learning, Teaching and Support
 - Partnership, Participation and Student Experience
 - Learning with Impact
 - Public Health Emergency
 - Equalities and Inclusion
- **Outcomes for Research**
 - Research Excellence
 - Research Sustainability
- **Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal**
 - Responsive Institutions
 - Confident and Highly Capable – Work Ready Graduates
 - Knowledge Exchange and Innovation
 - Collaboration
 - Climate Emergency

It should be noted at the outset that while this document focuses primarily on the Scottish context, the strategies, actions, standards and services taken forward and provided by the University to staff and students both during the pandemic and on an ongoing, permanent basis, are also applied to staff and students studying as part of the University's provision in Qatar, where applicable.

The refined Table of Measures provided by the SFC at the start of the exercise is attached as **Appendix 1**. This provides up-to-date data against each measure included by the SFC this year, with projections made against each for 2021/22. The University's Self-Evaluation for the 2020-21 Interim Outcome and Impact Framework document, developed in response to Covid-19, is attached as **Appendix 2**. The University's Innovation Fund report is also attached as required as **Appendix 3**. Any queries in relation to this Outcome Agreement or the affiliated documentation should be directed to University's Director of Planning or the Head of Strategic Planning in the first instance, via planning@abdn.ac.uk.

2. PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

“Institutions take steps to ensure the health and well-being and best interests of their students and staff during the emergency period.”

As previously reported, the University was one of the first in the sector to move its activities off-campus at the start of the pandemic and revert to home and online working. It put in place a comprehensive set of governance arrangements to manage the Covid-19 crisis, including establishing a Covid-19 Campus Planning Group (CPG) which continues to meet weekly to review changes in the external environment, to agree the institutional response to emerging guidance and legislation, and to oversee development of the broader strategic approach to Covid-19. This group reports directly into the University’s Senior Management Team (SMT) which also meets twice per week.

The CPG is comprised of key stakeholders from the academic, professional services and student bodies, including Trade Union representation and elected members of the University’s Senate. As well as coordinating the strategic response to the pandemic, the Group is on standby to convene at short notice to respond to critical incidents and agree actions arising from changes in both local and national circumstances. The CPG oversees compliance, reviews emerging risks associated with the pandemic, and provides strategic direction to a sub-group which is made up of representatives from HR, Health and Safety, Estates and Facilities, and Student Support. This latter group takes forward the operational implementation of actions, reporting back to the CPG alongside a Research sub-group and the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG). In relation to risk management, it should be noted that a comprehensive risk identification process was undertaken at the start of the pandemic, and risk management arrangements dedicated specifically to Covid-19 were put in place; these have been maintained and refined throughout. This included establishing a detailed Covid-19 risk register.

Communication plans are a standing item on the CPG agenda, with the issue of regular, real-time community-focussed updates to staff and students on changes to guidance or the University’s approach to managing the crisis. These communications also emphasise the need for compliance when appropriate, as well as highlighting the support available from the University, particularly in respect to health and wellbeing. In relation to this, the University has also developed [dedicated web pages for Covid-19](#); these are vital support resources which are continuously kept up to date to ensure they provide the latest information to staff and students. It includes information on a dedicated community testing facility on-site, information on vaccines, inclusion and support services, information on returning to campus, comprehensive ‘frequently asked questions’, among other resources.

In terms of measures for the delivery of education in 2021/22, this is being taken forward in line with current Scottish Government guidance. The University has largely adopted a blended learning approach, with more on-campus teaching than in the previous year. On-campus teaching is focused on smaller group activities, with large group or lecture-style teaching arrangements continuing online. The type of education activity delivered on campus will vary between disciplines, taking account of student numbers and the most appropriate way to deliver teaching. It should be noted that the University places the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff and students at the core of all decision-making.

3. OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

3.1. FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS

“Education is accessible to students of all backgrounds, and students are supported through successful pathways.”

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

The University has a range of measures in place to ensure that people from deprived areas are supported to have fair access to study at Aberdeen. The most significant of these are outlined below:

- **For students going through an articulation route**, the University has a clear and robust offering of [pathways](#), entry to which is supported by the Articulate Aberdeen Programme. The programme began in 2020-21, designed specifically to support students whilst in college but due to start the process of transitioning into the University. The move online necessitated by the pandemic has allowed the University to reach many more areas and as a result, some of the activities will now be made available online as standard in future. It is notable that, despite the pandemic, the proportion of articulating students has continued to rise from 38.4% in 2019-20 to 46.7% in 2020-21.
- **The University has a robust set of contextualised admissions processes**, designed to enhance accessibility to Aberdeen, particularly to students from deprived backgrounds. Further information on this is [available here](#). These processes ensure reduced entry tariffs to eligible applicants, and underpin the support offered to students’ pre-entry. This includes applicants from the 20% most deprived postcodes. Those who meet contextualised admissions criteria are also supported via the [Access Aberdeen Programme](#).
- **Students from the 20% most deprived postcode areas were offered free accommodation for their first year of study** for the fourth year running for 2021-22. In addition, widening access students starting university in 2021-22 were also eligible to apply for a range of entrance scholarships, up to the value of £4000 per annum. Based on early indications, the percentage of students from the 20% most deprived postcodes has risen to 8.2% this year, a rise on the previous year during the pandemic.
- **The University offered an Access and Articulation Internship in 2020-21**, engaging with various widening access groups pre-and post-entry. Feedback gathered will be incorporated into the Access and Articulate Aberdeen and Student Support programmes in 2021-22.
- The University is a host to **Reach Scotland**, which supports pupils from widening access backgrounds into high demand professions, such as Law and Medicine. Reach supports pupils from Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Moray, Highlands, Orkney and Shetland, many of whom are from deprived postcodes or low-income families.
- **Considerable financial support** was provided to our students adversely impacted by the pandemic. Nearly 500 undergraduate and graduate students received Covid-19, ‘525 Bursaries’ from over £325,000 raised. This supported students requiring laptops, broadband access, with rent and with other expenses. Bursaries ranged in value from £525 to £5,000.

3.1.2. People with experience of care have fair access and are supported to succeed

In addition to the range of support measures referenced above, those with care experience are guaranteed an offer of admission, providing they meet the contextualised entry requirements for non-controlled subject areas. Moreover, as a Corporate Parent, the University works closely with local organisations such as Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils, Who Cares Scotland and MCR Pathways to support [The Promise](#) and care experienced young people. The University is working in partnership supporting aspects of the student lifecycle, particularly those involved in raising aspirations, pre-entry outreach work, transition, and student support during studies. This includes using feedback from care experienced students to enhance the University’s summer bridging programme for first year entrants, with elements of preparing for independent living such as finance and healthy eating. Staff training on Corporate Parenting also continues to be expanded and it is notable that despite the pandemic, the University maintained its recruitment level for this cohort of students, standing at 1.3% for two years in succession, to 2020-21.

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

As part of the University's contextualised admissions policy, prior learning is taken into account when considering all applications. Non-traditional qualifications are given recognition wherever possible; for example, if an applicant is a veteran and they have undertaken training or have prior experience that is relevant, then this is taken into account when considering their application. Similarly, where qualifications do not necessarily meet entry requirements, prior work experience and/or professional qualifications may be taken into account when considering an application. In 2020-21 a major review of RPL was conducted and an updated policy approved in May 2021 ([Policy - Accreditation of Prior Learning.pdf \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)).

3.1.4. Transitions and pathways for students are supported and signposted

The University continues to work with partners from across Scotland, including schools, colleges and the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP), to highlight the different pathways to University that are available, and to provide support on the UCAS process. In addition to those programmes already mentioned above, a further selection is highlighted below:

- **Online drop-in sessions for widening access and articulation students have been established** in response to Covid restrictions. These take place regularly and are used to field questions and promote information regarding pathway opportunities. These will continue in 2021-22.
- **An Articulation Day/Week Online** held late autumn/ early winter will take place again in 2021-22. For the first time in 2021-22 this will be run alongside and complementing North East Scotland College's (NESCOL) UCAS week.
- **In 2021-22 the University created new online orientation modules available to all students** as a consequence of Covid-19, and with dedicated content for widening access students. This was reviewed through a student internship and enhanced for 2021-22, with 2843 undergraduate and 2092 postgraduate students completing online orientation.
- **The University ran an optional online summer school** for all students entering study in 2021-22. 256 students took part, studying a minimum of one skills and one academic course over a four-week period. A Widening Access Student Intern conducted an extensive review of all feedback from the programme and over the course of 2021-22 and this will inform improvements in 2022.
- **The Articulation Transitional Programme** was an optional programme running over a two-week period immediately pre-entry for the first time in 2021-22 to equip our advanced entrants from college with the skills they need to become successful learners. Sessions included a mixture of academic tasters, opportunities to meet staff, study skills, student support and assistive technologies. Over the course of 2021-22 feedback will be reviewed and appropriate changes implemented.
- **The University will run the award-winning Gateway to Medicine (G2M)** programme again in 2021-22. The programme is designed to support promising school pupils from rural and less advantaged backgrounds who want to study medicine. The programme runs in collaboration with North East Scotland College and has supported 87 students since it was launched in 2017. In 2021-22 changes will be implemented in response to staff and student feedback.
- **The Engineering Transitional Summer School** ran online again over two weeks immediately prior to the 2021-22 term starting. This is the University's flagship traditional summer school, a heavily academic programme which allows articulating students to effectively bridge the gap between college and university study. Evidence has shown this programme is invaluable in supporting retention in Engineering.

