



**Queen Margaret
University**
EDINBURGH

**INTERIM
Outcome Agreement
2020-23**

January 2021

PRINCIPAL'S FOREWORD

In considering my foreword to this three year Outcome Agreement, I have reflected on the key issues that have emerged from the refresh of our Strategic Plan and production of a new Delivery Plan. I have also taken into account, of course, the impact of the pandemic on both our university and the wider community that we serve.

The pandemic has raised significant challenges for the university. It has also served to reinforce our commitment to helping to create a better society through education, research and innovation and by providing a supportive and creative learning environment in which students and staff thrive. This remains our overriding purpose. In seeking to fulfil it, we are clear and realistic about our strengths, focussed on strategic goals, persistent in pursuing opportunities and overcoming barriers and guided by our values.

The University has met the objective of delivering high quality teaching and research throughout 2020, as well as providing support to students both on campus and online. Despite the undoubted challenges, the blended delivery model has worked well, combining face-to-face learning with synchronous online teaching and asynchronous online content.

Our approach has been founded on a creative and collegiate response to the challenges posed by Covid-19. We have been helped in this by the hard work and resilience of the student body; and our students' generosity of spirit under these testing circumstances has been especially appreciated.

Whilst we remain in the midst of the pandemic and having to operate under severe restrictions, we are also focussed on the longer-term challenges and opportunities over the lifetime of this Agreement. Even before the pandemic, we were focussed on the need to respond with agility and creativity to external factors, including accelerating technological developments and innovation, an increasing focus on sustainability, social and demographic change. None of these has changed because of the pandemic; indeed the pace of change has, if anything, accelerated.

Before the pandemic, we were cognisant of the likely impacts of Brexit - these have now begun to materialise. And we were aware of the need to plan for, and respond to, internal challenges and opportunities, investing in our people and infrastructure so as to help secure our future sustainability and growth.

We recognise that the nature of learning itself is changing. We have discovered that we can successfully embrace rapid technological change and we are committed to developing the way we teach and research to be flexible and responsive both to the needs of our students and the communities we serve. There is no going back to the situation pre-Covid; instead, we will aim to take the best of what we have learned during the pandemic and apply that as we move forward. That will not be easy, and will require support and innovation from government and its agencies.

In line with our history as an institution that provided education for working class women, at a time when society made that challenging, we will deliver on our stated commitments to widen access, to promote mental health and well-being, and enhance student progression, retention and attainment at a time of equal, if not greater challenge for society.

We will focus also on the generation of increased teaching and research income, strengthening external alliances, building on high quality, outcome driven partnerships, investing in infrastructure support, and maximising all available opportunities to collaborate.

At the time of writing this foreword, I am a little over a year into my role as Principal and Vice-Chancellor. This Outcome Agreement is wide-ranging and ambitious in its scope, but the commitment, creativity and expertise of all with whom I have engaged within the University provides me with the confidence that the outcomes set out in this agreement will be achieved.

Sir Paul Grice FRSE FAcSS
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

1 INTRODUCTION

This Outcome Agreement sets out a number of objectives across the range of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded activity, namely, teaching, research and innovation. In line with previous versions of our Outcome Agreement, we have established outcomes that align with the SFC measures of progress where applicable, but we have also established outcomes against internal baseline measures of progress.

We welcome the opportunity provided to publish an interim agreement for Session 2020-21 that captures, at a high level, the contributions, impact and outcomes to be delivered by the University, and provides reassurance on the use of allocated SFC funding for 2020-21. We welcome too the recognition by the SFC that institutions are working under emergency conditions, delivering a blended approach to learning, ensuring the well-being of students and staff, and delivering on an education-led economic recovery for Scotland. We continue to frame our contribution for this academic year within the three agreement submitted to the SFC early in 2020, but recognise that there has been some reprioritising and restatement of outcomes in response to the pandemic.

Our focus remains on maintaining baselines established in our three year agreement where this is possible. In setting outcomes for 2020-21, we continue to be ambitious nevertheless—for our students, our staff and our wider stakeholders, including the SFC. We commit to continuing to deliver on key sector priorities and outcomes for students, for research, for economic recovery and social renewal, and for responsive and collaborative institutions.

2 INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

During 2019-20, the University Court dedicated a significant proportion of its business to reflecting on the continuing ‘fitness for purpose’ of the University Strategic Plan and associated goals. The arrival of Sir Paul Grice as Principal in October 2019 galvanised the review timetable, with staff, students and other stakeholders consulted on the development of the refreshed strategy over a four- month period to February 2020. The Strategy was approved by the University Court in April 2020.

The Strategy (and associated Delivery Plan) has been reviewed further in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have acknowledged in our delivery plan that we must contribute to the pandemic recovery, manage its impact, and embed lessons learned over the period of the pandemic into our future development.

We believe that, despite the impact of the pandemic, the core principles of our strategy remain relevant and achievable. Our Strategic Plan, and this Outcome Agreement, continue to reflect the University’s established commitment to, amongst other things: delivering excellence in its core areas of expertise; promoting inclusiveness, equality, and a sense of community; working in partnership; encouraging and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship; maintaining the relevance of our academic portfolio, and equipping graduates with the skills and attributes necessary to succeed in an evolving economic and social context. We are confident that these reflect Scottish Government priorities, and the SFC’s core objectives.

The University Strategy 2020-25, and the accompanying Delivery Plan, sets out how we will respond to evolutionary change, building on our key strengths, adapting to overcome obstacles and creating new areas of strength. In so doing, we draw on our heritage. From its beginnings in 1875, Queen Margaret University has consistently addressed society’s needs and enabled positive social change. Our Strategy holds true to the principles and values on which the University was founded.

We have reframed our Mission and Vision, and have reflected instead on our **Purpose**

We see our Purpose as helping to create a better society through education, research and innovation, and by providing a supportive and creative learning environment in which students and staff thrive.

In seeking to fulfil this purpose, we are clear and realistic about our strengths, focussed on strategic goals, persistent in pursuing opportunities and overcoming barriers and guided by our values.

Our purpose is underpinned by our **Values**.

We are a university that is modern in its outlook and facilities, but with a maturity built on a long history of serving the community, both locally and globally, and enhancing its wellbeing. We work in a transparent and inclusive manner and hold to core values in everything we do.

- We value **intellectual curiosity** and the journey of discovery: we design our teaching and research to facilitate this.
- We value **social justice**: in fact, it underpins our world view. We embrace equality, diversity, inclusion, respect, and supporting our communities. Opportunities and access are open to all and on a fair basis.
- We value **excellence**: this is embedded in our research, teaching and learning, knowledge exchange and the services we provide. It will be exemplified in the experience of our students, staff and partners.
- We value **ambition**: we inspire our students and staff to achieve the best that they can. We pursue opportunities, often in partnership and collaboration with others, to transform and influence society for the better and enhance our visibility within the higher education sector and the wider economy.
- We value **environmental sustainability**: we recognise the severe threats to our environment and will be a sector leader in response. Our modern campus is a great asset in this work.
- We value **the individual** and encourage **collective support**: each member of staff and each student has their own journey to make and their own contribution to give. Queen Margaret University provides the supportive environment to facilitate this.

To fulfil our purpose, we have developed a set of strategic goals, with associated outputs, that are underpinned by our values and our alignment to the internal and external environment. These are to:

- provide distinctive, accessible, high quality education.
- deliver transformative research and innovation.
- seek out partnership and collaboration.
- invest in the long term future of the university.
- embed sustainability across our portfolio and practices

Each of these goals finds expression in this Outcome Agreement, with its focus on supporting students, serving the community, creating meaningful partnerships, promoting impactful knowledge exchange, all within the context of a deep-rooted commitment to social justice.

Our Outcome Agreement therefore aligns with our strategy, so that we are able to contribute effectively towards sector level impacts, according to our stated purpose and areas of strengths. This agreement presents an opportunity for us to describe how we contribute towards the Scottish Government's drive towards excellence and equity across the education and skills landscape in Scotland. We have interpreted and applied the SFC Guidance in a way that is appropriate and relevant to our particular context and agreed purpose.

An updated statement on our use of University Innovation Funding (UIF) supports this agreement for the period 2020-21.

3 COMMITTED TO NATIONAL MEASURES

As requested in the SFC Outcome Agreement guidance, we confirm our commitment to maintaining, wherever possible, the 2018/19 baseline levels of performance in the national measures, as set out in the table provided to us by the SFC in January 2021.

