

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING
INTERIM OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2020/21

This interim Outcome Agreement provides an overview of the University of Stirling's intended contributions, impact and outcomes for the academic year 2020/21, against the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which will without question act as a multi-year disruptor.

COVID-19 comes at a time when the UK higher education sector had already absorbed and was continuing to respond to a range of well-rehearsed, complex and intertwined challenges presented by the external environment. The pandemic brings new and unprecedented challenges and has impacted the sector in many ways - with the most substantial impact being a financial one. In April 2020, the SFC estimated that Scottish universities may face a collective loss of circa £72million in the 2019-20 academic year, and a potential loss of between £384m-£651m in 2020-21 predicated upon scenarios assuming variable and significant reductions in the international student population. The sector position has since evolved, as institutions deploy actions and reprioritise activities to mitigate against the immediate financial pressures.

The University of Stirling made significant progress across a range of themes in support of emerging from the immediate 'pandemic' period in financially as strong a position as possible, including, student recruitment; learning, teaching and the student experience; partnership working and delivery of world-class and impactful research. A challenge specific to Stirling's context is the proportion of institutional income (23% vs a sector average of 16%) typically attributed to commercial streams - including accommodation, catering, conferencing, sport and leisure facilities – all of which have been hit severely by the restrictions imposed, resulting in a number of controlled actions to reduce expenditure in order to mitigate the financial impact. Significantly, elements of these commercial strands are likely to be among the last sectors of the economy to recover when restrictions are eased.

The University maintains a register of strategic risk that is reviewed on a regular basis by Audit Committee on behalf of University Court. This helps the University to measure and assess the most significant threats and opportunities that could impact the delivery of the Strategic Plan. A specific COVID-19 strategic risk register, which will be integrated into the Institutional Risk Register over time, was developed as part of the University's resilience strategy to a planned response and recovery from the significant and prolonged disruption to business as usual operations.

Moving forward through 2020/21, the ability to show resolve and resilience, and build on the strengths and emerging opportunities will be crucial in securing future success and growth. Notwithstanding the immediate financial challenge created by COVID, the University is confident that steps taken earlier in the life of the Strategic Plan 2016-2021, such as investment in internationalisation and major capital projects, as well as involvement in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, will provide a solid foundation upon which to not only recover from the pandemic, but to develop strongly in the years that follow.

Having addressed the immediate risks and initiated business continuity actions in response to the crisis in the academic year 2019/20, the focus shifted towards planning for emerging from this crisis in financially as strong a position as possible, in a manner that ensures continued delivery of world-class research, a

quality student experience and where the University can maximise its position as a regional and global change agent.

Key Achievements

Despite the unparalleled and complex challenges posed by COVID-19, the University is proud of its achievements in 2019/20 and the progress made towards 2020/21 targets at this stage in the academic year. Achievements align with the University's Strategic Plan 2016-2021 and its overarching ambitions: to be one of the top 25 universities in the UK, to increase income by £50m, to enhance the research profile by 100 percent and to ensure internationalisation is at the heart of everything we do.

1. In November 2019, the University of Stirling's world-leading Institute of Aquaculture (IoA) was **awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize**. [This award recognises pioneering work](#) in the world's fastest-growing food production sector in a bid to tackle global hunger. This recognition is a timely announcement as the IoA marks its 40th anniversary with major redevelopment of its facilities planned under the auspices of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal.
2. The University is proud to be a **central partner of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal**, which presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to position the city and surrounding area as an economic and cultural powerhouse. The aim of the Deal is to establish the region as a world-class, dynamic and enterprising destination, complementing the University's own ambitions to be recognised globally as an institution that can make a positive difference to people, communities and partners. Through the City Deal, new University research centres will be developed – the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub and Scotland's International Environment Centre. Engagement with the City Deal and associated activities will significantly enhance the University's research profile and build on our reputation of carrying out world-class research.
3. Stirling's excellence in sport received further recognition when it was named **The Times and Sunday Times UK Sports University of the Year 2020**. This prominent accolade recognises the exceptional sporting and educational environment that the University creates for its staff, students and community. A **£20m redevelopment of the University's sports facilities launched in November 2020¹** and provides an even better environment in which to train, play and stay healthy.
4. The University of Stirling is a place where ability not background is valued. In 2019/20, the University recruited 31.5% of the Scottish domiciled undergraduate intake from MD40 postcodes and 13.7% from MD20 areas. To date, in 2020/21, 32.3% of the intake was recruited from the most deprived 40% of postcodes and 14% were recruited from the 20% most deprived areas. Further, the full-time intake accounts for 13.5% of entrants from MD20 regions. This significantly exceeds the Commission on Widening Access target for 2021 (CoWA target of MD20 entrants representing 10% of full-time entrants at individual institutions) and reflects the institutional commitment to fair access and opportunity.
5. Performance in the **National Student Survey improved significantly in 2020**, with Overall Satisfaction increasing from 82.9% to 86.8%. **The University's entry tariff score also improved**

¹ COVID-19 restrictions have since dictated temporary closure at the time of writing

year-on-year to 172 points, placing Stirling in the UK's top quartile for this measure for the third successive year and demonstrating the University's ability to attract talented students. As the sector transitioned to the Graduate Outcomes Survey, **the University's student employability levels remained at an excellent level of 96% of graduates in a positive destination** ²⁰⁰⁰¹ with the proportion of students entering a graduate-level job being 76%.

6. Recurrent increases in research grant & contract (RGC) awards have been achieved, with the University reporting £15.9m in 2019/20, **the highest RGC awards income recorded during the current strategic planning period** and representing growth of almost 20% since the 2014/15 baseline.
7. The University's interdisciplinary approach towards research continues to have a significant impact on public policy, with institutional impact demonstrated across a range of areas. The Institutional Dean for the Institute of Advanced Studies, Professor Iain Docherty, is a member of the Scottish Ministers' Governance Board overseeing the revised [National Transport Strategy](#), and Professor Catriona Matheson, an expert in substance abuse, is the Chair of the [Ministerial Drug Death Task Force for Scotland](#). Most recently, in January 2021, a leading environmental law expert, Dr Annalisa Savaresi, was appointed as a member of Scotland's new environmental body, [Environmental Standards Scotland \(ESS\)](#), which will operate on a non-statutory basis to prevent an environmental governance gap arising from the UK leaving the European Union.
8. Additionally, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor Gerry McCormac, was elected to the role of Convener of Universities Scotland – and in doing so represents Scotland's world-class higher education sector across a range of key priorities.

Priorities for 2020/21

The following activities, presented under SFC OA guidance headings for the purposes of this document, are to be prioritised under cross-institutional themes for delivery in 2020/21.

Outcomes for Students

Fair Access and Transitions

9. The **2020 SQA exam grading U-turn** presented challenges for the secondary and higher education sectors. An consequential independent review was led by education expert Professor Mark Priestley, resulting in nine recommendations being put forward to the Scottish Government to inform the 2021 approach. The University responded flexibly to the situation, making additional places available to the impacted applicants and in doing so significantly exceeded the intake target for Scottish undergraduate students. The University welcomed the SFC's indication of additional funded places and relaxation of population clawback rules. The impacts of teacher-provided grades from the 2020 (and 2021) diet will have multi-year impacts for universities. Clarification from the SFC and Scottish Government regarding future policy concerning additional funded

² Includes all levels of study, modes of attendance and domiciles in work or further study 15 months after graduation.

places, including intentions for those places formerly associated with EU intakes, would be welcomed by the sector and should be considered a priority.