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

As highlighted above, the University works with both schools and colleges in relation to widening access and articulation. Some of the most significant initiatives it is involved in are detailed below:

- **The North of Scotland Collaborative Outreach Project** is a ground-breaking project developed in response to the recently released Scottish Government data (2019-20) which showed that Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland all recorded decreases in young people moving onto positive destinations post completion of their studies. Teams from the University of

Aberdeen, RGU, Scotland's Rural College, and the UHI have joined together for the first time to run a series of events over the next academic year to help young people progress.

- **The University hosts the Reach Programme** for widening access pupils interested in high demand professions, namely Law and Medicine. Reach works closely with partner institutions in Dundee, St Andrews, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, to support pupils nation-wide.
- **The University hosts the SHEP programme** in the North and East of Scotland, Aspire North, and works to support their initiatives to support local school pupils. Pupils from SHEP programmes usually are then eligible for contextualised offers with the associate support.
- **The University has recently renewed its partnership agreement with Aberdeen Football Club (AFC) and AFC Community Trust.** The University is the Official Education Partner of the AFC Community Trust and collaborates and co-delivers workshops to primary and secondary schools across the region. The 2021-22 agreement prioritises the development and delivery of widening access engagement activities for the S4-6 cohort.
- **The Business School** has a dedicated member of staff for school engagement. The School run workshops that raise awareness and aspirations for school children based in both Aberdeen City and Shire, at both Primary and Secondary level. Since June 2020 almost 1000 young people have attended sessions.
- To build further on support measures already in place, the University of Aberdeen has committed to working towards becoming a '**University of Sanctuary**'. This will involve working in partnership with City of Sanctuary and other partner initiatives to inspire and support universities to develop a culture of welcome both internally and beyond.

3.2 HIGH QUALITY, LEARNING, TEACHING AND SUPPORT

"Students of all levels experience a high-quality, safe and supportive learning experience that enables them to succeed in their studies and they find it easy to participate and engage in their educational experience."

3.2.1. The student experience of learning, teaching and support is protected in the ongoing public health context

Since the start of the pandemic, all student support services have been operating virtually with no break in service to the student population. The provision of in-person support has also continued when needed, particularly through teams of support staff within managed halls. In addition, extra resources have been put in place to prioritise and enhance support available to those studying both in Aberdeen and remotely; this has included making £150,000 of additional hardship funding available to support students impacted early in the pandemic; hiring additional staff in Student Support and in halls of residence to support students with a range of welfare issues; introducing a new, 24/7 Counselling Helpline, to assist with support out of hours and for those based internationally; and creating a range of online resources and events aimed at enhancing wellbeing, particularly for those directly impacted by the pandemic. The University also ensured that there is a robust mechanism in place to support students required to isolate, ensuring their teaching and learning was quickly supported remotely, while in parallel, preserving the ability to return to in-person classes when government guidance allowed. Going forward, the following objectives or initiatives are planned:

- Launch of a new University Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2025, outlining a holistic approach to support staff and students to maintain positive wellbeing.
- Development of a shared understanding of wellbeing at the University, including institutional and individual responsibilities.
- Create a wellbeing-conducive working, learning and research environment which supports staff and students to fulfil their potential.
- Minimise the causes of study-related stress and support those affected.
- Empower the University community to achieve and maintain positive wellbeing by providing resources to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- Reduce health inequalities within the University and provide easy access to resources and support, enabling staff and students to maintain positive wellbeing.

- Create an environment which enables the University community to efficiently identify, respond to and support wellbeing and health issues or concerns.

3.2.2. There is rigour and quality in learning and teaching processes

Ensuring rigour and quality in learning and teaching processes has been and will remain central to the work of the University during the institutional response to Covid-19. As Covid-19 restrictions have eased, the University has committed to more on-campus teaching in 2021-22 than over the previous year, where this is possible; however for those students unable to return to campus, for whatever reason, the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment remains blended, underpinned by a set of [Principles](#).

To ensure both rigour and quality, the University has and will continue to provide all students with the level of access to their learning in order that they can achieve their learning outcomes, irrespective of their circumstances. Ongoing staff training, with a hub-and-spoke model of support for Schools from the University's Centre for Academic Development, has ensured that staff have been supported to successfully deliver teaching in the context of blended learning to the requisite standards. The University Education Committee (UEC), which includes representation from all 12 Schools within the University, and its associated sub-committees (particularly the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)) has overall responsibility for Quality Assurance (QA) (with ultimate reporting into Senate). The Committees have appropriately discussed and approved regulatory or policy changes and all decisions are recorded and monitored through those committees. Each School has responsibility for ensuring that the planning and implementation of the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment is taking place in an appropriate manner and this is managed through their School Education Committees. The NSS results for 2021 provide strong and clear evidence of student satisfaction in their learning experience, with Aberdeen moving from 19th to 5th out of 124 HEIs in ranking in the UK.

3.2.3. Arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement support to the standards expected by students

The University has ensured that standards for quality assurance and enhancement is maintained; ensured that the quality of the student experience is maintained, irrespective of where a student is based, be that Aberdeen, Qatar or online via distance learning. Different QA processes include: Course Feedback Forms (for the ongoing evaluation of individual courses, the feedback from which course co-ordinators use to make enhancements); Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) where students are able to provide ongoing feedback within their Schools; Annual Course Review (ACR) and Annual Programme Review (APR) which enable robust examination of the implementation of blended learning; External Examiners; and Internal Teaching Review (ITR), the University's process for periodic subject review. In addition, the University's education-related policies are reviewed regularly in consultation with staff and students, to ensure they remain appropriate.

The University continues to respond to national guidance regarding the pandemic and the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment, adapting practices and ensuring their alignment with QA requirements (for example, adherence to accreditation requirements). We have put in place alternative assessment arrangements as part of the response to Covid-19 and in line with the implementation of blended learning. All changes to assessment are approved by the University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Assessment integrity is an important area of focus and [resources](#) have been developed to support Schools in ensuring assessment integrity.

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

The use of data and evidence is at the heart of all University decision making, including all issues and priorities linked to learning, teaching and support for students. Of particular note, a number of formal, [key performance indicators, which link directly to education](#), have been agreed at School and institutional level as part of Aberdeen 2040 and are tracked on an ongoing basis. These include indicators linked to student satisfaction, student progression and graduate outcomes, among others. This provides a structured, coherent, and evidence-based approach to the continuous improvement and enhancement of education and the wider education environment, enabling the University to identify

areas of relative strength and weakness, to draw on best practice, and to make enhancements where needed.

More broadly, the University uses data derived from a wealth of sources to inform its decision-making under the Education agenda. These include the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES), NSS, Focus Groups, Course Evaluation Forms and online feedback. Feedback is analysed and reports are provided to Schools and Directorates with action plans developed and implemented to address areas for enhancement. More specifically, the use of data has also been key to informing the University's approach to education during the pandemic including a longitudinal evaluation of blended learning which reported in June and September 2021 and has enabled us to make appropriate changes to the delivery of education for 2021/22. The evaluation will play an important role in informing a strategic workstream on the Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education.

3.2.5. Well-developed strategies and approaches for digital and blended learning are in place

The optimisation of strategies and approaches for digital and blended learning have been a significant factor in navigating the impacts of Covid-19, largely overseen by the University Education Committee (UEC). The University's Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) provides expertise and support in enabling the required digital environment for blended learning. More detail on current and planned strategic approaches are given below:

- The approach to the delivery of blended learning overseen by the UEC, as above, and developed in consultation with staff and students. From this an agreed list of [principles for blended learning](#) was agreed and published, and these underpinned the strategic approach University-wide.
- A network of School-level Blended Learning Task and Finish Groups (TFGs) were established at School level, reporting into the Blended Learning Implementation TFG (BLITFG) at institutional level, which itself reported into the University Education Committee. This strengthened cohesion and effectiveness in the approach taken to online and blended learning, enhancing trust and effectiveness. BLITFG activities have now been absorbed into the UEC.
- In terms of technical expertise and direction, the process was supported by the Digital Strategy Committee, which enabled a project-based approach to implementation, providing a scope for operations, a framework for identifying and allocating resources, and a clear timeline for delivery across different areas. Specific security and governance concerns were also taken into consideration as technical solutions were deployed to facilitate learning.