As instructed by the SFC guidance, we have not updated our targets for this interim version of our 2020/21 Outcome Agreement. Where available, we have included our current 2020/21 targets for percentage measures, as well outcomes planned for by 2022/23, in the national measures table below. Also presented are the baseline measures for 2018/19. We have updated the positive destination and professional employment data percentages with our 2018/19 baselines, as they were not in the table provided.

We will review and update these targets for our 2021/22 Outcome Agreement, a draft of which will be submitted to the SFC in May 2021, for feedback under the revised Agreement timescale.

	Measure	2018-19 baseline	2020-21 target	2022/23 target
A	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	783		
B	Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	335		
	Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	211		
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	63.0%	At least 62%	At least 62%
C	COWA measure: Total number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants	753		
	COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	88		
	COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	11.7%	15%	16%
D	Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	9		
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	1.1%		TBA

E	Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants	661		
	Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	577		
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	87.3%	93%	93%
F	The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey.	-1	0	+1
G1	The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination.	97%	In the top 50% in Scotland	In the top 50% in Scotland
G2	The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment.	73%	75%	77%
H	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers.	608		

4 FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS

Queen Margaret University seeks to promote and support fair access in a number of ways. The projects and programmes of delivery detailed below respond directly to a number of recommendations detailed in 'A Blueprint for Fairness: Final Report of the Commission on Widening Access' including recommendations 4,5,7,9,11,12,15 and 21. We continue to focus on ensuring that this work is embedded in our practice, and contributes to a holistic institutional approach to widening access and participation.

This section of the Outcome Agreement, together with Section 4 below, addresses how we are responding to the CoWA report, and how we are utilising our WARF funding allocation in support of COWA. Importantly, along with the remainder of this document, it describes how we are delivering on our strategic objectives in terms of an excellent student experience, maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and quality of provision, and equality of opportunity.

4.1 WARF allocation

We are committed to widening participation amongst students who have previously been inhibited from entering Higher Education for social, economic or cultural reasons, and to taking active steps to maximise their persistence and success.

Our widening participation and retention strategy seeks to increase student numbers from non-traditional groups, including those that are: first generation to go to Higher Education; from low progression schools; reside in communities in the lowest 20% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (MD20); articulating students from Scotland's Colleges, disabled students, BAME students, male students studying Nursing and Allied Health programmes, and those who are Care Experienced.

Our approach to widening access offers built-in tailored support throughout the learner journey, including points of transition. To deliver on these commitments, we have invested

carefully in people and structures, utilising fully our SFC Widening Access and Retention Funding (WARF) allocation of £611k (April 2020) for this purpose.

Specifically, we invest some 90% of our WARF funding on dedicated people who develop and implement our access agenda through school, college and community engagement, and provide tailored support to applicant and student groups whom we have identified through our research are at a higher risk of not persisting with their studies. The latter includes entrants from SIMD20 and SIMD40 quintiles, articulating students, those from a care-experienced background, student carers, those estranged from their families and most recently, male students.

Our Widening Participation and Outreach Team, consisting of three staff funded directly by WARF, works determinedly with a range of partners, including schools, colleges, community groups, third sector and voluntary agencies, and local councils, to maximise the opportunities of people in Edinburgh and the Lothians and beyond. Detailed explanation of many of the projects and initiatives on which the team lead, or in which they are involved, is provided within this Outcome Agreement, including partnership work through LEAPS, SHEP and SWAP, the development and promotion of articulation pathways, and support to entrants through transition, induction and peer mentoring.

Each School continues also to receive funds to support the role of WISeR Coordinator. This role supports the implementation and embedding of best practice in relation to widening participation and student retention activity within each School, with the primary aim being to engage staff at the local level with the University's priorities in these areas. Priorities established for each School are determined by a number of factors, and are evidence based, drawing on data including programme application, admission and retention.

4.2 Contextualised Admissions

We have established standard and minimum entry requirements for each undergraduate programme, which are published in the University prospectus in line with CoWA recommendations. The prospectus includes information on QMU's commitment to widening access and approach to contextual admissions, presented in simple, clear language and developed in accordance with the 'Common Language' guidelines produced by Universities Scotland: <https://view.joomag.com/qmu-undergraduate-prospectus-ug-prospectus-2020/0554446001551699867?short>

Our Contextual Admissions Policy commits to making offers at the published minimum entry requirements to identified groups where we recognise that a range of factors may have influenced attainment. These groups include:

- Care experienced.
- Eligible for the Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS).
- Living in an area of deprivation, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

We have recently extended these arrangements to further groups ie those:

- With caring responsibilities;
- Estranged from their family;
- Armed forces/ex-military veteran.

We believe that the actions set out above align directly with the Scottish Government's intensification agenda.

4.3 Commitment to Priority Groups

4.3.1 SIMD 20 and 40

For entry in 2019-20, 13.8% of Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants (SDUEs) were drawn from the SIMD 20 demographic, and 34.4% from SIMD 40. This aligns with SFC's stated ambition that by 2021 entrants from the SIMD 20 demographic should represent at least 10% of full-time first degree entrants to every Scottish university, and 16% of full-time first degree entrants for the sector as a whole. We remain committed to the original target of 16% and 28% of our Scottish Domiciled entrants being drawn from the SIMD 20 and SIMD 40 demographic respectively in 2023.

4.3.2 HN entrants

Using QMU data to match the SFC national measure, we calculate that 61.1% of HN entrants admitted to the University did so with advanced standing in 2020-21 – which is just short of our target of 62%. We acknowledge that this is lower than the percentage achieved for entry in 2019-20 however. We attribute this relative reduction to the introduction of new undergraduate programmes, including Initial Teacher Education and Paramedic Science, which offer little or no opportunity for articulation due to placement requirements for professional registration. This has resulted in our accepting an increased number of HN students into Level 1 rather than into Level 2.

We consider that facilitating entry with advanced standing will be more challenging over the next couple of admissions' cycles, with places for such entry on over-subscribed programmes being reduced to accommodate the exceptionally large first year intake in 2020-21 that will move through the system - that intake having been impacted by decisions around SQA Higher and A Level grades during the pandemic.

The restrictions arising from the Coronavirus emergency, including the move by colleges to teach HN students remotely, undoubtedly reduced our access to college students, and to promotion of articulation opportunities. We have been proactive in developing a range of online resources that have been widely shared with the college sector, but engagement in these materials has been very difficult to monitor. We have worked collaboratively with Edinburgh Napier University and Heriot Watt University, both of which have had similar experiences, to produce and to promote widely a guide for college students thinking of applying to university. Nevertheless, we consider that 2020-23 will need to be a period of recovery for college applications to university, with levels of application and acceptance being influenced by, amongst other factors, rates of deferrals by College applicants, and by existing university students.

In terms of our continuing reach, we are confident that our articulation agreements offer full coverage of all available routes across the majority of Scottish colleges. To expand our articulation provision however, we have identified delivery of college partnership degrees as an area for growth. We have made significant progress in this area, with partnerships with Fife College for a BA (Hons) Creative Enterprise, and in development, a BA (Hons) Childhood Practice, as well as our established partnership with West College Scotland and New College Lanarkshire to deliver Drama undergraduate degree provision. We are currently developing a new route with Edinburgh College and City of Glasgow College for a BSc (Hons) Sports Rehabilitation, offering progression from HND Sports Therapy. We consider that this demonstrates our commitment to responding to local demand - for education and industry – providing routes to degree level study at a convenient location for those with talent and commitment, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Paragraph 4.1 below expands on our articulation activity.

4.3.3 LEAPS, SHEP and SWAP – access and transition

In developing our previous Outcome Agreement, we disaggregated targets for the Lothian Equal Access Partnership (LEAPS). Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) and Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) East entrants. This allows us to monitor more closely the application and offer rates for mature SWAP applicants, and applicants applying from LEAPS/SHEP schools. We acknowledge that mature applicants and applicants from low progression schools can face additional challenges when applying to University, and have addressed these barriers through our contextualised admissions arrangements, described earlier in this agreement.

In response to the pandemic restrictions, we ran our longstanding and successful QMAvance programme in online form in summer 2020. The programme is designed to support transition to the first year of a degree programme for those students from a widening access background entering level 1 of a QMU degree. The course has been consistently oversubscribed historically, so we have moved this year to expand our provision in response. In particular, we are now offering QMAvance to SWAP eligible students and HN students entering 1st year only, and delivering a discrete version - "LEAP into QMU" - to LEAPS pupils. By so doing, we have almost doubled the number of students who can take part in this dedicated WP transition programme that offers an informative and confidence-building introduction to the university. These programmes aim to develop in participants a self-assurance in their abilities, whilst providing early access to a range of key services and staff. They are also staffed by a team of students with widening participation backgrounds, who are paid for their work using WARF funding, and are provided with valuable experience that enhances their employability.