10. The University of Stirling is committed to supporting access to higher education. Work is ongoing to **develop an overarching Widening Access Strategy** for 2020/21 delivery onwards, which would encapsulate the institution's positive actions and trajectory within this area. Key strategic objectives have been identified and include promoting accessible routes to higher education; fair admissions; transition and induction; retention and support.
11. The institutional [Admissions Policy](#) is directly aligned with the Strategic Plan and was designed to support **the University's continued attainment of Commission on Widening Access targets for MD20 student recruitment**. The policy also supports recruitment of care-experienced students as well as promoting self-disclosure of care-experienced status in order to ensure provision of the requisite level of support.
12. **Commitment to delivery of CoWA recommendations is evidenced throughout the Outcome Agreement**. Specific areas of activity related to CoWA recommendations are outlined below:
 - The University recognises that not all applicants have the same opportunities and adopts a contextual approach towards admissions that assesses UCAS applications in conjunction with personal and educational circumstances. Eligible applicants are considered for an offer at the minimum entry requirements – this is applicable to those who are a carer or have experienced care, as well as those from MD20 postcodes (*CoWA Recommendations 11 and 21*).
 - Minimum entry requirements are promoted to applicants across a variety of platforms and engagement activities. The University continues to broaden the range of applicant information targeted at widening access students, inclusive expanded content presented in the [undergraduate prospectus](#) and the [widening access webpages](#). In line with Universities Scotland response to CoWA, Stirling committed to achieve consistency and greater clarity in the language used to describe contextualised admissions and access initiatives such as articulation – a commitment reflected in the prospectus (*CoWA Recommendation 12*).
 - Although working virtually, Stirling has offered online sessions to member institutions of the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) and worked with all four SHEP agencies (LEAPS, Lift Off, Aspire North and Focus West) to establish the support required for the pupils they work with, such as bespoke presentations. Similarly, the University will continue to work closely with the Scottish Wider Access Programmes (SWAP), including the provision of induction support for new entrants. The University remains a key partner in the [HELOA Scotland](#) webinar series, which offer virtual sessions to Scottish school pupils applying to university for September 2021 entry. Furthermore, through Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP), Stirling is the host University for the Development Coordinator role, the purpose of which is to set up and drive the national Widening Access and Participation Network for Scotland. The University is, therefore, at the centre of this developing network along with schools, colleges, the voluntary sector, professional bodies and employers (*CoWA Recommendation 7*).

- The University is undertaking a review of its advanced entry routes and articulation agreements, with consideration of the recommendations from the National Articulation Forum Final Report. This internal review commences from a strong base, with the institution having carried out activity to expand specific articulation opportunities through new agreements signed in 2019. Additionally, the University delivered a wide range of virtual presentations at 10+ colleges, promoting advanced entry routes and to enhance students' understanding of the UCAS process and accessing university (*CoWA Recommendation 9*).
13. **The strategic partnership with Forth Valley College** has seen continual success in the development and delivery of the Integrated Degree Programmes. The first cohort of integrated degree students graduated in summer 2017 with high levels of graduate-level employment and a number of students progressing to postgraduate taught or research study. The University could replicate this well-developed integrated delivery model should SFC make additional funded places available.
 14. The University's Access to Degree Studies course attracted a large uptake in 2020/21, providing students with the academic qualifications needed to progress to undergraduate degree programmes, as well as tailored support, guidance and study strategies to ensure students are ready for University study.
 15. Commitment to widening access ambitions requires consideration within the limitations of the (usually) capped recruitment system for undergraduate home students. Increasing widening access targets, in line with CoWA recommendations, and a broadly static funded population result in fewer places for non-widening access applicants who wish to attend university and are qualified to do so. The University is conscious that the capped system results in increased competitiveness and unserved applicant demand, especially for a number of popular courses, and would welcome conversations with the SFC and partners around innovative approaches in order to service this demand for well-qualified applicants.

Quality Learning, Teaching and Participation

16. **Outputs from the National Student Survey (NSS) improved significantly in 2020**, with Overall Satisfaction increasing from 82.9% to 86.8%, higher than both the Scottish and UK sector averages (85.1% and 82.7% respectively). Increases across all eight NSS themes was achieved, which supported improvements in League Table positioning, as demonstrated by the University placing 28th in the latest Guardian University Guide, an improvement of 17 places.
17. **The institutional ambition is to increase student satisfaction in the NSS, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) to over 91%**. The University pays particular attention to the qualitative information gathered in all student surveys and module evaluations, and uses this information, along with other methods, to ensure students have their voices heard and that they have a direct influence over their learning experience.

18. The rapid developments associated with COVID-19 resulted in the University community pulling together and responding to **enable a high quality, digital-ready and flexible learning experience for students studying on campus and at a distance**. Deployment of a technology-enabled learning and teaching model has been carried out, which delivers rich and engaging materials as well as live and pre-recorded sessions. The University's approach to blended learning focuses on engagement and connection by building and maintaining vibrant online communities. This approach is underpinned by the following principles:
 - *Be kind and supportive*
 - *Be flexible and inclusive*
 - *Encourage active learning and use of assessment for learning*
 - *Engage students as responsible partners in their learning*
 - *Build resilience into our teaching*
19. It is anticipated that this approach, and underpinning principles, would not only support learning during the current crisis, but would enhance teaching, learning and assessment thereafter.
20. So as **to maximise recruitment potential and applicant choice**, a significant piece of work was undertaken to understand applicant barriers caused by COVID-19 and mitigate where possible. Primary examples included 'hedging' of the postgraduate portfolio across Autumn and Spring entry points with consideration of market demand and enabling students to commence their studies wholly online until such a time as they could travel to the UK. These activities were deployed to support expansion into 'new' markets where a spring intake better suits both applicant need and the underpinning in-country education structures and timelines. Additionally, as informed by a portfolio review exercise conducted in partnership with an external consultant in 2019, a range of developments within the PGT portfolio have been implemented in 2020/21 (including launch of new programmes, creation of new modules for inclusion within existing programmes and discontinuation of underperforming programmes) to ensure that the University's provision remains attractive, competitive and aligned with market demands.
21. The University's fourth Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) is scheduled to take place in spring 2021. Preparations and institution-led review activities are well underway, with the University developing four themes to encapsulate aspects of our work that are currently important across the entire University and which deliver a strong student experience: *working with students, campus environment, health and wellbeing, and collaborations and partnerships*.
22. Academic Development plays a vital role in supporting the student experience. The University has seen a sustained rise in the number of HEA fellows, demonstrating academics' commitment to providing excellent learning and teaching for students. The University offers a comprehensive induction process for new staff as well as a range of CPD opportunities to enable staff to develop their knowledge and skill base and gain reward and recognition for their teaching practice.
23. As part of a holistic approach designed to enhance the student experience and improve the competitive position, the University will continue with delivery of marquee capital projects including **the flagship development, 'Campus Central', which will create a cohesive on-campus**

centre for our community, facilities and services. [Campus Central](#) will be the dynamic heart and the social core of the University, encouraging connections and engagement across our communities. The project has already delivered the campus transport hub, and refurbished Atrium space. [The revitalised Atrium](#) offers the student and staff community enhanced retail and catering outlets and the addition of new social and study spaces, all with the contemporary look and feel befitting of a world-class establishment. The next phase will deliver a three-storey extension to the Andrew Millar building, more than doubling its size with additional floor space to be used for studying, research and socialising. A pedestrianised and landscaped Queen's Court will provide a new open space for students and staff.