In addition, as progress has been made nationally to increase the amount of campus-based teaching permissible, the University has and continues to take forward development of the estate to support digitally enhanced delivery in the classrooms.

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

The University continues its efforts to ensure that staff are appropriately developed and supported to deliver high-quality learning, teaching and support for students, areas all particularly important in light of significant and rapid changes to modes of delivery as a consequence of Covid-19. Key initiatives include:

- School-based support provided by our Centre for Academic Development that offered bespoke development and training for each School depending on their needs.
- An academic development framework is in place and, building on this, enhanced training for staff is available which offers support to facilitate skills development for delivery of blended learning.
- In addition, new online Community of Practice sessions for aspects of the delivery of blended learning have taken place and were very well attended; further sessions will take place to address any areas where staff require further development.
- A University-level Toolkit was created and publicised to support staff in creating and enhancing blended learning and teaching environments.

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

The University has and continues to take a range of measures to ensure that the transition for students coming from a tertiary level of learning is positive and seamless. Approaches include:

- The University will continue to review and enhance its communication strategy and policy, ensuring the ongoing provision of clear guidance to all internal stakeholders. The University's communication strategy has been pivotal to its successes in this area, ensuring students receive the right messages, at the right time and in the right way to the right incoming students.
- Students will continue to receive a series of bespoke 'new student communications' which guide them through the various stages of preparing for student life. Online Orientation allows students to learn about the key aspects of student life in their own time and at their own pace.
- The University will continue to enhance its Welcome and Orientation activities (online and on campus) and the support provided for new and returning students. This will include tailoring pre-arrival communication, streamlining orientation activities and enhancing the opportunities for students to engage with their peers in the run up to and during Welcome week. This will also include specific options for some groups, such as widening access and disabled students.
- The University will continue to develop and expand its peer support programmes to aid student transition, with the option for students to be matched with students with shared experiences.
- All new students (UG and PG) have the opportunity to participate in a peer mentoring or support programme.
- The Student Learning Service offers support to all students, and Schools deliver transition sessions to assist in the move to honours study and to dissertation study.
- The University's pastoral support systems (including personal tutors for undergraduates) offers support to assist students in getting the most from their time at University and in signposting them to academic and professional specialist guidance. There is a Pastoral Support review in place which is due to report in June 2022.

3.2.8. Students are supported in their mental health and wellbeing

The University offers extensive support services for students for their mental health and wellbeing. In Aberdeen 2040, the first major commitment made by the University is to "care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community..." and this is also as a key aspect of the [University Staff and Student Wellbeing Strategy](#), launched in October 2021. This strategy is also underpinned by the [University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#). Some of the initiatives in this area are given below:

- As part of its one-year plan for 2021-22, the University will be developing the Student Mental Health Agreement, improving access to information and support for both students and staff supporting students.
- This coming academic year the University will be recruiting to a new role of Student Support Advisor (Mental Health), to provide more focus on complex case management and the support of students in crisis or with longer term needs.
- The University's pastoral support systems (including personal tutoring for undergraduate students) will continue to provide a first point of contact on all issues, and training and guidance is provided, noting there will continue to be bespoke training on numerous topics including suicide preventions, mental health interventions and crisis management.
- As part of efforts to widen mental health support for both staff and students, the University plans to continue the 247 helpline over the coming three years, with a tender pending for this service.
- The Wellbeing Team in Student Experience provides a structured programme of events at key pressure points (including BeWell week) and provides online resources: [Wellbeing Toolkit | Students | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

3.3. PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

"Students find it easy to participate, have their voice heard and valued, and influence their educational and student experience"

3.3.1. Students have their voice heard and valued, and are able to influence their educational experience

The University places significant value in the student voice, recognising that student views are pivotal to both shaping and providing a high-quality student experience, and to underpinning student satisfaction. The University ensures that the student voice is heard in a number of ways, with an overarching focus on ensuring students are aware of the various means through which they can provide feedback on their educational experience. Mechanisms for this include:

- Course feedback forms which students can use to provide informal feedback throughout their academic studies.
- The University's Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) which is issued on an annual basis providing students with a voice and informing plans for improving the educational experience going forward.
- Working with the Aberdeen University Student Association (AUSA), appointing class representatives and AUSA School Convenors, who attend the different School 'Staff Student Liaison' meetings, which consider the delivery of courses and areas for development.
- Representation of students on committees and other such bodies, including the School Education Committee, the University Senate, committees, and sub-committees of Senate, as well as various Task and Finish Groups.

3.3.2. Student partnership is valued, and effective partnership arrangements exist between institutional leadership teams and student bodies

The University and AUSA have a [Student Partnership Agreement \(SPA\)](#) which reflects and outlines priorities shared by the two organisations, shaped by their respective strategies. The overarching goal of the SPA is to enhance the student experience and 2021-22, it will provide a focus for partnership working in three key areas: Accessibility and Inclusion, Sustainability, and Community. In addition to the SPA, the following is notable in terms of student partnerships:

- The Vice-President for Education (AUSA) is a member of the Vice-Principal Education's informal Education team where education-related issues and strategy are discussed.
- AUSA has membership on all major University committees and a number of associated working groups (or equivalent). This includes Senate and key committees like the NSS Steering Group and the Student Support Committee.
- Students also play a key role on the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group, providing student input and leadership in that space, in addition to other initiatives, such as the anti-racism strategy.
- The University has identified the 'Student Voice' as an institutional theme, and it is working closely with AUSA, with work planned on surveys and feedback processes, among other initiatives.

3.4 LEARNING WITH IMPACT

"Students at all levels are equipped to flourish in employment, further study and to lead fulfilling lives."

3.4.1. Students are supported to successfully complete their courses in the ongoing public health context

Students have been supported to complete their learning throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The University put in place all required teaching, learning and assessments so that students have been able to achieve their learning outcomes and successfully complete their studies. A comprehensive approach was taken, led by a Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG) for year 1 and then the University Education Committee, as the University has embedded blended learning over the longer term, to address the ongoing public health context and the impact on education. The University has used those forums to plan, monitor and evaluate the implementation of blended learning. Examples of the comprehensive approach taken include (noting some of this is referenced elsewhere in the document):

- The University has developed Principles for Blended Learning and Timetabling Principles to guide its activities.

- The University's Centre for Academic Development (CAD) provided specific support to each School so that staff were trained and supported to deliver blended learning.
- A communication strategy was developed in partnership with the Students' Union, aiming to ensure that students were clear about their education experience (what to expect and how to engage).
- A focus on accreditation and PSRB requirements with focused work on, for example, medical and teacher training placements.
- Support was given to both staff and students for the delivery of assessment, with all assessment successfully delivered throughout 2020-21.
- The University's teaching facilities have been developed to include extended hybrid delivery (with associated support and training).
- Hardship funds to support students in relation to digital requirements.
- The estate has been opened up in places to offer safe spaces for study.
- There have been extensive developments to the University's student support services such that they were available online to all students with the aim of supporting students to complete their studies.
- Policy changes were made to take account of the external context (e.g. related to absence and monitoring of attendance).

It is notable, as already referenced, that the University's NSS results demonstrated that the partnership approach taken was highly successful; the University placed 5th in the UK out of 124 HEIs. The University will be proactively building on this going forward into 2021-22, with an evaluation of its blended learning approach taking place to facilitate further, informed improvements to education delivery. This will also inform future strategy, via the Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education work stream.

3.4.2. Students are supported to progress to positive next destinations

The University is proactive in ensuring that students are supported to progress to positive destinations on completion of their studies. Specific initiatives, with plans in place for their progress, including the following:

- The Careers and Employability Service supports students to progress to positive next destinations through providing a comprehensive range of services and opportunities summarised in the [Vision and Mission | Careers and Employability Service | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#).
- All students are introduced to the importance of career and skills planning via a prescribed online 0-credit course, enabling students to make informed career and skills development plans during their studies.
- Over 4,000 employer opportunities are advertised annually by the University to students. These range from part-time jobs and volunteering to graduate internships and job opportunities. From this, 190 events were advertised over the last academic year, and 1,975 places booked by students (noting some events do not require bookings so the actual number will be higher). Recent data shows the number of employer opportunities is growing with 4,337 in 2019-20 and 5,687 in 2020-21. At present, from 1 September to 22 Oct 2021 there were already 2,006 employer opportunities advertised.
- As part of Aberdeen 2040, two strategic workstreams will be developing: the Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills; an approach to work placements or equivalent which aims to increase and enhance the opportunities for work placements.