In 2021, we will deliver a new project, 'Step Into Health @ QMU', aimed at S5 LEAPS eligible students interested in studying and applying to our nursing and allied health programmes. 'Step into Health' will provide pupils with experience and insight into studying these subjects at university, but will also provide important experience on which to draw for their university application personal statement.

4.3.4 *Students from a Care Experienced Background, Student Carers and Estranged Students*

Through our Head of Widening Participation and Outreach, we have established an initial point of contact for care experienced students, supported by a dedicated Support for Care Leavers webpage: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-care-leavers>

We have been humbled in recent years by the increasing number of care-experienced students who have chosen to study at QMU, and we are committed to ensuring they receive the student experience they so richly deserve. We have made steady progress. In academic year 2018-19, we recruited eight care-experienced students (1% of SDUEs), in 2019-20, thirteen declared as care experienced, and current data indicates that we have recruited fifteen care-experienced entrants in 2020-21.

We work with a range of agencies and Local Authorities to support care-experienced applicants, and contribute directly to a number of projects aimed at supporting these young people into Higher Education. We continue to work in partnership with the Who Cares Scotland?, Care Experienced, Estranged & Carers East Forum (CEECEF), East Lothian Champions' Board and the Hub for Success, to support care experienced young people and to promote the University as a positive destination. We are also active partners in East Lothian's Corporate Parenting Board.

Through our partnership with Who Cares Scotland, we established a Corporate Parenting Plan, published in March 2018: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-care-leavers/> and our Widening Participation and Outreach team work with Who Cares Scotland to deliver associated Corporate Parenting training.

In 2020-21, we will update and refresh our Corporate Parenting Plan to reflect and address the Care Review recommendations detailed in *The Promise*. We will engage with, and listen to, our care experienced community to inform and guide the new plan and associated policies, and from the outset, will adopt a key recommendation made by care experienced contributors to the Care Review, by re-naming our policy as **QMU's Good Parenting Guide**.

We are partners with East Lothian Council and Rock Trust in the delivery of an innovative housing project for care experienced young people in East Lothian. 'My Place' offers two care experienced young people a room in a 3-bed property in Musselburgh as their first 'adult' tenancy. Each property has a Peer Flatmate, who acts as a role model for the care experienced young people. Peer Flatmates are recruited through the University, and through partner universities in the Lothians, and live rent-free for at least a year with the young people. Queen Margaret University students are supporting three properties currently. We hope to place further QMU students as new properties are added to the project in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

We partnered with Carers Trust Scotland in the development of our 'Student Carers Support' policy. A student carer is defined by the Carers Trust Scotland as "anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support". We were delighted to receive Carers Trust Scotland's 'Going Higher for Student Carers' award in May 2020, in recognition of our on-going commitment to support our student carers.

We have established formal links with Edinburgh Young Carers, and are part of the Edinburgh Young Carers Network Group. This engagement has supported delivery of presentations to our Initial Teacher Education students on the educational challenges often faced by young carers. We have a dedicated point of contact for student carers, and a supporting web page resource; <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-student-carers/>

We have a comprehensive plan to provide support for estranged students, and are committed to the Stand Alone Pledge. That commitment was recognised in November 2020 when we received a Stand Alone Pledge Award for our efforts to support our Estranged Students throughout lockdown. That commitment will continue throughout 2020-21, and the lifetime of our three year Outcome Agreement. Details of the dedicated point of contact and the support we have put in place can be found at: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-estranged-students/>

4.3.5 Support for Ex-Service and Veterans

We are a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant, and have supported a number of engagements aimed at supporting ex-military/armed forces students and their families, including attendance at the Army Apprenticeship and Education Fair held annually at Leuchars Air Base in Fife. In his capacity as our Armed Forces Champion, the Head of Widening Participation and Outreach attends related events and, together with staff from across the university, represents our interests on the City of Edinburgh Universities Joint Military Education Committee and has recently developed a supporting web page, which sets out support now in place:

4.3.6 Protected characteristics

On the basis that we have adopted a wider definition of 'under-represented groups' that has extended beyond that of the SIMD national indicator, we have included specific outcomes for protected characteristic groups in our Outcome Agreements since 2011. We have in place a range of initiatives to increase the participation and retention of those from a broad range of non-traditional groups. This includes disabled students, BAME students, mature students, and male students studying Allied Health programmes.

We are committed to enhancing the student experience by creating and promoting an inclusive learning environment. This applies to recruitment and admissions, to the curriculum, teaching and assessment, to welfare and support services, and to staff development and training. We continue to benchmark and evaluate our performance in this area, primarily through the Equality and Diversity Committee and through the Widening Participation and Student Retention (WiSeR) Board.

Data is produced on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, gender reassignment, religion and belief, sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity. The Outcome Agreement Data Group, which is a sub-group of the WiSeR board, meets at key points in the year to monitor and review progress in the achievement of our Outcome Agreement outcomes. Using both SFC national measures and institutional specific measures, it identifies areas of potential intervention in response to any emerging trends as appropriate and where possible.

Regarding the proportion of entrants with protected characteristics, using the SFC national measure, figures from November 2020 for SDUEs in 2020-21 suggest that 17% have declared a disability, 6% are from BAME backgrounds, and 46% are mature. We know from experience that the percentage of disabled students will increase during the year as additional students declare, or are assessed through referral to the disability services team. The University is no longer notified automatically when a student is in receipt of the Disabled Student Allowance, but has to pursue this directly with the student. This has an impact on the accuracy of the data collection.

During session 2020-21, we have committed to progress work in support of our Race Declaration, made in August 2020: https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/advance-he/sector%20racism%20declaration%202020.08.2020_1599751012.pdf

This commitment will extend beyond 2020-21. We have established a Project Steering Group, under the leadership of the Principal, and are progressing priority work-streams, including:

- Fostering an anti-racist culture of understanding.
- Decolonising the curriculum.
- Constructing systematic, anti-racist development practices.

- Investing in a diverse workforce.
- Recording and responding effectively to racist incidents.
- Monitoring and reviewing organisational race data.
- Consulting with Black community partners.

We continue to be supported in our work by the Advance HE Project Team in Scotland, and look forward to the publication in spring 2021 of the Race Toolkit. We are working also with colleagues across the sector as part of the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland's Enhancement Themes, and will focus during 2021-22 on work being progressed currently by our Student Experience Committee on Decolonising the Curriculum.

As part of our Public Sector Equality Duties, we will publish by 30 April 2021 a 3 year Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes. That will include priorities that will influence the next iteration of our Gender Action Plan, originally published in July 2017. Work on that document is currently in development, but we will re-commit to increasing the application, offer and enrolment of mature and younger male applicants to Psychology and to Nursing, the two subject areas identified as having a severe gender imbalance within the University under the definition adopted by the SFC.

We recognise that, application and entry to some degree programmes is subject to wider societal influences. Audit Scotland's report on the Scottish NHS workforce records that 1 in 10 of the Nursing workforce is male, and that 2 in 10 of the Allied Health professions are male. A rebalancing of the student demographic requires partnership working with schools, Colleges, parents, and with the professions and wider community influencers.

QMU has a very similar percentage of males to females to the national picture (differences of 1%). The data on mature students shows that the gender split is far less pronounced, and the conversion rates are much higher, which may be evidence of the work QMU staff are doing with applicants entering QMU through alternative routes.

A report for NHS Education for Scotland (NES) on underrepresentation of men in nursing recommends the need for a positive national 'rebranding' of nursing, a co-ordinated marketing campaign by colleges, universities and the NHS including the use of high profile examples of men in nursing (Whitford et al 2018). We continue to promote Nursing as a career for men through a number of video profiles on our website, and as part of our 'Step Up to QMU' promotional campaign www.qmu.ac.uk.

We have produced and published a promotional leaflet in full colour A5 format, highlighting the range of careers available with a Nursing degree. The leaflet features five student profiles, three of whom are males. Our website also reflects this commitment also: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-stories/gareth-pocock-bsc-hons-nursing-year-3/>

We have established formal next level articulation agreements with Borders College and West Lothian College that present students undertaking HNC Care and Administrative Practice with the opportunity to articulate to Level 2 BSc (Hons) Nursing. The focus during the lifetime of this agreement will continue to be on outreach work with Schools and Colleges.