24. **The £20 million [sports facilities redevelopment](#)** is now complete, creating an iconic new complex that will not only support future generations of Scotland's elite athletes, but the students, staff and wider community who train there too. The new facilities initially opened in November 2020 and will support the health and wellbeing of the entire University community, alongside initiatives to encourage active lifestyles and positive mental health. Launch of the University's world-class sports facilities will support diffusion of the Institution's culture in support of health and wellbeing, and broader **support towards the Public Health Outcomes**. Examples of recent university-led community initiatives with a focus on health and wellbeing include the '[Walk to the Moon](#)' initiative and launch of a campus [ParkRun](#).
25. Following the impact of COVID-19, a number of other projects that were planned and due to commence this year have been reviewed, re-profiled and/or rescheduled accordingly. When considering the institutional context of capital planning, it is important to recognise that the majority of the physical estate dates back to the 1960's, and the 2015 Estates Conditions Survey reflects the substantial levels of ongoing work required to maintain it. The campus itself brings additional challenges compared with city universities including extensive University-owned utility networks. This places an additional burden on the University, resulting in funds that would be spent on core activities being redirected to deal with failing infrastructure components and to maintain business as usual. The impact of the summer flooding event in June 2019 also continues to have an impact on capital ambitions and priorities.
26. The University **will continue its cohesive programme of strategic work to enhance the student experience and foster student success**. This programme of work, underpinned by extensive research, is designed around the five key pillars of *Supported, Connected, Organised, Prepared and Evolving (SCOPE)*. The project delivers against an 'improvement plan' which sets out clear actions to deliver enhancements to the student experience in core learning, teaching and research, supported by prioritising services that students have identified as essential to the quality of their experience. This work is complimented by the institutional Learning and Teaching Quality and Enhancement Strategy 2018-2022. Work towards an enhanced student experience will continue and adjustments will be made as necessary in a post-COVID world, such as the introduction of remote induction events, the provision of online support services and provision of targeted support to facilitate the transition and retention of students.
27. With the interests of students and staff at the centre of decision-making, supporting a physically and mentally healthy community is a priority. Complementing the context set by the Scottish

Government, the SFC and the well documented acute rise in students requiring mental health and emotional wellbeing support experienced across the sector, the University is set to **launch a Student and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy** during 2020/21. The aim of this strategy is to implement activities and interventions that promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the University, directed by five underpinning strategic objectives and six values-based guiding principles. The strategy is based on a holistic cross-institution approach and focuses on prevention of and early intervention, as well as crisis response. As an example of activity in response to the COVID context, [the University has partnered with togetherall](#) to provide staff and students with access to 24/7 online support, access to a supportive community and a wide range of wellbeing resources.

Learning with Impact

28. **Institutional provision continues to be aligned with the skills needs of prospective students and the needs of both employers and the wider economy.** In recognition of the demand for skills in STEM, c.27.5% of the 2020/21 home undergraduate intake is anticipated to have enrolled on a STEM course – a proportion that the University are seeking to increase going forward.
29. The University holds 60 STEM secondary education places, previously delivered jointly with Heriot Watt, funded directly by the Scottish Government. Recruitment to these places has historically been below expectations. Work is underway to implement alternative partnership provision that would meet the specific objectives of the Scottish Government in this area. The SFC and Scottish Government will be kept abreast of developments, which are progressing at pace.
30. The University will continue to deliver its ‘new’ routes in STEM-focused primary education provision, building upon successful recruitment patterns across Inclusive Practice, Literacy, Numeracy and Primary Science streams.
31. The University was successful in the tendering process to deliver a **Data Science Graduate Apprenticeship ‘framework’** in the 2020/21 academic year under the leadership of the Faculty of Natural Sciences. The Graduate Apprenticeship framework represents a new delivery model for the University, based on the principle of work-based learning, delivered in partnership with a number of employers. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption and posed an enormous number of challenges to businesses. University of Stirling graduates will play a key role in supporting the recovery and this new programme provides a new route into education for many, while offering employers opportunities to upskill existing or attract new talent. The course has been introduced at a critical time and will help apprentices to make a positive impact in their company, reflecting the University's ongoing commitment to supporting businesses and the Scottish economy. The University would welcome announcement of post-2021/22 framework details so as to enable the appropriate development and student recruitment activities to be progressed.
32. Stirling was also successful in tendering for undergraduate **Paramedic Science provision**, with the first cohort of 49 students starting in September 2020. Working alongside NHS Education for

Scotland (NES) and the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), the University's BSc Paramedic Science will be delivered across NHS Forth Valley, Fife and Tayside and will boost training opportunities for budding paramedics and enhance patient care.

33. Stirling graduates are highly employable and sought-after in the employment market, with 96% of leavers in employment or further study 15 months after graduation in the 2017/18 Graduate Outcomes Survey. The proportion of graduates entering a graduate-level job was 76%. The University recognises the value of providing access to work related learning opportunities and has therefore introduced a Quality Improvement Plan to reflect on employability developmental activity and to ensure a range of opportunities are available across all faculties.
34. As an internationally diverse institution, the University committed to English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The on-campus INTO centre offers pre-sessional English courses for non-native speakers in need of upskilling. More broadly, the University will continue to deliver its popular MSc Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programmes.

Equalities and Inclusion

35. Recognising that digital poverty is a barrier to education, the University invested in a bank of c.380 laptops which students facing financial hardship are able to borrow on a long-term basis for the full academic year. Further, the University introduced a laptop lending service in January 2020, enabling short-term borrowing of laptops to ensure that students have access to the technology they need during their learner journey.
36. In line with commitments stated in the institutional [Equality Outcomes](#) and the [Gender Action Plan](#), the University will continue to implement the suite of actions aimed at improving the gender profile of different disciplines and **improve the overall gender balance of students across the institution**. University Equality Outcomes will be revised, following a programme of consultation, for publication in April 2021, along with other PSED reporting requirements. The University will also continue to develop the next Gender Action Plan (2020-23), delayed due to COVID-19.
37. In line with the institutional commitment to equality, the University will continue to **build on the programme of work aimed at preventing and eradicating all forms of gender based violence (GBV)**, as well as supporting survivors. The University is continuing to utilise the Equally Safe in HE Toolkit as part of the ongoing development of our whole campus approach to GBV. Previous high profile work in this area included the award-winning [#isThisOk?](#) Campaign.
38. The University's Equality Steering Group has considered the Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) inquiry, *Tackling racial harassment: Universities challenged*, and its associated recommendations. [Black History Month](#) was widely promoted in October 2020, providing an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the enormous contributions black people have made to our vibrant society. A range of events and resources are published on the University website, which also outlines our commitment to anti-racism initiatives.