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

The University is engaged in a number of activities to ensure that appropriate support arrangements are in place for all graduates entering the labour market, and particularly those cohorts that will likely experience a challenging labour market on completion of their studies. Current initiatives or arrangements include:

- The Aberdeen Employability Boost Award Programme, which is designed to give graduating cohorts a flexible and accessible programme of careers and employability development events,

and activities which can be completed at their own pace. Activities and live sessions incorporate labour market insights in response to change and challenge.

- A new programme launched in Summer 2021, the ABDNGradChallenge, gives graduating students the opportunity to work in teams in a virtual professional environment to solve employer-led challenges – developing professional skills and preparing for professional settings.
- Graduates have access to the full range of careers and employability services for as long as required, both on graduation, but also when facing challenges at later stages during their career.
- Graduating cohorts are informed about the availability of services and support as they transition from student to graduate via a planned and coordinated communications plan.

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

The University is constantly working to ensure that the curriculum and pedagogical offer remains fit for purpose, and is responsive to changing needs and demands. This is a particularly pertinent issue during current times as we learn from the delivery of our education in the context of Covid-19 and in light of our ambitions as set out in Aberdeen 2040 strategy (e.g., sustainability, interdisciplinary). Measures the University has in place in this area include:

- Changing needs and demands are captured via a suite of Programme Advisory Boards/Employer Liaison Committees and an overarching Institutional Employer Board.
- Each School utilises boards/committees to suit the needs of their programmes. An example of how this has positively enhanced and informed curriculum is the Business School, which has established an advisory board to inform the strategic direction of the School in both education and research.
- The Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills work stream for which there will be wide consultation including with employers and other stakeholders.

3.4.5. There is a good understanding of the needs of business and industry; and Scotland's economic recovery needs

The University maintains a good understanding of the needs of business and industry, and of Scotland's economic recovery needs. This is done via a variety of means, but in particular, via use of data insights where possible, and through representation as a key stakeholder in cross-sector groups. Key activities are summarised below.

- The University uses data insights from [PACE](#) network to gain live insights into the regional and Scottish labour market. During the pandemic, this included furlough data insights.
- Skills Development Scotland produce monthly data insights and data dashboards on the regional and national employability landscape, which the University taps into. It has included information on job postings, sector-based information, trends in job vacancies, unemployment metrics and many other areas of data, showing longitudinal changes in different metrics associated with employability across sectors.
- The University is represented on the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership. This helps to gain a strategic overview of future skill requirements, and business and industry needs. It also helps to inform a regional educational strategy, connecting regional partners with local authorities and education providers.
- Through partnership and membership of the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA), with NESCOL and Robert Gordon University (RGU), Aberdeen is also collaborating regionally to develop strategic partnerships with industry, addressing the challenges of ensuring the skills requirement for Energy Transition. Examples include the partnership with Scottish Power and their industry partners to address their skills requirement for the hydrogen supply chain.
- Other examples of regional partnerships include the community wealth building project funded with the Aberdeen City Council and RGU, providing resources to support for community organisations in developing carbon reduction plans to enhance success in funding growth strategies.

3.5 EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

“Every student has their individual needs recognised in terms of protected characteristics; and everyone is treated fairly and with respect”

The equalities and inclusion agenda is at the heart of University strategy through Aberdeen 2040, and in particular, under its Inclusive theme via which a number of key commitments are made. These include a commitment to eliminate pay-gaps and a commitment to achieve a variety of flagship accreditations linked to Inclusion, including Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter, among others. Related to this – as an example - the University is about to launch an Anti-Racism Strategy, with a commitment to taking bold action to tackle racism where it exists. In short, the University’s ethos and intent is not simply to meet its legislative requirements, but to go beyond them where possible, taking a moral and societal lead in this area. In terms of other key points:

- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are undertaken on all new policies and those which are undergoing major review. The University is also currently reviewing processes linked to EIAs.
- The University is proactively taking steps to generate more data and management information linked to equalities and inclusion specifically. This includes data generated to track progress against different Aberdeen 2040 commitments, such as data from internal staff surveys, but also data linked to ‘People’ which is now routinely reviewed as part of the annual planning process. It has also enhanced its capability to assess data for specific priorities like the Race Equality Charter; after a period of development, the University is now able to manipulate people data to help identify intersectional issues and barriers to equality.

4. OUTCOMES FOR RESEARCH

4.1 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

4.1.1 Institutions produce excellent research outputs

The University's research agenda is shaped in large part by Aberdeen 2040. It identifies five interdisciplinary areas which represent established strengths, and which seek solutions to some of the pressing challenges of our time:

- Energy Transition
- Environment and Biodiversity
- Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing
- Data and Artificial Intelligence
- Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity

The University has taken a number of key steps to underpin the delivery of research excellence. These include:

- Adding to its research capacity by creating 49 new academic positions over the past year to support these research priorities.
- Appointing interim Directors for each interdisciplinary theme to provide academic leadership, to support and facilitate interdisciplinary and collaborative working, and impactful and stakeholder driven research.
- Providing funds over the period to pump prime new initiatives and pilot studies. In all, 48 projects were funded, totalling £358k.
- Recruiting permanent Directors for the interdisciplinary themes, a process currently underway
- Plans are under development to invest in new initiatives and projects, aligned to the Scottish Government's funding and delivery priorities, and supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They will be supported through a new Interdisciplinary Research Hub which will bring together knowledge and best practice in new ways and in creative spaces to support disruptive thinking, encourage innovation and co-creation, support cross-school learning and boost opportunities for engagement and impact. The Hub will provide an immersive environment for early career researchers in particular, and will demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving and the importance of engagement with research users at all stages of the research process.

The University has reported separately on how Covid restrictions have impacted on its ability to undertake research and the measures that the institution put in place to ensure that research activity continued during 2019/20 and 2020/21. Analysis of World of Science shows that the University's productivity in terms of research outputs for 2020 was broadly similar to that of 2019, as was the case across the sector. For 2021, the data suggests a reduction in the number of outputs for the University of Aberdeen of 16% compared to 25% across the Scottish sector. The data also indicates a reduction in quality in the last three years, having experienced a decline in the percentage of Web of Science highly cited papers in 2020 (showing 0.9%). The 2021 data for the first three quarters points to a recovery to 1.4% of the University's outputs.

4.1.2 The research impact reaches beyond academia

For the University of Aberdeen engagement beyond academia starts with easily accessible research outputs. It has taken a number of steps to enhance accessibility of outputs, with some of these listed below, along with some key points to note:

- The University has strengthened the Library team in order to increase advocacy and open access support.
- Engagement within the University's academic community remains high – across all journal articles, compliance for the first 10 months of 2021 was 74%, and higher for externally funded outputs.
- The University is planning to review its open access policy and processes in the light of Plan S and the revised UKRI open access requirements.

- The University is also planning to re-launch Aberdeen University Press as an open access press for journals and longer form outputs authored and edited by the University's researchers. Library colleagues have taken a leading role in national negotiations with high profile academic publishers to secure a deal that will allow the University to comply with the open access requirements.

Engagement with research users and stakeholders is central to the University's impact strategy and its commitments under Aberdeen 2040. Much of the work of the interdisciplinary themes is focused on stakeholder engagement and co-creation of research to achieve lasting impact, particularly around economic and social recovery. The University has created a new senior role, Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement & Regional Recovery, who will take a lead on stakeholder engagement and build on the partnerships working under the research themes. Examples of this are the [National Decommissioning Centre](#) and the [Biohub](#), which are both investments under the [Aberdeen City Region Deal](#), involving the regional economic partners.

4.2 RESEARCH SUSTAINABILITY

“Institutions ensure they protect their world-leading research programmes against the impact of COVID-19.”

4.2.1 The research environment support excellence and impact

The University continues to support the generation of impact from its research, with emphasis on collaboration and co-creation with non-academic partners. The main means of delivery of impact support will be the University's new Interdisciplinary Research Hub which will create a fundamental shift in the approach to co-create interdisciplinary solutions to societal challenges. The University's Interdisciplinary Research Directors – all senior professors and experienced academic leaders - will be supported by the established team comprising the Dean for Industrial Engagement in Research and Knowledge Exchange (KE), the Impact team within Research & Innovation, with additional input from the VP for Regional Engagement & Regional Recovery.

The University recognises that research excellence depends on an open, inclusive, enabling and supportive research culture. Throughout the challenges presented to researchers during Covid and the subsequent restrictions, the University has been working on enhancing the research environment to ensure that all researchers and postgraduate students are able to undertake high quality research and enable excellent impact and are supported in doing so. The University has established a Research Culture Task and Finish Group with wide representation across the research community. The recommendations of the Group are expected early in 2022 and are likely to focus on workload issues, staff development and career progression, with a particular emphasis on how these manifest for researchers with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.