Sections 5, 6 and 8 of this Agreement describe progress and our continued commitment to advancing the position of women in Research and through our governance structures.

We are fully committed to our duties under the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act, and to contributing in a meaningful way to the first BSL National Plan. We published our BSL Action plan in October 2018: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/footer/bsl-action-plan/>

Our Plan 2018-2024 is framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan, where these are relevant to our work. We believe we have developed a plan that is ambitious, responsive, builds on our progress and which will be shaped continually by national initiatives, local needs and the priorities of BSL users. Our actions are embedded into our Inclusive Learning and Teaching Materials Policy, and feedback sought from students and staff through informal and formal mechanisms, including staff development and workshops sessions.

Our Action Plan focuses on improving access, removing barriers, improving experience, and removing obstacles through addressing the following five key National themes:

- Post-School Education
- Training, Work and Social Security
- Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and the Arts
- Democracy

In doing so, we have set out our aims, commitment and the associated actions to ensure that our Deaf and Deafblind BSL Users are supported in their ability to learn, work, be creative, live life to the full and to make their contributions to our communities, our culture and our economy. We commit to playing our part in the shared Scottish Government vision that Scotland will be the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit.

Our associated key actions centre around heightening awareness within the University, training staff (particularly front of house staff) and students, consulting with and responding to BSL users' views and creating opportunities for development and growth across the University.

Additionally, we believe we have an important contribution to make to the plan through the delivery of online modules in Advanced BSL/ Interpreting, and the delivery of an on-line Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in BSL/English Interpreting.

The on-line modules are for experienced practitioners who have been through academic training in the past, as well as those who may have joined the profession through vocational routes. All modules will aim to engage interpreters to reflect more critically about their work and relate professional practice to evidence-based research. Subject to appropriate funding, we hope to introduce further provision in this area during the lifetime of this Outcome Agreement.

4.4 Closing the gap – working with Schools

The disruption to primary, high school and college education arising from the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant, and delivery of face-to-face engagements presented a number of operational challenges to the University initially. However, since March 2020, we have moved the majority of our activity to online delivery successfully. The renewed focus on on-line delivery promoted the review of our web pages and resources and the production of enhanced content by our Widening Participation and Outreach team. This work will continue over the remainder of Academic year 2020-21 to ensure respective audiences can access useful and up-to-date information and resources with ease.

The extent to which individual pupil and college student learning has been affected has still to be fully understood, but it is clear that many students and pupils have missed out on learning, and that disadvantaged individuals are likely to have been disproportionately affected. A recently published research brief from the Sutton Trust states that 'the impact of the pandemic on learning continues to be unevenly felt, with over half (55%) of teachers

at the least affluent state schools reporting a lower than normal standard of work returned by pupils since the shutdown, compared to 41% at the most affluent state schools and 30% at private schools'¹.

It was in recognition of this immediate crisis that the University and East Lothian Council joined forces with the STV Children's Appeal and a local family charity to launch the East Lothian Tutoring Initiative: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/20210121-east-lothian-tutoring-initiative/>

This tutoring initiative is focussed on students who are in 4th – 6th year and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- from a low income background (for instance where a student is entitled to EMA, free meals in school, or where the family is entitled to a benefit such as Universal Credit);
- has spent time in care or being looked after or who is estranged;
- is a young carer - by this we mean a young person who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support;
- lives in one of Scotland's 20% most disadvantaged communities as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD20).

The programme will deliver 10 weeks of online sessions to pupils across the six partner schools, offering over 100 pupils the opportunity to take part in the programme. Delivery is focussed on Maths and Science tutoring support. Each of the six schools have appointed a Programme Coordinator, to identify and prioritise young people who meet programme criteria for referral to the tutoring initiative. Some flexibility has been provided for schools to include pupils who do not directly meet any of the criteria but who are facing significant barriers to learning and would benefit from the programme.

We were delighted to form a partnership with Edinburgh College, which will guaranteeing an unconditional offer to pupils who engage in ELTI.

As reported earlier in this agreement, we continue to support prospective S3 to S6 high school pupils (and their families and advisers) in partnership with the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP). Our engagement with the Lothian Equal Access Partnership (LEAPS) also provides us with access to over 5000 pupils through a range of activities, including one to one interviews with S5/S6 pupils.

In addition to our work with partner agencies, we deliver a number of university led programmes of engagement, including our Summer School, which is supported by Santander Universities. The summer school targets P6 and P7 pupils from widening participation backgrounds attending schools throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians. We were delighted to be able to deliver successfully our 2020 QMU Summer School through online delivery. We plan to deliver an on-campus Summer School in 2021, subject to any restrictions in place at that time.

¹ Learning in Lockdown: Rebecca Montacute and Carl Cullinane, January 2021

5 HIGH QUALITY, EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING.

5.1 Articulation

We are committed to working with college partners to maximise progression from college to university and have a comprehensive set of articulation agreements with colleges across Scotland. As referenced above, we are working to develop articulation opportunities beyond those afforded by articulation agreements.

The embedding by the SFC of additional funded places supports us in continuing to offer Associate Student places to students on programmes at Edinburgh College, Fife College, West Lothian College and Newbattle Abbey College. Recruitment to the existing Associate Student programmes has proved challenging over recent years, so we have been refocussing our efforts in this area. We are currently in the early stages of developing a new degree programme with Edinburgh College and City of Glasgow College: BSc (Hons) Sports Rehabilitation, which will be a dedicated and bespoke Associate student route that offers a new professionally recognised degree not currently available in Scotland. We are confident it will provide an attractive option for college students at these partner colleges.

The development demonstrates our commitment to providing an integrated tertiary education model, through collaboration and partnership, and adds to our growing portfolio of QMU degrees delivered at college campuses across the country. We consider that this model of delivery has the potential to increase student articulation numbers, but it does require a flexible funding approach across all partners ie the university, colleges and the SFC.

In an exciting innovative collaboration, we are working with Edinburgh College to develop a new NQ Access to Paramedic Science course. Routes into this degree from college are well covered for mature students by SWAP and HNs, but for younger learners, the route was unclear. Developing this bespoke course for delivery at Edinburgh College will offer younger learners a qualification that can be accepted for L1 entry, or for a relevant HN if this is required. Building this new qualification in partnership will result in better prepared learners, and offers opportunities for university-to-college mentoring and volunteering. Long term, there is the potential for this NQ to develop into a nationally accredited NC course.

We are delighted to be one of the main development partners in the Pathways.ac.uk web based application (see www.pathways.ac.uk). Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh Napier, Edinburgh College and Fife College took responsibility for phase one of the app development, which was successfully launched at the end of July 2020. The University continues to work with Edinburgh College and Fife College on phase two of this exciting development in 2021, as we look to include other options for articulation outside the standard SQA HN format. The app provides a further tool for advisers working in Skills Development Scotland, schools and colleges, and learners, to research articulation routes in the South East of Scotland, so that learners can make fully informed decisions on their journey through education.

Our College Partnership Manger is now a member of the SCAPP Articulation Forum, established to offer expert practitioner advice and guidance to the Commissioner for Widening Access. We hope that QMU's extensive knowledge and experience in this area will contribute to this national forum and its ongoing efforts to improve the learner journey in Scotland.

We continue to work hard also to retain direct entrants, and believe that the dedicated support we have put in place, both pre and post entry, has contributed to a retention rate of 94% for this category of student (section 4.2 below refers).

In responding to the restrictions arising from the pandemic, we moved our long established dedicated week-long induction programme for Direct Entrants onto an online format, offering students 8 weeks of engagement, with three online sessions per week and each week offering a different theme. The online format continued to offer entrants the opportunity to meet lecturers and other students, and to start to develop the academic skills required for a successful university experience. Materials were hosted after the live events on a dedicated webpage for students to view again, or at an alternative time to suit.

Whilst we believe there is potential for these materials to be incorporated into future inductions, our experience suggests that an on-campus event promotes higher levels of engagement, and we look forward to returning to an on-campus format as we emerge from the pandemic.

5.2 Retention

Our self-evaluation for Session 2019-20 reports on progress with retention targets. We are working hard to ensure that we maintain these at the baseline levels achieved in 2018-19. We remain committed to an outcome that would see 93% of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2. We believe this will be challenging however, especially for some key groups such as SIMD20 entrants, where we have experienced an increase in deferrals in 2019-20, impacted by the challenges presented by the pandemic.