39. As part of our commitment to promote and support BSL users, the BSL Steering Group will continue to monitor progress to achieve the aims of the [British Sign Language \(BSL\) Action Plan 2017-2021](#) and provide regular updates to the University Equality Steering Group. The University will contribute to the Scottish Government's national progress report in 2021.
40. The University recognises the unique set of circumstances faced by students who are estranged from their families and is [committed to supporting estranged students](#) through the application process and transition into university life, providing on-course support where necessary. **The Principal has signed the *Stand Alone Pledge*** and the University has been working closely with Stand Alone to develop our support provision for estranged students. The named points of contact for estranged students have attended a number of sector conferences and sessions in order to work collaboratively and share best practice. The University also took part in Estranged Students Solidarity week by promoting the support we offer estranged students.
41. The University has implemented [dedicated support for students with caring responsibilities](#), enabling carers to access advice and information throughout the application process and whilst studying. We also offer special consideration and adjusted offers to students with caring responsibilities. We have strengthened our partnership with *Stirling Carers Centre*, with the University's Recruitment team delivering a presentation to the Centre's Young Adult Carers group, and the Centre being invited to be represented on the University's Student Carers Working Group. Members of this working group have also participated in sector-wide activity to create the *Carer Aware HE training module*, hosted on the Open University's Open Learn platform. Additionally, Stirling is working towards a submission to the Carers Trust Scotland 'Going Higher for Student Carers' Recognition Award.
42. The University has established a range of new partnerships, and enhanced previous partnerships, in order to provide support for Armed Forces personnel, veterans and service families to access higher education. As part of our long-standing partnership with Queen Victoria School in Dunblane, a school for families of military personnel, a series of workshops were delivered to support pupils applying to university for 2020/21 entry. Colleagues from across the Institution met with Scotland's Veterans Commissioner to discuss the work already ongoing at Stirling and to scope out a range of future opportunities. Furthermore, introductory meetings with the RFEA, the Forces Employment Charity, are planned for early 2021.

Outcomes for Research

Research Excellence

43. The University's reputation for research with impact positioned Stirling on the frontline of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 25 research projects funded by Scottish Government, UKRI and others [investigating the impacts of Covid-19](#) on health, wellbeing, society and the economy. Project themes include examining health and safety for children and young people during the pandemic, the effects of social distancing for older people, the impact on mental health for social workers and interventions for addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.

Recently, the University was successful in securing funding for a UKRI project studying the impact of 'COVID fear' in people aged 50+ in Scotland. Academics have developed a [series of bite-sized lectures](#) to highlight how COVID-19 has impacted their areas of research.

44. As well as rising to the immediate challenges of producing research within the COVID-19 context, the University has continued with important research in a range of areas. In 2016/17, the University **developed three major research 'themes', which were illustrative of the University's excellent, world-leading research and innovation: Living Well; Global Security and Resilience; and Cultures, Communities and Society.** The emphasis across these research strengths was the ability to make a difference to society and to have a positive impact on communities worldwide. Fundamentally, our research themes reflect the principals and values set out in the *Concordant on Open Data Research*. The University established 12 interdisciplinary research programmes alongside the overarching research themes that look to address global challenges. The programmes were considered to be the engine house of Stirling's major strategic research activity. A range of [Research Spotlight](#) articles have been developed to promote just some of the influential research going on at Stirling.
45. Preparations for participation in the 2021 REF exercise are well underway, with a focus on Unit of Assessment-level action planning and enhancement of impact case studies. A Code of Practice governing the University's submission to the REF has been developed, designed to support the University's commitment to promoting equality and diversity in research while tailoring the submission.
46. It is recognised that a step-change is required in terms of postgraduate research (PGR) student recruitment in order to achieve the level of growth attained by other unregulated student cohorts as signalled by the Strategic Plan. In response to this, PGR activities shall be supported by the [Institute for Advanced Studies](#) (IAS), created in early 2019.
47. The IAS model is used in prestigious universities around the world and typically provides a focal point for postgraduate, postdoctoral and interdisciplinary researchers. The Stirling IAS was founded on two main 'pillars' of activity - to give a new cohesiveness and depth to the quality of PGR support provided across the University, and, promotion of cross-disciplinary research across the wider research community in the University, and support on the journey from post-doctoral and early career to senior researcher cohorts.
48. To date, the IAS has focused on reinvigorating particular elements of the post-doctoral graduate provision across the University in order to improve the student experience. These include the PGR admissions process, induction, and the creation of a cross-university calendar of events to encourage interdisciplinary engagement. Going forward, this work will be expanded to encompass a wider review of the PGR student journey. Further, the IAS have established a PhD exchange programme with Lingnan University, Hong Kong, providing a unique opportunity for students to conduct research on an international level and gain a different perspective from scholars.

49. **The University is a central partner of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, which presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to position the city and surrounding area as an economic and cultural powerhouse.**
50. The Deal has established a new collaborative regional partnership, focused on a long-term strategic approach to improving regional economies. Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils have joined together with the University as delivery partners and have developed a coherent package of proposals that will deliver a transformative step change to the region's economy, including a significant improvement to its inclusivity by valuing the productive capacity of all of its places and people.
51. The vision of the Deal is of Stirling and its region as a highly desirable place to live, work and visit: an attractive place in which to invest financial, human and social capital. The Deal will provide the platform for the city region to thrive in new and emerging sectors with a highly-skilled, flexible workforce prepared for the changing demands of emerging industries, supported by outstanding infrastructure, making it an attractive and well connected place in which to trade and do business. The region's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem is one in which home grown talent is taking root, developing the area's key sectors to deliver inclusive growth and shared prosperity, whilst tackling the economic and social inequalities that exist between the most and least advantaged communities. Economic recovery is now a priority within the Deal and projects are being flexed to enable delivery of outputs and benefits that will deliver against this essential agenda.
52. This Deal represents fresh investment in the regional economy and will be jointly funded by the Scottish Government and the UK Government with each Government investing £45.1 million. The Innovation strand of the Deal is led by the University and accounts for £39 million of the Government investment. This investment is in two major programmes, the establishment of **the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub (NATIH)** and **Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC)**, which will support University and broader national sustainability ambitions. Additionally, the University has a third proposal building on our expertise in ageing and dementia and seeks to establish the **Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub (ILIH)**. This proposal is being considered through a parallel process within the Deal and an outcome is expected shortly.
53. Support from SFC has enabled the establishment of a dedicated Innovation & Enterprise structure that focuses on the commercial potential of our research activities, as well as a comprehensive programme of support for the enterprise activities of our students, graduates and staff. It is under this structure that the development of ambitious and ground-breaking initiatives in relation to the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal are enabled.
54. In December 2020, the University won a competitive bid to host the newly created post of Scotland Hydro Nation Chair, establishing a unique partnership with Scottish Water and the SFC. The University will host and lead a £3.5m initiative to make Scotland a global leader in water research. The Hydro Nation Chair will provide the leadership to forge collaborative partnerships across the sector to deliver solutions for sustainable water management in Scotland. The University's

leadership and research expertise will play a pivotal role in supporting the ambitions for Scotland to transition to a net zero economy.