Finally, the University has signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) and is working towards implementation, continuing the dialogue with the academic community on the responsible use of metrics in research assessment and transparent and fair assessment of research quality outside REF preparations. As part of the implementation of Aberdeen 2040 and of DORA the University is exploring ways in which it can further promote and encourage engagement with non-academic partners.

4.2.2 Institutions implement the Research Integrity and Researcher Development concordats

The University recognises that conversations on research culture are becoming more prominent across the sector, with a growing recognition that 'behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms' have an effect on research which cannot be captured by grant income and publication metrics. In practice, this work intersects with several different initiatives supported by different Professional Services teams within the University and requires continuous consultation and engagement with the research community as well as alignment with the University's 2040 strategy.

The University became a signatory to the Researcher Development Concordat in July 2020 and retained the HR Excellence in Research Award in January 2021. Simultaneously, the University Task and Finish Group on Research Culture, referenced above, is due to report in March 2022. These pieces of work have evolved in tandem, ensuring that work on the Concordat will align with that on Research

Integrity, DORA and Open Research, and research-related initiatives in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The University has also established a Task and Finish Group (referenced above) to oversee planning for the revised Concordat Principles and Obligations, and will identify short, medium and long-term actions as well as opportunities for cross-sector collaboration before the end of this academic year (2021-22). The plan will align with the University's 2040 strategy and incorporate final recommendations from the University's Research Culture Group.

A gap analysis conducted by the University's Researcher Development, HR, and the Postdoctoral Research Committee has already identified the following areas:

- A review of research staff roles and contracts across disciplines.
- Transformation of career development policy and practice including protected professional development time, review of recognition and promotion, career development reviews supported by evidence, support for careers outside academia.
- Support for Principal Investigators and academic line managers in implementing the Principles.
- Research staff are fully involved in shaping this planning, through a series of focus groups, participation on the Steering Group, and articulation with the Postdoctoral Research Committee.

The University will, over the course of the coming academic year, work to address the issues identified in this gap analysis.

4.2.3 Support for PhD students, who are the pipeline of talent for future research and who have adversely affected by the instability created by the pandemic

The University's Postgraduate Research School has taken a number of steps and implemented policies designed to support PhD students and to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on research degrees. In July 2020 a policy was launched which was designed to ensure that students could:

- Complete their research to an appropriate standard including access to facilities and resources and with enough time to do so
- Submit their thesis electronically and with exceptional extension requests
- Have their thesis examined in a viva voce by videoconference
- Have their degree awarded following required extensions including to correction timeframes
- Be supported with welfare and wellbeing issues as a priority
- Continue to be supported through ongoing data gathering, in particular to monitor the longer-term and disproportionate or wider impacts on PGRs. e.g. caring responsibilities, economic hardship, loneliness/isolation, physical/mental health issues. If not accounted for, disparities in productivity may entrench gender and ethnic inequality.

Support, through funded extensions has been provided for students for whom the impact of Covid-19 has been insurmountable. This continues with applications being accepted up to April 2022 for students with end dates on or before 1 July-30 September 2022. To date 236 requests for the SFC funded call were received, and 131 awards made for a total of 408 months of funded extensions.

A Postgraduate Research Strategy has been approved for 2021-22. It includes commitments to grow the PGR population and to enhance the experience of students studying for doctoral degrees. It also outlines career paths for PGR students, beyond academia. This has been done working in partnership with the University's Careers Service, to deliver resources tailored to the population, with a focus on enterprise, entrepreneurship and leadership.

The University is going to establish an internship programme for Postgraduate Research Students to facilitate external collaboration and experience of interdisciplinary research. These internships will align with interdisciplinary research centres established to help support delivery of Aberdeen 2040.

The University offers a comprehensive training programme for Postgraduate Research students to enhance core and transferrable skills for research progress and across a range of different employment sectors. This training package is in place for all Postgraduate Research students regardless of stage or mode of study.

The University has robust support for research supervisors in place and includes (in addition to mandatory supervisor training) masterclasses to support supervisors to facilitate career development and employability discussions with doctoral students.

5. OUTCOMES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SOCIAL RENEWAL

5.1. RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

“Institutions are responsive to employer and industry needs and to current and future skills requirements”

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

The University builds and uses labour market intelligence at multiple levels, utilising nationally available data insights via Microsoft SDS, alongside insights captured via sources like the Employer Board. These data insights are utilised to inform degree programme development, to identify careers and employability needs across the Institution and for specific programmes.

In terms of programme development, the University has and will continue to use market intelligence to inform degree programme structures and modes of delivery; in particular two-year master's programmes, where the potential interest in flexible placement and course options across two-year programmes, in countries like India and in North America, informed development of that offer.

Beyond that, students and graduates are also provided with Labour Market Information (LMI) insights through a range of co-curricular programmes, such as mini-careers courses, and live sessions covering regionally important sectors as part of the Employability Boost Award. This is designed to enhance their learning outcomes and their employability prospects on completion of their studies

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

The University plays an important role in upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce, with a broad range of initiatives in place in this area. A selection of these is summarised below.

- The University shares upskilling and reskilling opportunities via a range of regional networks such as the Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE).
- A total of 725 funded places were allocated via the SFC Upskilling Fund and the National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) in AY 2020/21, equating to £770,295 in funding. [These case studies](#) showcase an SME and individuals who have benefitted from the funding.
- The University is on track to allocate the forecasted £1,118,000 it is expected to receive from the SFC Upskilling, NTT and North East Economic Recovery and Skills funds, having already allocated 625 funded places to upskillers and reskillers on short online courses commencing in September 2022, equating to £590,459 in funding.
- In 2021-22, the University will continue to increase its provision on the [FutureLearn platform](#), introducing a suite of short online courses on Diet and Lifestyle Health, a short course (MOOC) on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) for clinicians, teachers, social workers, and a short course (MOOC) on Mindfulness.
- The number of online short courses available to upskillers and reskillers will continue to grow in 2021-22. There are currently over 100 short courses available through the University's [On-demand Learning site](#). In addition, the University will continue to offer more 'bite sized' offerings, 10, 5 or even no credit (CPD) courses.
- A '[short course route to programme study](#)' has also been introduced. This route allows students without typical academic entry requirements to take two short courses to prove their capability of attaining at Master's level. On successful completion of 30 credits, students can then apply to transfer to a Master's programme.
- The University also develops bespoke professional development courses in response to industry partners and the skills requirement; for example, short courses in Decommissioning.

5.1.3. People have the necessary meta skills and attributes to succeed

The University ensures that staff and students have the necessary meta skills and attributes to be successful via a number of means, including:

- The University will be reviewing and creating a new graduate attributes and skills framework that aligns with institutional priorities laid out in [Aberdeen 2040](#). This will draw on existing frameworks from external organisation such as [Advance HE](#), [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), and Skills Development Scotland [Skills 4.0](#). The overall aim of this work is to create an agile set of attributes or skills that can align with any programme so that students can build and reflect upon these competencies as they complete their studies and take part in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, allowing them to build evidence for their competencies in an ever-changing external environment.
- Meta skills are incorporated into the compulsory zero-credit professional development course which is given to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, with training and self-reflection tools linked to equality and diversity; health, safety and wellbeing; cyber security and digital skills; and how to make the most of careers and employability provision. Students completing this course have it recorded on their enhanced transcript, meaning it is formally recognised.
- The University runs a project funded by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) on resilience, via the current Enhancement Theme “Resilient Learning Communities”. This is aimed at understanding what resilience means for students and employers. The outputs from this project will inform work on the graduate attributes and skills framework.
- Similarly, the University runs a project funded by JISC to develop future ready sociology graduates, with recommendations from this study currently being embedded in first and second year undergraduate curricula: [Developing future ready sociology graduates | Luminate \(prospects.ac.uk\)](#).

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

The University also helps find pathways for people without work to study and move into employment. In addition to some of the information already given above, this includes:

- The University partners with five Scottish colleges (Dundee & Angus College, Fife College, Forth Valley College, New College Lanarkshire and North East Scotland College) to provide over 160 different articulation routes into degree programmes across many of the University’s subject areas and also at multiple levels of entry, from Level 1 to 3. Students studying on an articulation pathway with one of the partner colleges can apply to be an associate student, allowing them to have access to University services such as the library, computers, and other campus facilities, thereby helping smooth the transition from college to university life. Some of our degree programmes (e.g. those in Engineering) also offer summer schools to help bridge the gap between college and university studies if required.
- Once students are registered with the University in any capacity, whether a short course or a full-time degree programme, they will have access to all student support services such as Students4Students peer mentoring scheme, careers advice, employability support (e.g., CV writing, creating an online profile through LinkedIn, interview practice), skills development opportunities and learning support.
- The University Careers and Employability Service currently offers twenty Mini Careers Courses covering a diverse range of support topics such as success in interviews, psychometric testing, effective CV and cover letter writing, applying for Masters and PhD’s, developing resilience, and professionalism, among others.