We recognise a range of factors as being important contributors to student persistence, including good mental health and wellbeing, engagement in academic study and participation in social groups. Student resilience and persistence is promoted also by access to dedicated support for additional learning needs, through peer mentoring, by providing access to financial advice and support and through targeted interventions at key transition points, from pre-entry through to post-graduation. The Coronavirus emergency has had an impact on many of these contributing factors, and will continue to do so for a further period.

We have a number of strategies in place to enhance student engagement, persistence and retention. Our approach offers support to students throughout their student journey and beyond, recognising that promoting retention and success to all, benefits all. Initiatives are evaluated through student feedback and evidence of impact.

As described throughout this document, we have adapted, and moved to on-line delivery of services and initiatives to ensure continued student support throughout the pandemic.

Withdrawal and deferral reports are reviewed on a weekly basis. At the time of writing, reports suggest that there is a notable increase in student deferrals, while student withdrawals remain comparable to the previous year.

Throughout the differing levels of restriction placed on the university due to the pandemic, we have provided a full range of support services to students, both on-line and face to face. Student Services staff, including Wellbeing and Counselling staff, returned to campus in August 2020, after careful risk assessment, and under strict hygiene and other mitigation measures. Staff have continued to deliver face to face and online appointments, with students having the opportunity to choose either. Between 40-50% have chosen to access support face to face. From a therapeutic point of view, this has been very beneficial for the students.

We have observed that, during the pandemic, there has been a change in the issues with which students have presented. We believe that many have found the move to on-line learning challenging, with many students with dyslexia, anxiety and additional learning needs having presented in particular.

In the early stages of the pandemic, we wrote to health students who were deployed in the NHS and offered them counselling out of hours if needed. We have continued to provide evening counselling from the beginning of term to students who, due to individual circumstances, struggle to access the service during business hours.

We have held a number of online “isolation cafes” in partnership with the Students’ Union (SU) for students who have been socially isolating and have felt isolated or have had queries. We have also provided wellbeing walks in partnership with the SU for students to encourage students to get out and to break some of isolation felt.

Over the Festive period, we provided a phone line for students who were struggling, who were unable to go home during that period, and/or who felt isolated. We also put in place arrangements to proactively call those students who had identified they wanted a call over the period. The service was open for incoming calls each day over the Festive period, with the exception of Christmas Day and New Year’s Day.

Given the required changes to the delivery of teaching and learning since March 2020, we have been unable to monitor student engagement through our Electronic Record of Attendance system. We continue to evaluate the most effective alternative way to monitor student engagement over our existing platforms, including access the Student Hub. Students identified as not engaging and considered to be at risk of not persisting with their studies are offered appropriate academic and pastoral support and guidance.

We continue to work to remove stigma around mental health. Our Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group, which is a joint partnership between the Students’ Union and University, developed our Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, available at <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/5900/student-mental-health-and-wellbeing-policy-october-2016.pdf>

We deliver an integrated system that supports students with mental health issues across different levels. The key features of our model are:

- *Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy*: key principles of promotion, prevention and support.
- *Investment in Wellbeing and Mental Health Mentoring* through our Wellbeing Service, funded by our share of the WARF funding.
- *Integrated approach*: all services work together, including Personal Academic Tutors, the Students’ Union, Accommodation and Student Services.
- *Pro-active approach*: based on data analysis. Our Stay-on-Course process flags students who are not attending classes and offers Wellbeing Adviser support to get the student back on track.
- *Preventative approach*: investment in Wellbeing, Sports, Five Ways to wellbeing.
- *Scotland’s Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA) training*: 25% of all QMU staff have been trained over the last two years, as well as over 100 students.
- *Collaborative work*: Local GP Practice, CHANGES charity; East Lothian Council to provide an all-round support service on and off campus.

We have developed a number of new partnerships during the pandemic and have established referral routes for students to alcohol and drugs services (MELDAP) to the Primary Mental Health Service (CWIC), as well as with local Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis groups. We have used funding from the Lottery Young Start Fund to extend our training

programme for students, and to invest in online 24/7 support through Togetherall, as well as training delivery on Mental Health First aid, Working with Trauma and Mindfulness training. We have also invested in a number of resources around Gender Based Violence (GBV) using this funding.

We welcomed the SFC funding for additional counselling posts. This supported the recruitment of two new counsellors, each at 0.6 FTE to the existing Counselling and Wellbeing Units. Specifically, the additional resource has:

- Provided additional drop-ins for self-help and wellbeing support, and for preventing/tackling sexual harassment and violence.
- Delivered psycho-education workshops and staff training.
- Undertaken Counselling assessments.
- Delivered brief Counselling and One-at-a-time Therapy/Single Session Therapy.
- Increased links with local stakeholders

We have built into this additional resource specialist support to assist us in our commitment to addressing sexual harassment and violence. We are working collaboratively with Edinburgh universities and relevant partners to address GBV as part of a wider, regional approach to tackling violence, harassment and hate crime against university students.

We are a member of the Fearless Edinburgh group, which is a multiagency partnership tackling and preventing sexual violence through joint strategic and operational actions. Fearless Edinburgh aims to provide a collective approach and voice to tackling sexual violence for our students. Membership has expanded to include Edinburgh College, SRUC, NHS and Edinburgh Rape Crisis. Primarily focusing on further and higher education settings, the partnership is committed to ending sexual violence by challenging harmful behaviours and attitudes, supporting those impacted and building confidence.

We are contributing to the regional, joint objectives identified in the joint action plan, whilst also developing specific on-campus projects and interventions. We have established a 'Tackling Sexual Harassment and Violence' Working Group to progress our approach to the prevention and reporting of GBV. Reporting to the University's Equality and Diversity Committee, the Group's membership is drawn from key departments across the University, and is co-convened by the Student Union President and the Assistant Secretary for External Liaison and Student Services. Externally, we have members from Police Scotland and Edinburgh Rape Crisis.

The aim is to work collectively to promote a learning environment and campus culture that embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of GBV, sexual violence and the attitudes and behaviours which support them. The group is working to ensure that there are clear and well publicised points of contact for students and staff reporting on cases of sexual harassment and violence. The remit of the Working Group includes implementation of the Scottish Government's Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit, and coordination of University level activities. We have worked to review policies, provide guidance for staff and students, and secure senior level support in line with best practice guidance set out in the UUK 'Changing the Culture' publication.

Our Students' Union has led on the delivery of Bystander Training for students and staff, in cooperation with Police Scotland. A series of staff training sessions delivered early in 2020 focussed on dealing with disclosures, and on equipping staff members with further knowledge and awareness around sexual harassment and violence, including dealing with the disclosure of incidents. We will extend the learning from this into our anti-racist work.

Support and advice for students is set out on a dedicated page on our website which covers consent, getting support, giving support and hosts the reporting tool:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/sexual-harassment-and-violence/>

To progress our commitment to retain more male students, we established a short-life working group during Session 2019-20 to develop an improvement plan. The group met twice, with student representation through the Student Vice-President, and considered a broad data set, including male student engagement with support services, progression and retention. Work was paused however due to the more immediate priorities for members presented by the pandemic. The group will re-convene and progress its work in spring 2021.

5.3 Quality Enhancement and Student satisfaction

The University's framework for institution-led quality review is available on the University's Quality website at: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/>.

Our Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality 2019-20, submitted to the SFC in September 2020, provides an overview of our learning and teaching activity during the pandemic, including adjustments made in response to Covid-19. As set out that Statement, the majority of subject review events planned for 2019-20 were completed in line with the agreed schedule. Just one event was postponed as a direct result of circumstances arising from Covid-19. Fourteen programme review events were held virtually, with some modifications to the usual process. A number of events were held jointly with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). The virtual review process was agreed on a case by case basis with each of the PSRBs to ensure their requirements were met.

The national lockdown in March 2020 presented a number of challenges to the University. We took an early decision that the assessment diet scheduled for semester two should be maintained for the majority of students at all levels, but with necessary adaptations. The main exceptions to this were practical assessment components. We also agreed a set of key principles, and approved a number of adjustments to regulations, policy and practice concerning student assessment, progression and award, and the operation of Boards of Examiners.

The revisions recognise the fundamental importance of fairness and of maintaining the academic integrity of Queen Margaret University degree awards, while addressing the exceptional circumstances. Such recognition was considered to be in the interests of students achieving Queen Margaret University awards, and in the interests of prospective employers, including those requiring professional registration. Amendments were agreed also in terms of the timing of Boards of Examiners and the issuing of verified assessment results, in the physical attendance of Examiners and meeting quoracy.