55. The University of Stirling was first awarded the HR Excellence in Research award in 2011, and have successfully retained it at each review point since, recognising our work in implementing the principles of the Researchers' Concordat. The University also promotes a culture of best practice and integrity across all of our research through the core values of honesty, rigour, open communication, care and respect, and accountability. The University is embracing the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity ensuring that the changes are embedded in our processes and culture. Work to promote research integrity throughout the University is embedded in the remit of all research ethics panels and is supported by broader research integrity training available to all staff and students.
56. World class research cannot happen without world class researchers, professional service teams and technical staff. Within the University exists a culture of continuing professional development supported by continued investment in an extensive suite of [staff development opportunities](#) open to all staff, as well as specialist development opportunities coordinated at a local level.
57. Stirling is committed to building strategic international partnerships to promote research with a global impact. In October 2020, the University signed a new agreement with the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU). This agreement will have an emphasis on strengthening the development of research in the area of heritage and society, through collaborative projects, and developing an international early career research culture across both institutions, offering PhD students an excellent opportunity to engage in international dialogue and exchange.
58. In order to provide and maintain support for our PGR students during the pandemic, the University, via the Institute for Advanced Studies, moved development/training offerings to be fully online, and over the summer of 2020 a new series focussing on mental health & wellbeing was offered. IAS has ensured that there are regular communications/online events for our PGR community to keep them informed and connected. In AY 2020/21, training/development has remained fully online and induction for our new PGRs was also offered virtually. The University has provided no-quibble academic extensions to PhD students who have been affected by the pandemic and financial support for students who were in receipt of University of Stirling studentships on a priority needs assessment.

Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal

Responsive Institutions

59. In an era of economic disruption, the University recognises that developing the skills of Scotland's current and future workforce is central to improving productivity and providing a high-quality service. The University has a substantial role to play in delivering learning that enables people to participate and progress in their chosen careers, creating a sustainable workforce for the future.

60. Staff across the institution build industry consultation and feedback into course development and approval through industry advisory boards, up-to-date labour market information and skills assessments, and employer focus groups. Throughout 2020, the University delivered a series of employer partnership and focus groups across a range of disciplines where employers are invited to online events to discuss their business needs and potential solutions to the challenges they are facing. Examples include employers associated with the disciplines of Sport Management, Psychology, Social Work and Environmental Science. Further events are scheduled for 2021.
61. The University is part of the local employability partnership and [Employer Engagement Forum](#), working strategically with a range of organisations to ascertain skills needs from local businesses. Additionally, the University responds to employers' needs by providing opportunities for student consultancy projects with industry to respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19. The University are piloting RIIPEN, a global platform to manage projects remotely in a more global environment.
62. The University is committed to establishing pathways for people without work to study and move into employment, with work underway to support the delivery of a broad upskilling portfolio, aimed at delivering flexible and agile provision which meets the known skills gap in the economy.
63. In June 2020, Deputy Principal, Professor Leigh Sparks, was invited to join the [Social Renewal Advisory Board](#) for the Scottish Government. The Board was tasked with looking at the social aspects of renewal for Scotland post-pandemic, and in January 2021 [published a report](#) containing 20 'Calls for Action' which seek to alter the nature of our differentiated and segregated society.

Work-Ready

64. One of the objectives of the University's Employability Strategy is to ensure all programmes include work-based and/or work-related learning by 2021. A new '[University of Stirling Work Placement and Project Policy \(WPPP\)](#)' and accompanying documentation was introduced in 2020, taking account of COVID-19 restrictions and the move to online placements, to support those developing or delivering a module or programme containing work-based learning and to ensure it is a positive, safe and successful experience for all stakeholders. A new staff development site is being launched in January 2021 to support and equip staff with resources to deliver all aspects of employability in the curriculum. This is being accompanied by staff development sessions.
65. The University has refreshed its [Graduate Attributes](#), which outlines how the University will prepare students and graduates for life long personal development, learning and to be successful in society. The attributes are based on up-to-date labour market information on employers' skills needs and have an emphasis on equipping students with digital skills to adapt to the economy's changing needs.

Innovation

66. Innovation was a key founding principle for the University, reflected in the University's Strategic Plan where innovation is identified as one of the three key underpinning institutional enablers. The University is committed to participating in the delivery of transformational regional economic

change and will support and enable local businesses who are actively scaling. During 2020/21 the University will continue to deliver on its institutional commitment to entrepreneurship and industry collaboration through its Innovation and Enterprise Strategy 2017-2021. The priorities embedded in our Innovation and Enterprise Strategy are, to a degree, designed to reflect those identified in the Innovation Scotland Forum action plan.

67. The University will play a central role in regional and national economic recovery from the pandemic through partnership working and by providing the skills and services to allow individuals to realise their potential through research and education. Delivery of the University City Region Deal programme will underpin major growth in research, teaching and commercialisation income over at least the next 10-year period. The commitment to engagement through partnerships extends to engagement with the *Scotland is Now* national branding strategy and engagement with Innovation Centres (e.g. the University's hosting of the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre and its engagement with Datalab).
68. In order to ensure that the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) and Sector Deals deliver the maximum economic benefit to Scotland, the University is currently collaborating with businesses and a range of other partners, across the Forth Valley area and beyond, to ensure the maximisation of emerging opportunities for the delivery of new research and innovation. In this context, the University has striven to utilise available Research Excellent Grant (REG) funding to leverage additional funding from the UK Industrial Strategy.

Being Responsive and Collaborative

Responding to Public Health Emergencies

69. Similar to other institutions, Stirling has responded to the pandemic by rapidly transitioning to an online learning model; adapting and evolving the 2020/21 programme portfolio to suit the needs of students; refocussing research priorities to align with the COVID-dictated agenda and carrying out a myriad of actions to ensure the campus adheres to social distancing guidance and assists with testing. A clear communication strategy was deployed to keep all staff and students well informed with the latest guidance.
70. Not only did the University implement mitigating activities to ensure operations could continue as smoothly and efficiently as possible, it acted quickly to support the national response to the pandemic. Almost 400 student nurses and 11 clinically-trained members of staff responded to a call to provide frontline support to NHS workers. The University sent clinical equipment to the NHS Louisa Jordan facility and four 3D printers were provided to support manufacture of personal protective equipment for healthcare workers. A leading expert in Social Work, Professor Lena Dominelli, produced guidelines for social workers on how to operate during a pandemic, advice that was shared via the International Association of Schools of Social Work, and the British Association of Social Workers. Further, the University secured over 10,000 masks from alum and partners in China plus a substantial number of surgical gloves, which were distributed amongst

staff and students, many of whom remained in university halls on campus or accommodation in the local vicinity over the first lockdown.