5.2. CONFIDENT AND HIGHLY CAPABLE - WORK-READY - GRADUATES

“Work-ready graduates are confident and ready to secure success in their career, meeting employer needs and making a positive contribution to our economy and society: Students are equipped to take up employment and succeed when the job market opens up.”

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

The University seeks to maintain a pipeline of technically skilled people where gaps are identified in key industries, via a variety of means. As already outlined above under section 2.4.5, the University uses data insights from PACE and via Skills Development Scotland to gain understanding into labour market trends and requirements, both locally and nationally. It is also a key stakeholder in partnerships like

NESA (also referred to above) and in the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership. Through utilising market insights and through collaboration with other stakeholders, the University is well placed to respond to different sector needs by shaping and reshaping its education offer to ensure it delivers technically skilled graduates needed for industry.

It is also worth noting that the University works closely with the SFC, in line with priorities outlined by the Scottish Government, to produce graduates in key areas linked to Medicine and Dentistry; for example, extensive work has taken place in recent years, and it continues, to help meet shortages in General Practitioners. The University also responds to sector needs in its teacher training offers, working to ensure that primary and secondary education teacher shortages are mitigated where possible. Collectively, the University plays a key role across each of these areas, regionally and nationally, in addressing potential skills gaps across different sectors.

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

The University's programmes and its curriculum more broadly is designed to equip graduates with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities to be successful when they enter the workforce. As part of this, the University has identified 19 'Graduate Attributes' that are grouped under four themes: Academic Excellence, Critical Thinking and Effective Communication, Learning and Personal Development, and Active Citizenship. These attributes are used in course and programme design, and in some cases, they are used directly in the curriculum on courses for the delivery of learning materials and for assessments. One example of this is in a Global Health MSc course where the graduate attributes are used as a tool to assess students who take part in work-based learning projects with external organisations.

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

The University ensures that effective support mechanisms are in place to enable students to understand their career options, to self-assess and to plan accordingly via a range of services and initiatives. This is highlighted via the following:

- All Level 1 UG students, all PGT students, and all articulating students who are in their first year at the University are prescribed a professional development course. It is delivered entirely online with 5-6 hours of online materials to complete. Topics covered include orientation at the University, equality and diversity, health, safety and cyber security, and how to make the most of your time at the University in relation to careers and employability. When students successfully complete the course, it is recorded on the student's Enhanced Transcript.
- Each academic School has a dedicated Careers Advisor who offers specialist careers support and acts as the go-to individual for students and teaching staff with enquiries related to employability and careers. These key members of staff also run classes, workshops and other activities throughout the academic year. In many Schools these Careers Advisors also sit on Programme Advisory Boards and link external companies and organisations with strategic decisions on curricula and course developments.
- Engagement data with the Careers and Employability Service provides a structured breakdown of engagement of different academic disciplines and a University-wide understanding of the impact the service has among the student population.
 - 3,904 booked appointments/interactions
 - 3,512 curricular and co-curricular activities completed
 - 733 students took part in co-curricular activities led by the Service
 - 87% of 1st years completed the PD1002 course
 - 256 students passed credit-bearing employability-related courses
 - 54 students supported by the Service in internship opportunities
 - 1,175 places booked on short workshops
 - 440 hours of face to face (either in-person or virtual) discipline-focused sessions and workshops

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

Students at Aberdeen are regularly given opportunities to engage in work-informed or work-based learning, with a concerted focus in recent years to increase the number of opportunities available to students across all disciplines. This will continue over the coming years. Below are examples of initiatives in place or planned, in this area.

- The University Careers and Employability Service runs two new initiatives linked to provision of internships and volunteering opportunities for students with external organisations. The ABDNConnect Internships provide a framework for paid internship opportunities for students and graduates.
- The programme is supported by completion of a pathway of skills, reflection, and development activities to maximise the value of the experience. For current students, successful completion of the programme is recognised on the Enhanced Transcript.
- The second initiative is the ABDNCommunity Volunteering Programme which provides students with a set of skills, reflection, and development activities to complete whilst undertaking an approved volunteering opportunity. Successful completion of the programme will be recognised on the Enhanced Transcript and it is open to undergraduate or postgraduate students.
- The University has multiple disciplines that run work-informed and work-based learning. For example, Social Sciences run a course ([ED3536](#)) that provides the opportunity for students to work in small groups to develop solutions for projects submitted by industry, businesses and the public sector. Medical Sciences run year-long industrial placements ([BT5007](#)), while Psychology offer opportunities for students to gain work experience and professional skills in their fourth year of undergraduate study ([PS4042](#)) that allow students to reflect on their employability and professional development through a part-time job, placement, personal development project or volunteering activity.
- The University also runs [Santander internships](#) with SME's for 10-12 weeks at a time, linking businesses with our students and providing those students with real world experience of working within a small or medium-sized business

5.3 KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION

5.3.1 Colleges and HEIs are focusing and prioritising their knowledge exchange and innovation activity on Scotland's economic and social recovery

The University's knowledge exchange and innovation activities are closely aligned to the priorities outlined in the Aberdeen 2040 strategy. Further information on knowledge exchange at the University is available via the University Innovation Fund, attached as Appendix 2.

5.4 COLLABORATION

"There is active collaboration with other SFC funded institutions and across the education and skills system."

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

International collaboration and partnerships are an important component of Aberdeen 2040, recognising that the University's research effort benefits from multiple national and international collaborations. The following are points or activities to note in this area:

- Since 2019, the percentage of research outputs that include external partners in the UK or abroad has grown from 76.5% to 82.6% (by conclusion of the third quarter in 2021) (source: Web of Science).
- The newly established interdisciplinary themes encourage and support collaboration within and outwith the institution, and with academic and non-academic partners alike.

- The roles and responsibilities of the Research Deans reflect institutional priorities, with a new position of Dean for Academic Partnership and Research Governance also created.
- NESAs are a collaborative initiative between the University, RGU, NESCoL, supported by regional partners, Skills Development Scotland and ETZ Ltd. Acting as a collaborative umbrella organisation, NESAs will provide a “one stop shop” for industry to access a wide range of energy courses, skills development and R&D capabilities in the partners.
- In planning for COP26, the University brought together regional partners, including local councils, economic development agencies, educational institutions, public engagement bodies and net zero organisations, encouraging sharing and planning of events, promoting the regions’ contributions. The University secured a number of observer passes, allocated between students and staff. A post-COP26 policy evaluation is being planned as part of the regions’ developing response to achieving net zero.

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

The University is actively seeking collaboration on estates assets that can and will improve local coherence and sustainability of provision, while reducing carbon emissions in line with its Aberdeen 2040 vision, which includes a series of commitments under sustainability. This also ties in with priority areas of policy outlined by the Scottish Government. Examples of this are given below.

- The University is working in looking to work in collaboration with Aberdeen Heat and Power (a not-for-profit organisation involved in Aberdeen’s district heating network) on a solution for the Hillhead campus heat network (part funded by SFC Financial Transactions); discussions are exploring whether a hydrogen demonstrator project may form part of the solution. This links directly to [Commitment 19](#) made by the University as part of Aberdeen 2040; to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040.
- The University is in ongoing discussions (begun in 20/21) with Storegga / Pale Blue Dot about the longer-term supply of hydrogen as part of a regional approach to decarbonising local heat networks, which also links to Commitment 19. Academic links are also being pursued through the Centre for Energy Transition which links to [Commitment 18](#); to excel in research that addresses the climate emergency, enables energy transition and the preservation of biodiversity.
- The University will also work with Robert Gordon University over the coming year to tender for waste and recycling services via the APUC framework. By working together on the tender, more economically advantageous bids have already been secured, as well as rationalising waste transport miles and thereby reducing emissions. This links to [Commitments 16](#) and 19, noting the former is to encourage our community to work and live more sustainability.
- The University is also part of the GetAbout Partnership; a group which comprises the Regional Transport Partnership, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, Robert Gordon University, North East Scotland College and various other partner organisations with an interest in improving sustainable and active travel. The partnership works to promote active travel to people in the Northeast of Scotland and to improve facilities for them. This also links to Commitment 16.

5.5. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

“Institutions take urgent action to help reduce or halt climate change, avoid irreversible damage, and support environmental sustainability measures.”