The interim provisions were subject to further review by the University Senate - in September and December 2020 – with some of the provisions set aside on the basis that the University was able to plan learning and teaching delivery for Academic year 2020-21. That position is being revisited in light of the recent tightening of restrictions in terms of on-campus delivery and movement of students. Updated regulations will be brought before the Senate in March 2021.

We recognise that students are anxious about the impact of the pandemic on their assessment, and we will communicate clearly our approach to assessment in Academic session 2020-21, emphasising that no student will be disadvantaged as a result of Covid-19.

The Students' Union ran a survey in May 2020, repeated in October 2020, to gather students' opinions on the move to online learning and teaching arising from the restrictions

to face to face teaching due to the pandemic. Results were shared across the University to help inform training, development and support in advance of the new academic year.

Over 1000 students took part, with results from October survey demonstrating an overall preference for some face-to-face learning experiences, although there were some students who preferred fully online learning. Students provided very positive feedback on staff adaptation to approaches to learning and teaching, and on the quality of support provided during the pandemic. Students reported some variation in the technical expertise and approach to blended learning from academic staff, and in some cases, this was perceived to have a detrimental impact. Some respondents highlighted the lack of interaction with their peers and lecturers as being a negative factor. Particular concerns were expressed by students around placement learning, and ways to make up the required hours. An online Q&A session on placements led by the Dean of Health Sciences took place on 15 January to address these concerns directly.

There were improvements in our National Student Survey (NSS) 2020 results. The score for overall satisfaction increased to 83%, above the University's benchmark of 81%. Scores for the 'teaching on my course' and 'learning opportunities' categories also improved. There were strong results for a number of subject areas, with three programmes achieving 100% overall satisfaction (Acting for Stage & Screen, Applied Pharmacology, and Nursing). At the time of writing this interim agreement, we have just launched the NSS Survey for 2021. We expect that the survey will capture a range of responses from students on their experiences of the necessary adaptations to programme delivery during the period of the pandemic.

The NSS represents one of the avenues for student feedback but we continue to work hard to ensure direct feedback through our student representative systems. The role of student representatives has been critical this year, given the necessary changes to the delivery of learning and teaching. The University and the Students' Union have continued to work in partnership to ensure its success, with some 268 Class Reps recruited in 2020-21. This ensures coverage of most undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. Training of class representatives has moved online, and incorporates a module from Sparqs, as well as a live online session. Attendance at the Academic Council, the Students' Union (SU) representation forum for class reps, has been higher than in previous years, suggesting that the on-line format has made it more accessible to a wider group of reps.

5.4 Graduate Outcomes and Skills

Through our portfolio of socially and economically relevant educational programmes, we continue to develop graduates and postgraduates who are able to think independently, reflectively and creatively, who are ready for employment, and who have an enthusiasm for lifelong learning. We aim to provide an infrastructure and environment that actively supports graduate start-up.

The most recent HESA PI for employability for the University (published in July 2018, and based on 2016-17 data) is **97.1%**. This places us third in Scotland for graduate employment and further study, and 14th in the UK.

We are in the process of reviewing our Employability Strategy. The Working Group progressing this includes representation from academic and professional services staff, and from external stakeholders. In developing the strategy, the group will consider how graduates from Queen Margaret University will contribute to the post-pandemic recovery. The revised Strategy will be apply from the start of academic year 2021-22.

Our Employer Mentoring Programme continues to provide mentoring to specific groups of students for whom statistics show it can be difficult to find graduate employment. The

programme gives committed and enthusiastic students the opportunity to meet with an experienced individual from a relevant sector, who is willing to offer their time, advice and inside knowledge surrounding the world of work. Priority is given to undergraduate Scottish domiciled male, BAME, mature, direct entrant, care experienced or disabled students.

Since it started, nearly 400 students have participated in the programme, the overall objective of which is to nurture a mentoring culture at the university, where senior students mentor junior students. The programme's goal is to increase confidence in participant students and to prepare WP students for the world of work, as well as create links and job opportunities for them. Feedback from students and mentors suggests that key outcomes are the development of self-awareness, assertiveness and entrepreneurial skills.

The pandemic has had an impact on the number of mentors in 2020-21, due largely to changes in individuals' circumstances eg redundancy or caring commitments. Sessions have also moved on-line, and feedback suggests that this format does not suit all students and mentors. Nevertheless, the programme continues to be offered to target groups, and uptake has been reasonable, despite the challenges.

We will build on work to date to ensure that enterprise and employability is a core component of academic provision at all levels by: increasing start up activity; supporting opportunities for developing and understanding enterprise skills, both within QMU and externally, including placements, internships and participation in enterprise competitions; presenting a single, coherent message about enterprise to all stakeholders; and nurturing relationships developed with employers through other interactions to maximise graduate employment opportunities.

We have set out separately to the SFC how we are utilising our share of the allocated Upskilling Fund, in line with SFC guidance and Scottish Government priorities. Further information on our approach to student entrepreneurship and enterprise is provided in section 6 below.

6 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

6.1 Responding to the immediate challenges of the current emergency – economic recovery and social renewal

We are one of the first seven UK HEIs to retain the 10 Year HR Excellence in Research Award, reflecting our commitment to the new Researcher Development Concordat and supporting researcher mobility post Brexit. We worked with the University of Stirling as a critical friend in the development of our 10 Year HR Excellence Award Submission. We are also one of only 22 UK HEIs to participate in the pilot Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey 2020 (CEDARS) with data used to benchmark our [Concordat for Researcher Development Action Plan 2020-22](#). CEDARS was also used as a QMU research culture health check during the COVID-19 pandemic (May-July 2020) in response to the 2020 Wellcome Trust Research Culture Report. New research culture interventions are being progressed via a series of QMU Wellcome Café Culture events.

As part of a rapid response process, in collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University we have set up an inter-institutional mentoring scheme to support our post-doctoral researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes peer to peer mentoring.

There are a number of other collaborative initiatives in response to COVID-19 including researcher wellbeing workshops with the University of Glasgow and support for research integrity during the pandemic with the University of Dundee/University of Edinburgh.

SFC funding has supported the following QMU projects in response to COVID-19.

- Impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on isolation in Asylum Seekers and Refugees.
- Investigation into the social and cultural impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children from Black, Asian and other racialised minority ethnic communities in Scotland.
- Challenges and opportunities for voice therapy services in the context of COVID-19.
- Community, health and social care system stressors and coping mechanisms during COVID-19.
- Film festivals, audiences, and COVID-19: Crisis, community, and digital comeback.
- Leadership and trust: public communication of COVID-19 in Scotland.
- Parental complaints and teacher wellbeing in Scottish Schools during COVID-19.
- Support After COVID-19: health and social care delivery for COVID-19 and influences on access to support across Scotland.

6.2 Understanding the changing resilience of economic sectors.

Aspects of some sectors, such as food and retail, have emerged resilient by using innovation to adapt and diversify. Key to the place agenda, our food and drink researchers are exploring new and changing practices in retail as the High Street faces unprecedented challenges. We are working with the food industry to understand better how robust and adaptable new product development can fuel new or changing demand ie the takeaway market. In responding to the Scottish Government Inward Investment Plan, researchers are also working with Scottish Development International, and Abertay University on a project with industry in the Netherlands.

We have new and continued investment in collaborative and industry led entrepreneurship programmes to support graduate and research start-up. A new programme, THRIVE, focused on the Food and Drink Sector, was recently launched with SRUC and Abertay University. We have continued investment in SHIFT, focused on the Creative Industries with Glasgow School of Art and the Royal Conservatoire Scotland and with increased emphasis on supporting economic recovery in Events/Hospitality sectors, including new opportunities arising from AI. Our research is improving care and advancing professional practice within the care home sector. We have taken a multidisciplinary approach to developing collaboration with professionals in care homes, business, nursing, and palliative and community settings.

6.3 Institutions produce excellent research outputs

Our strategy for world-class research is reflected increasingly in our continued research successes, including major new publications, the strengthening of our international profile and global collaborations, and a steady increase in research income from a diverse range of funders. We must continue to elevate and sustain our position as a leading post 92 institution. Our structures allow our researchers to pursue bold ideas, be creative and work to the highest standards, and in doing so, undertake research that acts as a driver for innovation, impact and economic growth. We want to be exemplary in our approach to collaboration, and to be the partner of choice and will continue to do this by making more informed and efficient decisions about how we deploy our resources for maximum return.