71. Efforts during the pandemic to support positive health and wellbeing among staff and students were brought together under the institutional [Be Connected programme](#). The programme, mainstreamed for 2020/21 due to its success during the initial lockdown, was inspired by the 'five ways to wellbeing' and contained a wide range of events, activities and resources, such as enabling access to virtual exercise opportunities, to ensure the Stirling community *stays connected* with each other and remains healthy, active and in the moment.
72. The University has introduced an [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP), provided by 'Innovate Healthcare' and delivered by their EAP partner CiC, to help staff achieve a healthy work-life balance. Innovate's qualified and experienced therapists provide free and confidential support and information services for a wide range of work-related and personal issues.

Responding to the Climate Emergency

73. A Corporate Sustainability Steering Group (CSSG) currently oversees the management of climate change action and sustainability across the institution – including the following work streams: Sustainable Procurement; Sustainable Travel; Embedding Sustainability in Learning, Teaching & Research.
74. Reflecting on the Scottish Government's declaration of a Climate Emergency in April 2019, the University will launch an interim sustainability strategy during 2020/21, which will detail the University's targets for reducing carbon emissions and water consumption.
75. Scotland has committed to reach net zero emissions from all greenhouse gases by 2045 with interim targets of reducing emissions by 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2040 (5 years ahead of UK government). The University notes that the SFC will work with universities and colleges to develop an agenda for climate change and would anticipate that the Scottish Government would support and resource the sector's work in this area.
76. Recent activities to support sustainability include the investment of £1.4m in the replacement of the campus water network, resulting in a 22% reduction in water consumption, and securing a 100% rate of grid electricity imported from renewable sources. The University also participated in Sustrans' 2020 Scottish Workplace Challenge, was awarded Cycling Friendly Campus Award by Cycling Scotland and produced an updated Travel Plan. As part of the City Deal, Scotland's International Environment Centre will further support innovation in sustainability policy and practice.

University Innovation Fund 2020-21

University of Stirling

Introduction

1. The University of Stirling is pleased to submit this paper reflecting on use of our grant allocation from the University Innovation Fund (UIF) in Academic Year (AY) 2019-20 and current activities within AY 2020-21. Current funding levels are challenging, particularly at a time when we are working to increase engagement with, and leadership of, collaborative activity in support of the objectives against which UIF seeks to deliver and economic recovery.
2. Innovation was a key founding principle for the University of Stirling and we continue to embed it at the heart of everything we do. Our current Strategic Plan (2016-21) illustrates this commitment with innovation being identified as one of three key underpinning institutional enablers. We recognise that “Finding new ways of thinking and doing things that place us at the cutting edge; identifying opportunities that benefit students, staff and stakeholders; growing income through research, knowledge exchange and commercialisation; and ensuring our curriculum meets the needs of citizens in the 21st century” is essential.
3. Our institutional vision is “to be recognised across the world as a University that addresses the needs of society through innovative interdisciplinary research; learning and teaching of the highest quality; and by sharing our knowledge with the world”. We aim to be recognised as leaders of innovation and enterprise through our distinctive collaborative activities that create positive and sustainable impact on society and the economy. We are committed to applying a creative, imaginative and entrepreneurial philosophy to all that we do. We are leaders in higher education innovation, in Scotland and beyond.

UIF Funding Allocation

4. We acknowledge the structure of the UIF funding with the platform grant element and, as in previous years, we confirm that we will commit to investing above the required match funding amount in 2020/21 for the UIF platform through:
 - Our continuing investment into the development of the reach and purpose of the University of Stirling Innovation Park (USIP) as our vehicle for delivering a diverse portfolio of innovation and commercialisation support (specifically business incubation and support).
 - Continued programmes of:
 - i) Student and graduate enterprise
 - ii) Knowledge exchange, including Dementia Services, Culture and Heritage
 - iii) Public engagement
5. Consistent with previous Outcome Agreements, one of the five key priority areas for the University is “Priority 4: Greater innovation in the economy – a national culture of enterprise and innovation leading to a more productive and sustainable economy”. Specifically, we will:

- Continue to build on opportunities for students and graduates to develop their employability and enterprise skills in preparation for the future world of work. In doing so we will extend the learning from our successful 'Making the Most of Masters' programme and embed it in a wider range of our postgraduate qualifications; enhance the programme of support for student and graduate entrepreneurs, including workshops, masterclasses and an accelerator programme supported by Santander Universities.
- Continue to play a leading role in the development of innovation through expansion of enterprise support, enhanced business incubation facilities, business competitions and expanded activity in commercialisation and other forms of knowledge exchange.
- Support our local region through the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal as partners in economic and community transformation, particularly in innovation support. Our City Region Deal Programme Office, based within our Innovation & Enterprise structure within Research & Innovation Services, links in with, and helps to drive, activity with the corresponding structures within the local authorities party to the Deal.
- Continue to implement our enhanced approach to supporting innovation and enterprise as a key enabler of our strategic ambitions, namely through a dedicated support structure.
- Continue to host a number of nationally important archives and collections that can be regularly exhibited to the public once pandemic restrictions allow. We will continue to extend our archive collections and public engagement with them in a similar way.
- Develop further collaboration with the University's MacRobert Arts Centre to bring researchers and performance artists together in novel collaborations, which promote public engagement with research in an appropriate way, consistent with the current pandemic restrictions.
- The funding will continue to contribute to our capacity to engage constructively with the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal. The potential for collaboration with industry, public and third sectors is considerable and the University has a significant role to play in the delivery of the Deal's outcomes, impacting directly on economic development and societal benefit. Specifically, we will continue to work directly with companies within the aquaculture sector, with local authorities to establish Scotland's International Environment Centre and with local authorities, business and the third sector to establish an exemplar of intergenerational living that will be established as a living lab to test emerging innovation and technologies to facilitate independent living. All of these areas will be bases from which substantial individual and collaborative bids will be developed to underpin activity in these areas.

Contribution to national outcomes

6. The sections that follow outline the projects and actions that we are undertaking and their contribution to national outcomes. We continue to pursue the outcomes within our overall programme, incorporating them into the enhanced framework as set out below. In addition to our own specific actions, we continue to proactively engage with, and contribute to collaborative projects in the areas of demand stimulation, entrepreneurialism, international and equality and diversity, with other Scottish universities. We are the lead institution for the sector's collaborative

work in the area of inclusive growth and social impact and have identified opportunities for the work in this area to logically connect with other outcomes, e.g. entrepreneurialism, to ensure a coordinated approach.

7. The existing work underway and in development in relation to the UIF outcomes is underpinned by our UIF funding. The actions associated with the outcomes that we lead have been clustered under the heading Inclusive Growth and focus on three key areas, all of which are collaborative:
 - i) Establishing a model for the engagement of universities with City Region Deals
 - ii) Establishing inclusive models to support student and graduate enterprise
 - iii) Establishing inclusive models to support the development of social enterprises.
8. Points (ii) and (iii) have been identified as logical contact points with Outcome 4 (entrepreneurialism) and we continue to work closely with the University of Strathclyde who is leading work in relation to this outcome. All of these areas are focused on maximising growth potential and leveraging connectivity with partners and stakeholders, and sharing best practice to promote a comprehensive and consistent approach.