5.5.1. Universities demonstrate innovative approaches in their response to the climate emergency, and how they are engaging with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The University and its wider community of staff and students will continue to take action in 2021-22 to help reduce or halt climate change, avoid irreversible damage to the environment, and support environmental sustainability measures. This will be achieved in a number of ways, a selection of which are outlined below:

- The University's Aberdeen 2040 strategy places the sustainability agenda at the heart of the University's institutional mission. Alongside a headline commitment to becoming a Net-Zero University before 2040, Aberdeen 2040 also acknowledges the importance of engaging, educating and enthusing staff and student communities to be leaders in protecting the environment. It also highlights the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a key mechanism against which to articulate the University's academic and operational impacts in meeting societal challenges.
- The University has a newly named Sustainable Development Committee to oversee the sustainability agenda; chaired by the Senior Vice-Principal, it reports through the University's Senior Management Team to the University's Policy & Resources Committee. This group is supported by a working group that focuses on ways in which engagement with SDGs can be enhanced across the University.
- In the coming year the University will also review its operational support for sustainability, with the establishment of a dedicated unit to take forward the commitments in Aberdeen 2040 and to provide impetus for wider staff and student engagement, and the behavioral changes that will be required to progress commitments made.
- In 2021-22 the University has allocated initial resources to Net-Zero Carbon works, with further contributions from revenue budgets available to support energy initiatives and associated feasibility. The University will continue to review the level of financial support required to deliver its Net-Zero commitments and will explore other funding opportunities. A more comprehensive long-term approach to drive progress towards Net Zero will also be developed, with the immediate priority remaining the reduction of emissions associated with energy use.
- Alongside continued efforts to reduce emissions through improvements in how the University manages energy use, improves efficiency, and reduces demand, the University will press ahead with strategic discussions with regional partners about issues such as the decarbonisation of heat and collaborative approaches to heat networks.
- The University continues to report comprehensively on its emissions and climate change performance through the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties framework (PBCCD). The University welcome's the emergence of mechanisms to enhance and harmonise the approach of public bodies to reporting, in particular through the recognition of the shared challenge in managing Scope 3 emissions.
- In October 2021 the University committed to fully divesting from fossil fuels by 2025 as part of its wider commitment to sustainability. In taking this decision, the University also committed to using its unique position and partnerships with the energy sector to work towards the energy transition that is necessary if the worst impacts of the climate emergency are to be avoided.
- Academically, the University's Centre for Energy Transition was formally launched in May 2021, with the identification of key research areas and academic champions across a range of related disciplines. The Centre aims to facilitate a genuine interdisciplinary effort across research and collaborations. This includes coordinating collaborative funding bids; offering courses on the fundamentals of energy transition; working with partners on skills development; and collaborating with international colleagues, for example through the development of interdisciplinary research as part of the Aberdeen Curtin Alliance.
- In 2021, the University's impact against the SDGs was assessed for the third time via the Times Higher Education's 'Impact' Rankings. A global position of 57th out of 1,115 institutions, saw notable performances in SDG 17 "Partnership for the Goals" and SDG 11 "Sustainable Cities" where the University placed 27th globally for both. The University ranked 12th in the UK overall and was in the UK top 10 for 11 of the 17 SDGs, and top in Scotland in six. An indicator of the breadth and depth of the University's impact is that we were ranked in the top 20 in the UK across all 17 SDGs.

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	Confirmed Results							Target Result
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
A Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	1,523	1,401	1,643	1,307	1,474	1,551	1,571	1,993
B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	0	139	197	211	212	185	137	253
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	0	15	25	37	51	71	64	119
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		10.8%	12.7%	17.5%	24.1%	38.4%	46.7%	47%
C COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	77	57	80	72	60	124	116	151
COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	5.3%	4.3%	5.1%	6.0%	4.4%	8.6%	7.9%	8.2%
D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	3	10	22	11	26	20	21	19
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	0.2%	0.7%	1.3%	0.8%	1.8%	1.3%	1.3%	1.0%
E Total number of full-time first year SDUE	1,055	1,422	1,317	1,549	1,190	1,410	1,460	1460
Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	981	1,332	1,249	1,473	1,138	1,326	1,423	1416
Proportion of full-time first year SDUE retained	93.0%	93.7%	94.8%	95.1%	95.6%	94.0%	97.5%	97.0%
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	0	1	0	1	1.91	2.79	7.51	
G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey				687	726			
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				656	680			
The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				95.5%	93.7%			
G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment				506	536			
The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				355	376			
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				70.2%	70.1%			
H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers	1411	1588	1110	1309	1329	1524	1234	

Please note that 2018-19 and 2019-20 figures for measures G1 and G2, 2019-20 figures for measures F and H and all 2020-21 figures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years. Please note that University has included its projected figures (correct as of December 2021) for 2021-22 in column J.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITIES INNOVATION FUND (UIF) PLAN 2021/22

The University of Aberdeen's knowledge exchange and innovation activities are closely aligned to the following objectives from the University's 2040 strategy:

- Listen to and work with external stakeholders regionally and globally to build partnerships that deliver imaginative solutions to societal and industrial challenges.
- Develop a research portfolio that promotes national and international collaboration with stakeholders, including companies, organisations and governments.
- Excel in research that addresses the climate emergency, enables energy transition and the preservation of biodiversity.

The University of Aberdeen will use its Outcome Grant to deliver the following programme of activities to meet the seven agreed UIF Outcomes. The University will continue to work collaboratively with other HEIs, with regional and national partners and with industry to deliver these objectives. The University confirms its ability to utilise and match the Platform Grant.

The University confirms that it will work towards the following objectives and has highlighted the most relevant activities in the following sections related to individual Outcomes.

- Be recovery focussed and evidenced by learning from AY 2020-21 and consultation/collaboration with stakeholders at local and/or national level such as local authorities and Scottish Enterprise.
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to helping Scotland achieve its net-zero targets/green recovery ambitions such as through CPD, spin-out and start-up support. Pooling effort and resources to leverage funding into Scotland such as from UKRI or as activity related to Scotland's Inward Investment Plan is encouraged.

As an indication of the University's general commitment to these objectives, the University of Aberdeen has recently appointed a Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement and Regional Recovery, responsible for leading the development and implementation of a strategy for the University to make a comprehensive and effective contribution to the economic, social and cultural activity of the region.

Commitment to Collaboration across the Sector via Universities Scotland RCDG

Through Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG) each institution agreed to contribute to the UIF Outcomes. The University of Aberdeen will continue to work with the UIF Collaboration Manager and will work collaboratively with other institutions.

The University of Aberdeen will continue to be an active participant in all of the collaborative clusters and will contribute to workshops and other collaborative activities.

Outcome 1 - Demand Stimulation: "Working with enterprise agencies, SG, Business networks, Interface and others... help increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for university services".

As one of the Northeast of Scotland's key anchor institutions, the University of Aberdeen is committed to working with regional, national, and international stakeholders to build partnerships that deliver imaginative solutions to societal, economic and industrial challenges in Scotland and internationally.

A key regional stakeholder is Opportunity North East (ONE) which leads the Aberdeen City Region Deal (ACRD) innovation themes, and the University of Aberdeen is embedded in the activities of the Net-Zero, Life Sciences, Food and Drink and Digital and Entrepreneurship themes, all of which are aimed at addressing the needs of industry.

The University's focus in 2021/22 will be on activities related to these innovation themes, which map well on to a number of the Interdisciplinary Challenges identified as a feature of the University's Aberdeen 2040 strategy. The University's Interdisciplinary Challenges are:

- Energy Transition
- Environment and Biodiversity
- Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing

- Data and Artificial Intelligence
- Social inclusion and cultural diversity

A key sector in the economy of North-East Scotland is the energy sector and the University will continue to work with other regional partners to support this sector in meeting the challenges that have arisen as a consequence of the pandemic and in its adoption of energy transition technologies. In particular, the University's Centre for Energy Transition provides a 'front door' for industry to access the University's research expertise in this area.

The University is engaged with a number of key regional partners:

- The University engages with the ACRD's Net Zero Technology Centre (NZTC) to provide research expertise to meet industry's requirements
- The University will engage fully with companies in the Energy Transition Zone (ETZ) and will participate in opportunities for supporting start-up businesses in energy transition technologies.
- The National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) to be based in the ETZ is the first of the formal structures in place with the partnership of Skills Development Scotland, RGU, NESCol and the University of Aberdeen working together to address industry's skills needs for energy transition
- The National Decommissioning Centre (NDC) is a partnership between the University, the NZTC and industry, and provides a further route for the development of collaborative R&D, training of skilled individuals through its PhD and master level programmes and through an industry accredited CPD programme. The recently launched immersive simulation suite in NDC will transform approaches to offshore decommissioning and renewable energy infrastructure projects in the North Sea.