We have adopted a centrally-led approach to REF 2021. Following approval of our revised REF 2021 Code of Practice in October 2020, we are now in the final stages of submission preparation. Our REF 2021 submission reflects the continued growth of our research, from five Units of Assessment (UoA) in REF 2014, to 7 Units of Assessment (UoA) in REF 2021, and with the return of 88 staff and 14 Impact Case Studies.

Our REF 2021 Strategy has focused on staff with Significant Responsibility for Research across a range of career stages.

Case Study – Staff Appointments to REF 2021 Sub Panels

QMU was delighted to receive confirmation of the appointment of Professor Brendan McCormack to UoA 3 Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy and Professor Jim Scobbie to UoA 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics. These appointments are a testimony to the outstanding reputations of our leading researchers within their fields, illustrating the strength and world leading recognition of QMU research.

We recognise that the last few years have seen fundamental change in the research landscape, as funding and policy increasingly straddles the domains of research, innovation, skills and place. Through investment in Research and KE Centres, we have considered how we respond to the challenges in this new landscape, as well as inherent opportunities for more proactive exploitation of potentially overlapping interdisciplinary approaches. Following the strategic refresh of Research Centres we now have the foundation on which to build core strengths and cultivate and expand our research and innovation footprint.

Case Study – Scottish Government Research Funding – Responding to the COVID crisis

Researchers in our Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD) and Psychology received £64,098 of Scottish Government research funding towards their research into the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on loneliness amongst asylum seekers and refugees. An interdisciplinary team led by researchers in Physiotherapy has been granted £28,326 for work on supporting recovery from illness experienced in isolation due to a pandemic.

We continue to use REG to deliver the institutional strategy for world-class research and to leverage additional external funding, by continuing to invest in six strategic research centres:

- Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS)
- Centre for Person-centred Practice Research (CPcPR)
- Clinical Audiology, Speech and Language Research Centre (CASL)
- Centre for Communication, Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS)
- Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD)

Our share of the University Innovation Fund (UIF) has been used to invest in our KE Centre: Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation (SCFDI).

Strategies for the generation of increased research income will continue to be reviewed to secure external investment, research collaborations and that allow us to contribute meaningfully to grand challenges and initiatives such as the GCRF, ISCF and new interdisciplinary UKRI calls.

The evolution of the Global Health Research Programme Development (GHRPD) facility is a central tenet of our strategy to ensure that our research is robust and resilient and able to respond to international challenges and opportunities. It provides a mechanism to secure publication, policy influence and research engagement that promotes growth in the portfolio of global health research at QMU. It serves these functions through pump-priming interdisciplinary research activity. This positions IGHD for future collaborations, partnerships and funded research programmes or, on completion of funded programmes, supports the dissemination of research outputs and policy influence, including the sharing of research

protocols and manuals to support more effective and rigorous data collection in low-income settings and fragile and conflict affected states. Other than a small proportion of activity related to work in China and parts of Eastern Europe, the significant majority of our work is focused on DAC-listed countries, typically focused on (barriers to) provision of healthcare and well-being, and involving extensive and intensive fieldwork engagement and local partnership.

Case Study - £7.68m award helps rebuild health systems in fragile and shock-prone areas

A consortium involving researchers in IGHD has been awarded £7.68 million by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID). **ReBUILD for Resilience** will look at health systems in fragile contexts experiencing violence, conflict, pandemics and other shocks. The aim is to produce high-quality, practical, multidisciplinary and scalable health system research that can be used to improve the health and lives of many millions of people. The current COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the fragility of the global health system and the need for evidence-based action to address the growing risk of shocks of various kinds. ReBUILD was the first DFID research consortium to specifically address the effects of conflict on health systems. In ReBUILD for Resilience, we will build on that base but extend our work to a wider range of shocks – including disasters, epidemics and complex emergencies – and also work with partners in new regions, such as the Middle East, which are highly shock-prone. Our work will aim to help districts, countries and the global health system to better prepare and respond in future.

The research consortium, led by Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), will be jointly delivered with the Institute for Global Health and Development at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh alongside partners working in Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Sierra Leone and the UK, and associate partners at Oxford Policy Management and International Rescue Committee.

In strengthening international research collaboration in response to the UK's departure from the EU, we remain committed to being an open, inclusive and internationally-focused university. Sustaining the cultural and intellectual links that have been shaped through European integration is key to our strategy post-Brexit. Excellence in our research and innovation has been stimulated by different intellectual contexts arising from long-term cross-border collaborations. We continue to support this through our European partnerships, which are focused on social inclusion, person centred practice, culture and business education.

We will work with the sector to continue to support a post-Brexit environment, developing approaches to researcher and doctoral student mobility and recruitment, research partnerships, funding and grants that ensure QMU continues to thrive. We remain committed to supporting our EU partners and researchers and the global values that define QMU.

Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh Napier University have discussed and agreed to initiate a strategic collaboration on research and innovation. The agreement is underpinned by three key principles:

- a) the shared aspects of the two institutions' vision and mission;
- b) our joint desire to effectively and efficiently support the Scottish recovery and align to the key priorities of the region and the Government, and
- c) an in depth understanding of the complementary academic strengths and areas of focus of the two institutions.

The collaboration is currently being developed across three key areas. Firstly, we are designing a joint programme of training and support for our early career academics in order to ensure that we provide a more effective approach in attracting and developing academic talent. Secondly, we are utilising our UIF to fund four jointly supervised PhDs in the broad area of health and wellbeing, this discipline being a joint area of research and education focus for the two institutions that aligns well with key national priorities. Academics from both institutions have enthusiastically engaged with this opportunity and the two institutions view this funding as seed corn for a fuller and long term collaboration that will strengthen the research environment and deliver R&D partnerships with external organisations. Thirdly, we are planning to collaborate for the development of the QMU innovation park whereby ENU will complement QMU's focus on food and drink and other sectors through their significant expertise in AI and Data Science.

Collectively, the three areas of collaboration identified and progressed form a coherent and well-articulated framework of a strategic peer-to-peer partnership that was developed through effective and equal dialogue between the two institutions without requiring any new centralised resources or structures. As such, this can provide the foundation of a viable collaboration model that can be utilised across Scotland to enhance the sustainability of research and innovation.

We seek to maximise excellence in our outputs and ensure that the narrative behind our impact is more compelling, recognising that we are a small but agile institution. In so doing, we acknowledge that we cannot afford to disperse our research endeavour across individualistic threads when the future funding context commands a collaborative approach, as well as inter and trans disciplinary focus.

To increase the reach and significance of our work, the emphasis of our strategy will increasingly depart from lone scholar models. We will facilitate increased internal research collaboration, specifically between the arts and health, as we look for sharper definition in the articulation of our distinctive identity. We will increase the volume, quality and impact of our outputs, secure greater diversity of income streams and enhance the doctoral research experience.

Case Study – Cultural Sector – Learning from Failure

FailSpace - also known as *Cultural Participation: Stories of Success, Histories of Failure* — is an AHRC-funded research project exploring how the cultural sector can better recognise, acknowledge and learn from failure, particularly when undertaking work intended to diversify and grow the people who are taking part in subsidised cultural activities. The project is a collaboration between QMU, University of Leeds and practitioners from the cultural sector.

6.4 Institutions implement the researcher development concordat

As a relatively small HEI, we continue to use our agility to be at the forefront of sector developments. As mentioned above, in December 2020 we were in the first cohort of only seven UK HEIs to secure and retain the 10 Year HR Excellence Award for the implementation of the Concordat for Research Careers. We are also proud to be one of the first 15 UK HEIs to sign up to the new 2019 Concordat. This reaffirms our commitment to working collectively in delivering the UK's ambitious economic and industrial strategies, and the role of the Concordat as a tool for competitive advantage, necessitating the supply of well-rounded and multi-skilled researchers who can traverse the interface of academia and industry.

Our 2020-22 Action Plan supports and welcomes the renewed vigour of the principles of the revised Concordat and we are proud to uphold our obligations and responsibilities as a signatory, reaffirming these in our strategy and embedding them within a research culture that is both supportive and inspiring. In light of Brexit, endorsement by the European Commission of our commitment to researcher development, international research and researcher mobility could not have come at a more important time.