Outcome One: Demand Stimulation

9. We continue to believe strongly that demand for innovation in the Scottish business base can best be stimulated at scale by enhancing the understanding of, and appetite for, innovation within the workforce (including new start-up businesses). Therefore, we continue to focus on student and graduate enterprise and entrepreneurship. In the shorter term, we are continuing to increase contact and collaboration with established businesses and other employer organisations. (PA5)
10. Our Enterprise Programme is highly collaborative with strong links to enterprise organisations throughout Scotland, including the University's sponsorship of CONVERGE, for example. Our expanding programme looks continually for opportunities to strengthen and diversify partnerships and we will continue to do so to maximise the value and opportunities for student and graduate entrepreneurs to build skills and successful businesses. A number of initiatives under our Enterprise Programme and wider Innovation and Enterprise activity are designed to bring together aspiring entrepreneurs and role models from the Scottish business base for inspiration, collaboration and skills development. (PA5)
11. We are committed to supporting mechanisms that facilitate greater academic-SME business collaboration and skills development, including active engagement with Interface, our hosting of the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre, and active participation with a number of other Innovation Centres. (PA5)

Outcome Two: Simplification / Commercialisation

12. We continue to be heavily involved and an active participant in fora and groupings across the sector focussing on innovation support.
13. We are committed to adopting all simplified and standardised contracts terms and the post project referral protocols, established through the Universities Scotland Research &

Commercialisation Directors Group, and continue to work to facilitate their development and adoption across all Scottish universities. (PA7 & PA8)

14. We continue to pursue and enhance strategic engagement with key sectors including aquaculture, sport, health & behaviour, digital and social enterprise. We continue to sharpen our focus on these areas where the University can offer distinctive strengths to business and other relevant organisations. (PA6)

Outcome Three: Simplification / Greater Innovation

15. As host institution for the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre and as partners in the Digital Health and Care Innovation Centre, the Data Science Innovation Centre, the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre, the Oil and Gas Innovation Centre and the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre, we actively contribute to the sharing of sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy. (PA3)
16. As highlighted under Outcome Two, we are committed to adopting all simplified and standardised contracts terms established through Universities Scotland Research & Commercialisation Directors Group and continue to work to facilitate their development and adoption across all Scottish universities. (PA7)
17. We continue to engage actively with professional development organisations (ARMA, PraxisAURIL) to co-ordinate, align and enhance the training and development support available to University research and innovation staff. (PA4)

Outcome Four: Entrepreneurialism

18. A key element of our Innovation and Enterprise activity is our Enterprise Programme, which has been expanded to support a significant increase in the number of students and graduates to develop their entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial skills and to promote entrepreneurial opportunities. Within this scope of work, we include social enterprise, a distinctive area that resonates with the values of our students and staff. We continue to offer our Enterprise Programme to Forth Valley College students. (PA1)
19. The support delivered through the University of Stirling Innovation Park continues to not only significantly increase the number of start-up and scale-up businesses supported, but will also facilitate increased teaching and research connections and enhanced opportunities for student and graduate entrepreneur mentoring and incubation. (PA1 & PA2)
20. We continue to work with the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre and the life sciences, digital and creative sectors to enhance work-based learning. (PA2)

Outcome Five: International

21. As outlined in our current Strategic Plan, we have placed internationalisation at the heart of everything we do, in recognition that “to be a globally-connected university, we must continue to build and strengthen further our international links by: connecting with partner universities,

organisations and people around the world; producing research with global relevance and impact; and graduating students as global citizens, who will play a leadership role in their communities, wherever they live”.

22. As we continue to extend our international partnerships, we will continue to ensure direct economic and social benefit through knowledge exchange, support for business innovation, skills training and in-country capacity building. Equally, we will continue to facilitate full access to participation in our Enterprise Programme for our broad cohort of international students at Stirling. (Links to PA10 within Outcome 6)
23. We continue to believe that our increasing range of international R&D collaborations will offer enhanced opportunities for Scottish businesses to collaborate internationally. Aquaculture is a particular area of focus for us in this regard. (PA11)
24. We are also continuing to pursue opportunities through channels focussed on ODA-related work, which provides another mechanism to contribute to the achievement of this outcome.

Outcome Six: Inclusive Growth and Social Impact

25. We continue to lead this work stream within the UIF National Outcomes activity. Through this work stream, we aim to enhance the structures and mechanisms to provide more ambitious and effective connections between universities to enable them to deliver economic, social and cultural benefits. The main focus of our work in this area has been the engagement of universities with City Region and Growth Deals. Sharing best practice and experience is seen as being of particular value to this engagement and we are coordinating events and mechanisms that facilitate the achievement of these aims. (PA10)
26. As outlined in our current Strategic Plan, “Stirling is a place where everyone is treated with respect and where ability – not background – is valued. We are open with one another and support people with specific needs; we acknowledge difference, and respect the right of students and staff to hold differing views”. We will continue to work proactively to support this throughout all aspects of University business.

Outcome Seven: Equality and Diversity

27. We continue to positively promote equality and diversity for all staff and students through all of our activities. This is supported through our continued participation, and progress in, initiatives including the Equality Action Forum, HR Excellence in Research, Athena Swan and the Aurora Programme.
28. We have a keen interest in understanding where there may be barriers to fully diverse and equal engagement in innovation and enterprise. In particular, we are proactively investigating the opportunities that working collaboratively and being innovative afford us in tackling these issues.

For further information please contact: Dr John Rogers, Executive Director of Research & Innovation Services, University of Stirling, john.rogers@stir.ac.uk, 01786 467041



Full Equality Impact Assessment Proforma

Name of policy/proposal: Interim Outcome Agreement 2020/21

Responsible department: Policy and Planning

Lead officer: Graeme Duff, Head of Policy and Planning

STEP 1: ABOUT THE POLICY

1. What is the aim of this policy?

The Interim Outcome Agreement 2020/21 outlines the University's intended contributions, impact and outcomes for the academic year 2020/21, whilst also considering the Covid-19 context. It reflects on the activities of the University that are funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The key priorities identified in the SFC Outcome Agreement Guidelines fall under the following areas:

- Outcomes for students
- Outcomes for research
- Economic recovery and social renewal
- Responsive and collaborative institutions.

2. Who will be affected by this policy?

Students and staff across the institution, belonging to all of the protected characteristics, will be affected, as well as stakeholders in the wider community, e.g. partner schools and Forth Valley College.

3. Is the policy being developed or reviewed?

The Outcome Agreement builds on previous OAs, as submitted to SFC.

4. What is the timescale for approval of the policy?

The agreement will be finalised, approved and submitted to the SFC by 29 January 2021.

5. Who/what committee is responsible for approving any necessary changes to this policy?

The Interim Outcome Agreement has to be submitted to the SFC in January, prior to University Court in March, therefore University Court has agreed for the agreement to be reviewed and approved by the University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG) and then signed-off by the Principal and Chair of University Court via delegated authority. The University Secretary will be responsible for approving any necessary changes.

STEP 2: HOW DOES (OR WILL) THIS THIS POLICY OR DECISION AFFECT DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE?

The purpose of this step is to identify whether the policy/proposal could affect some groups of people differently. Will the policy discriminate against or disadvantage people on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics, or are there any opportunities to better promote equality or good relations between different groups of people through modifying the policy?