Life sciences is an important research focus for the University of Aberdeen and engagement in this sector will include working with ONE on the BioHub facility for life sciences companies. The BioHub is currently under construction on the joint University/NHS Foresterhill Health Campus. We envisage that the BioHub will host spin out and start-up companies in life sciences and health data sciences from the University, and that its tenant companies will develop R&D collaborations with the University. It is also likely that BioHub companies will make use of specialist research facilities located in the University.

The University has recently appointed a Technology Transfer Executive who will provide support to life sciences company creation from University of Aberdeen staff and students.

Research in health and nutrition from the University's Rowett Institute is an equally important research strength for the University and the new SeedPod under development by ONE will provide opportunities for the food and drink industry in Scotland to work with researchers from the Rowett Institute to develop innovative products and services.

The University will continue to work with industry through other routes such as through our Santander Universities Network supported SME Internship Programme, through the Innovation Centres and Interface and through KTP projects supported by the North of Scotland KTP Centre.

Outcome 2 - Simplification / Commercialisation: "In partnership with enterprise agencies and Interface...demonstrably simplified business access to the knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities".

The University of Aberdeen is one of the universities participating in the UIF Challenge Fund network, organised by the UIF Collaboration Manager which looks for opportunities for Scottish universities and industry to work collaboratively.

The University's focus under this Outcome is to provide opportunities for partnership working with industry sectors, in particular with the ACRD partners, with an emphasis on developing more strategic relationships with shared goals and demonstrating to businesses the long-term benefits of partnership. The University will continue to provide a programme of training for researchers focused on the collaborative competencies to enhance engagement with businesses and impact from research.

The University of Aberdeen continues to support the simplification of processes and promoting efficient commercialisation, as demonstrated by our commitment to using standard templates wherever possible and the University's track record in commercialisation. The University of Aberdeen is a member of the Universities Scotland RCDG Contracts Sub-Group which has already provided a range of commonly used contracts supporting simplification and harmonisation of the process for businesses to access knowledge within all universities. The University of Aberdeen will continue to promote good practice within our partnership with the ACRD and other multi-party collaborations.

Outcome 3 - Simplification/ Greater Innovation: “In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface... at a national level made use of their sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy (including beyond STEM)”.

The University of Aberdeen’s focus on our Interdisciplinary Challenges has provided opportunities for showcasing innovation to industry and for engagement with industry. This process began with the launch of the Centre for Energy Transition in 2020 and will continue in AY2021/22.

The University of Aberdeen has evidenced our commitment to engaging and collaborating with other universities and the enterprise agencies through our partnership approach in ACRD, but also the University’s ongoing commitment to the long-standing partnership of the North of Scotland KTP centre.

The University will continue its staff development activities, providing in-house training to staff and extending to externally sourced training and conferences as required. The University continues to engage in the Researcher Skills theme of the UIF collaborative activities to examine best practice in training researchers for engagement with industry and other stakeholders and will adopt training that complements and enhances our current activities.

Outcome 4 - Entrepreneurialism: “(The) sector will have made significant positive change in the way entrepreneurial opportunities are promoted and delivered to students, HEI staff and businesses”.

The University of Aberdeen has recently (September 2021) re-opened its ABVenture Zone incubator to student and recent graduate entrepreneurs due to demand for collaborative space for start-up teams.

The University will run our Lightbulb Business Ideas competition for the sixth successive year in February 2022. The 2021 Lightbulb competition took place via online delivery, in 2022 the University’s intention will be to use a blended approach, if possible, with online training and in person pitching events. Focussed on developing early-stage ideas and supported by student entrepreneurs, Lightbulb promotes entrepreneurial thinking and provides a pipeline of potential start up opportunities.

The University will work with Elevator and accelerator programmes offered by ONE and ETZ to channel entrepreneurial staff and students into relevant accelerator programmes.

The University of Aberdeen will remain an active participant in the Converge competitions and the University will host one of the additional Enterprise Executives joining the Converge team during calendar year 2022. The University will use its Lightbulb competition and other routes to raise awareness, encourage entrepreneurship and provide support for promising early-stage start-ups with the aim of funnelling these into other opportunities.

Engagement with Elevator’s summer accelerator programme is now an established part of the University’s support for start-ups and we will continue to support student entrepreneurs entering into this programme, providing bursaries for participants to support inclusive growth. This accelerator has proved particularly popular during AY2019/20 and AY20/21 and the University anticipates similar numbers of participants in 21/22. In 2021/22, the University’s AB Ventures fund will again provide small start-up grants (up to £2000) to student entrepreneurs to support business activities such as IP protection, web site development, purchase of equipment or consumables, matched in kind or in cash from the student businesses.

The University will continue to participate in the UIF Entrepreneurship collaborative cluster to ensure that programmes supporting entrepreneurship create a cohesive system for support to entrepreneurs.

The University of Aberdeen will participate in Scottish Enterprise’s High Growth Spin out Programme when appropriate spin out opportunities arise.

Outcome 5 - International: “in partnership with SDI, Connected Scotland others...pooled knowledge and networks and shared good practice to promote and engaged Scotland internationally”.

The University will continue to work with SDI, Invest Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council (amongst other local and national organisations) to promote Scotland, in particular the North East of Scotland, for inward investment opportunities. The University’s involvement in ONE’s investment through the ACRD into the life sciences and food and drink sectors (through BioHub and SeedPod respectively) will also promote inward investment through access to our research expertise.

The University recently announced that its partnership with South China Normal University has resulted in the creation of a joint institute specialising in data science and artificial intelligence. The links between

the universities are long-established, with a number of existing joint undergraduate programmes in Real Estate, Finance and Computing Science, enabling students from SCNU to study at Aberdeen, while staff from the University have also taught at SCNU.

The University will use its existing networks to enhance collaborative opportunities for its researchers including the European Network, AURORA, the University's Confucius Centre, the global Alliance with Curtin University and the multiple partnerships created through GCRF funding. The University will use the AURORA Network to provide a platform for enhanced collaboration and to seek new opportunities for research and knowledge exchange across Europe, particularly around sustainability, social inclusion and promoting mobility.

The University is undertaking a range of collaborative approaches in international projects. Notably, the University is partnering with the Al Faleh Group for Education and Academic Services to open a £100M campus in Qatar, expanding the range of programmes offered by the University in Qatar to include STEM subjects, medical sciences, law, and politics and international relations. The University has committed to using the Scotland is Now branding where appropriate and contributing to the Connected Scotland project including participation in Going Global events to showcase Scotland's research strengths.

Outcome 6 - Inclusive Growth and Social Impact: building on current and good practice, Scottish HEIs will have scaled up their support of the Scottish Government's ambitions for inclusive growth

Public engagement has remained a priority for the University during AY2020/21 and will continue to be a priority in 21/22. The University will continue the Café Connect public engagement podcast series which was started immediately after lockdown in April 2021. Café Connect provides short and informal conversations with researchers and regularly reaches an international audience.

The University of Aberdeen led a successful application for funding to deliver EXPLORATHON (*a European Researchers' Night, Scotland*) project in September 2021 and with the University's partners at the universities of Glasgow, Strathclyde, St Andrews and Heriot-Watt delivered 82 online or in-person events, with a total audience of over 50,000. The University of Aberdeen has led the submission of an application for delivery of EXPLORATHON in 2022 and 2023.

Further public engagement planned includes the Festival of Social Science (November 2021) which features events linked to COP26 and British Science Week in March 2022.

Using Wellcome Trust's Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF), the University continues to support public engagement in biomedical science and this funding has allowed the University to recruit a diverse group to provide Patient and Public Involvement support to our researchers for the design of research projects.

The project work with SHMU (Station House Media Unit) in Aberdeen funded by Curiosity funding (BBC Children in Need/Wellcome Trust) was delayed due to the pandemic but is now underway, allowing young people from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds to investigate topics of interest with University scientists and co-create science-based radio shows, videos and podcasts and carry out citizen science projects on themes relevant to their communities.

The University of Aberdeen has supported Doors Open day in 2020 and September 2021 via virtual tours.

The University will continue to deliver training programmes for researchers as part of these initiatives and also from our *Grants Academy* to support engagement with a broad range of stakeholders including the public and industry.

Outcome 7 - Equality and Diversity: building on current and good practice, HEIs will have ensured positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of the UIF

The University will continue to ensure positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of UIF.



Outcome Agreement between the University of Aberdeen and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2021-22

On behalf of the University of Aberdeen:

Signed:

Print name: PROFESSOR GEORGE BOYNE

Position: Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 27 MAY 2022

Signed:

Print name: JULIE ASHWORTH

Position: Chair

Date: 27.05.2022

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:

Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 28 July 2022