*Note: Under the Equality Act 2010, the **nine protected characteristics** are age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. When answering the questions below, you should think about how they relate to each of the 9 protected characteristics.*

1. Does the evidence suggest that people with any of the protected characteristics have (or are likely to have) different needs or experiences in relation to this policy? [Include data where appropriate e.g. uptake of services or provision]

This policy sets out its ambitions to meet the key priorities (as set out above) for the HE sector identified in the SFC Outcome Agreement Guidelines.

The agreement is intended to deliver an accessible and diverse student experience and attract and provide more equal opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Current and planned activities are intended to have a positive impact on staff and students, regardless of their protected characteristic. The University currently exceeds the Commission on Widening Access 2021 target for MD20 students.

The data contained in the 'national measures' appendix sets out projections for maintaining diversity in the student population and, as appropriate, diversifying the community further e.g. gender-balance in the student community.

2. Does the evidence suggest that any aspect of the policy could lead to unfair treatment (including unlawful discrimination) against people with a particular protected characteristic?

(For example, are people from any particular group excluded from accessing provision, either directly or indirectly as a result of the criteria applied?)

There is no evidence to suggest that any aspect of the policy could lead to unfair treatment against people with protected characteristics. One of the University's key priorities is to provide learning that is accessible to all ages and from all communities and backgrounds. This will be achieved through a contextualised approach to admissions, including individualised one-to-one support to carers and care-experienced persons, together with a commitment to strategic partnerships with schools and Forth Valley College.

The policy notes that from 2017 the University set the following priorities through the Equality Outcomes:

- Gender equality
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Retention, continuation and success
- Interculturalism and Respect

The Outcome Agreement and Equality Outcomes are aligned in tackling unfair treatment against people with a protected characteristic.

3. Will this policy help the University to meet the three parts of the general equality duty? Please expand on your reasoning in relation to each part:

(i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other prohibited conduct

Yes. The Outcome Agreement reiterates the University's commitment to fairness and equity.

More specifically, the agreement reports the University's intention to increase the representation from under-represented groups. It also highlights University strategies that aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, such as the programme of work aimed at preventing and eradicating all forms of gender based violence.

Through the Equality Outcome of 'Interculturalism and Respect' the University is committed to developing and maintaining a culture of respect and providing appropriate support to ensure that unlawful discrimination and harassment of staff or students is not tolerated.

(ii) Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it

Yes. The agreement aims to advance equality between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It also aims to improve retention rates and to close the gap between specific groups. Further, the agreement highlights activities that have been undertaken to reduce digital poverty across all groups.

(iii) Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it

Yes. The University's revised contextualised approach to admissions, including individualised one-to-one support to carers and care-experienced persons, together with a commitment to strategic partnerships with schools and Forth Valley College will ensure good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it. One of the Outcome Agreement's priorities is to further develop partnerships with schools and

Forth Valley College in order to smooth the student learner journey.

4. Summarise what evidence you have considered when answering these questions. (E.g. anecdotal evidence, management information, research reports, consultations with staff, students and/or campus Unions)

Development of the Outcome Agreement was informed by:

- ❖ The University's Strategic Plan 2016-21
- ❖ Analysis of management information
- ❖ Consultation with the University's Corporate Governance & Policy Manager and Widening Access Student Recruitment Manager.

Throughout the consultation, no evidence emerged of potential equality issues or differential impact.

STEP 3: ACTION PLAN

You should now be able to identify whether any action is required to eliminate discrimination or disadvantage, or to make changes to more effectively promote equality, diversity or good relations. Alternatively, you might have identified that you cannot fully assess the impact of the policy on different groups until you have more information. Actions that you might identify at this stage could include:

- Changes to the policy itself to better promote equality or to tackle unfair treatment/discrimination
- Collecting and analysing data not currently available e.g. management information, surveys
- Consulting further with staff, students or Unions in order to find out more about how the policy or decision will affect people

| Action/change required | Responsibility | Timescale | Resources required | What issue/problem will this action address? |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|--|
| None required | | | | |

STEP 4: Recommend whether the University should adopt, modify, pilot or reject the policy/function

- A: Adopt the policy in its originally proposed format (no changes required)**
- B: Modify the policy to address any negative impact or to more effectively promote equality, diversity and good relations
- C: Continue the policy without modifications, despite identifying equality issues (note: justification must be provided)
- D: Reject the policy entirely, due to the findings of the EIA
- E: Pilot the policy and re-evaluate the equality impact after the pilot period
- F: Modify the policy to meet separate statutory changes, not linked to equality/diversity

Based on the work undertaken in this EIA, briefly set out your reasons for this recommendation:

This policy is not likely to discriminate against any particular group. It includes a commitment to providing more equal opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds and delivering an accessible and diverse student experience.

STEP 5: MONITORING AND REVIEW

1. What equality data will be collected to monitor the implementation of this policy?
Annual reporting against Outcome Agreement targets.
2. Who will be responsible for collecting, analysing and reporting on this data?
Policy and Planning.
3. To whom and how often will this data be reported?
Any issues will be reported to the University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG), Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee (JPPRC) and University Court.
4. When will this policy next be reviewed?
Autumn 2020.

Is this EIA now complete?

YES

If you have answered 'NO', when will this EIA be resumed?

N/A

Signed (lead officer):



Date 29.01.2021

Signed (accountable officer):



Date 29.01.2021

Once you have completed this EIA and it has been signed off by the accountable officer, please send a copy to equality@stir.ac.uk.

The completed EIA will be published on the University's website in due course.

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

University of Stirling Interim OA 2020/21 Annex 3

| Measure | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2020-21 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| A Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants | 1,963 | 1,729 | 1,495 | 1,893 | 1,818 | 1,856 |
| B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes | 401 | 278 | 248 | 353 | 579 | 564 |
| Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing | 44 | 15 | 17 | 27 | 63 | 88 |
| Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing | 11.0% | 5.4% | 6.9% | 7.6% | 10.9% | 15.6% |
| C COWA measure: Total number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants | 1,749 | 1,549 | 1,269 | 1,681 | 1,617 | 1,783 |
| COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas | 247 | 191 | 152 | 268 | 233 | 240 |
| COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas | 14.1% | 12.3% | 12.0% | 15.9% | 14.4% | 13.5% |
| D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience | 36 | 32 | 28 | 45 | 55 | 29 |
| Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience | 1.8% | 1.9% | 1.9% | 2.4% | 3.0% | 1.6% |
| E Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants | 1,774 | 1,843 | 1,644 | 1,365 | 1,786 | 1,680 |
| Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2 | 1,663 | 1,706 | 1,504 | 1,255 | 1,589 | 1,546 |
| Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2 | 93.7% | 92.6% | 91.5% | 91.9% | 89.0% | 92.0% |
| 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 | 3 | 1 | 0 | -1.5 | +3.8 |
| G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey | 0 | 0 | 0 | 837 | 0 | 847 |
| The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination | 0 | 0 | 0 | 811 | 0 | 821 |
| The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination | | | | 96.9% | | 96.9% |
| G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 680 | 0 | 689 |
| The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 420 | 0 | 427 |
| The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment | | | | 61.8% | | 62.0% |
| H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers | 1,138 | 1,257 | 1,614 | 1,640 | 1,469 | 1,590 |