Early Career Researchers in post-doctoral or early academic roles will be supported in developing research independence through our commitment to the 2019 Concordat. We will pro-actively support mid-career and high performing researchers to be at the forefront of their discipline or area of professional practice. Ongoing investment in Vitae and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), and the allocation of budgets to Research Centres for research and impact, will support these activities

We will continue to grow our Graduate School to develop the teaching and research nexus through an enhanced doctoral experience. We continue to attract high quality doctoral candidates from across the globe by offering a competitive, high quality doctoral and research experience that prepares students and early career researchers for careers within or beyond academia. This is supported by the development of curricula underpinned by our critical and applied research and practitioner expertise.

We have prioritised the development of our skills capacity to attract and develop the next generation of researchers, focusing on ensuring our core academic team remain competitive and entrepreneurial, while up-skilling and promoting the enhanced employability of our doctoral and contract research staff. Increased institutional investment in a central studentship budget will have a refreshed emphasis on collaboration and leverage of external funding. A priority will be strengthening external alliances with the Scottish Graduate School for School for Social Sciences and the Scottish Arts and Humanities Graduate School.

6.5 The research environment supports excellence and impact

In July 2020, we were one of only 22 UK HEIs to participate in the pilot of the first Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey 2020 (CEDARS) **with a response rate of 31%**. This national benchmarking survey gathers anonymous data about working conditions, research culture, career aspirations and career development opportunities for research staff and research leaders in HEIs across the UK. We are committed to running CEDARS again next year to monitor progress against baseline data. A detailed analysis of the CEDARS data has been undertaken in consultation with research staff and Trade Union representatives and we are fully committed to undertaking further scrutiny with a view to setting targets and a transparent and action based approach to improvement in future years.

Case Study – Using the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey 2020 (CEDARS) as a research culture health check during COVID-19

CEDARS is structured around the three principles of the Researcher Development Concordat of environment and culture, employment, and professional and career development. QMU participated in CEDARS, using COVID 19 as a lever, as a Research culture and researcher experience health check in response to the 2020 Wellcome UK Research Culture Report. We are using the Wellcome Trust Research Café Culture event toolkit to obtain a better understanding of the QMU researcher experience and to identify new interventions to improve excellence in our research culture.

As Open Research Data and Open Access publishing become firmly integrated into the research environment, we will provide support to our researchers from our library and

information services, and provide training and infrastructure to ensure that we fully embrace the Open Access agenda. We have signed up to the UK Office for Research Integrity (UKRIO) and joined the newly formed Scottish Research Integrity Network and the University Innovation Fund (UIF) Collaborative Group for Responsible Innovation. We are prioritising new measures to enhance our position in responding to the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research and the Concordat on Open Research Data and are working pro-actively with the sector to develop new governance structures and public facing narratives to support this commitment. Our institutional Research Data Management (RDM) Working Group acts as an advisory body for the Concordat for Open Data, with a new RDM policy published in 2020. Through investment in our institutional repository and our Research Support Librarian, we continue to monitor OA publishing and citation and altmetric data for all our researchers

We will further embed our Institutional Statement on the Use of Metrics in Research Assessment, outlining the key role of peer review; support for an inclusive and transparent process for research assessment; respectful of researchers and of the plurality of research. A key priority will be the ongoing implementation of the University's commitment to:

- Becoming a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) to underpin our commitment to the responsible use of research metrics.
- Adopting the principles of the Leiden Manifesto.
- Implementing the recommendations of the Forum for Responsible Research Metrics (FFRM) and the principles of the Metric Tide Report.

6.6 Research impact reaches beyond academia

We continue to invest in enhancing research infrastructure for impact husbandry and curation, to assist us in capturing, managing and making accessible our research outcomes and impacts. Over the next three years, we will look to invest in and embed a new research management system in line with sector norms. We will work to maximise leadership and influence through the dissemination of our research, and by ensuring that our website is engaging and vibrant.

We want to empower our researchers to act as agents of change, and to encourage and

Case Study – QMU Working Paper Series – Reaching Audiences beyond Academia

In summer 2020, in response to limited face to face opportunities for public engagement we launched the new [QMU Working Paper Series](#) to create a space for innovative thinking on collaborative, interdisciplinary and co-produced research to emerge and take shape. It intends to be a friendly, open space to disseminate, circulate and discuss continuing research. The objective is to support conversation and debate about new work, stimulating a lively exchange of ideas as well as enhancing networking and potential external collaboration among researchers, thinkers, practitioners and users.

enable them to share insights and maximise impact pathways. Public participation and civic engagement will define the QMU researcher journey. We will continue to play an integral role in public discourse and evidence based decision making through imparting knowledge and informed and measured views, and by shaping debates and seeding new ideas. We will build on existing links with the Scotland's Futures Forum, Scottish Parliament, and Scottish Institute for Police Research. Membership of the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange (SPRE) will support our researchers in working with policymakers in training and mentoring opportunities delivered in conjunction with partners; digital platforms providing tools for researchers and policy professionals; and bespoke tools addressing particular policy challenges.

We will grow the number of high quality, outcome driven partnerships with the public, private and third sectors, increasing the number of external Fellowships awarded such as RSE, Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament Fellowships. We will be an active member of the new Scottish Parliament Academic Network (SPAN). The network builds on an existing collaboration established in 2014 between the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICE), Scotland's Futures Forum, Beltane and the Scottish Universities Insight Unit to encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange between the Scottish Parliament and the academic community. A recurrent theme across all of our innovation activity is the desire to support a growing and vibrant community of academic innovators and researcher practitioners.

After 10 years of collaboration, the signing by the four partners of a new Manifesto for Beltane Public Engagement Partnership will secure future growth. We will build on previously successful collaborative researcher events, including Explorathon, Bright Club, Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas and the Beltane Gathering.

The Beltane allows partner universities to share good practice and build on reciprocal researcher training arrangements. It supports interdisciplinary pathways to impact and provides a means to negotiate collectively on future engagement with the Edinburgh Science Festival and other high value/cost public engagement initiatives, and promotes economies of scale. Priority will be given to investment in the Beltane web presence and infrastructure, as we seek to raise the profile of the collaboration, building on the increasing policy priority of regional cohesion through our Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. We will be more pro-active in seeking collaborative external funds, such as UKRI Enhancing Place-based Partnerships in Public Engagement.

Case Study, Beltane Public Engagement Fellowship – Clinical Audiology, Speech and Language Research Centre

Following the award of an Edinburgh Beltane Fellowship, Professor Jim Scobbie, has participated in numerous public engagement activities throughout the ten year development of Ultrasound Tongue Imaging, a world-leading research tool, commercially underpinning spin-out company Articulate Instruments Ltd. This has included demonstrations in schools, science centres and other venues, providing opportunities for research colleagues and doctoral students to enhance their own understanding of how to communicate their scientific methods and research questions in speech production to a mixed audience. He has been able to combine engagement with "citizen science" by collecting samples of speech with Dr Patrycja Strycharczuk at the British Academy Summer Festival (2019), as well as supporting the ASCUS Wet Lab at Summerhall arts venue, Edinburgh. Funding from the Carnegie Trust and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) with Dr Eleanor Lawson led to the development of the Dynamic Dialects and Seeing Speech websites which have attracted millions of visitors.

7 SUSTAINABILITY

We continue to define sustainability according to its three pillars – environmental, economic and social.

Our Sustainability Committee, which has the active support of Senior Leadership Team, has representatives from all parts of the University, and has identified work streams that promote this value in the student experience, the academic curriculum, the management of our estate and our use of resources. The Sustainability Committee has responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the key objectives within our Climate Change Action Plan

and for oversight of the collation and reporting of other external statutory and benchmarking reporting.

Our Climate Change Action Plan, which has been in place since 2010, was relaunched in 2018. The plan establishes baselines, and seven key areas for action. The next steps include calculating realisable targets, investigating climate change adaptation and seeking further engagement and feedback from stakeholders.

Reducing our carbon emissions is a major objective of our revised Climate Change Action Plan 2018-2023 (CCAP). The updated plan seeks to build and improve on previous accomplishments, with the ambition to reduce annual carbon emissions by 12% per annum by 2022 (from a 2015/16 baseline). This will see annual emissions coming below 2000tCO₂e for the first time in the University's history. As well as the environmental benefits, the cost savings represent best value for public investment.

The CCAP outlines the University's targets and ambitions over the next five year period to become a truly sustainable institution. Operationally, significant investment projects following the acquisition of the residences continue to deliver energy and carbon reductions. For example, the full year carbon reduction benefits of the investment in LED lighting within the residences, as well as the installation of voltage optimization across our high voltage network, have contributed to a 22% carbon reduction against our revised 2015/16 baseline.

We remain a signatory to the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland (UCCCfS) which supports delivery of the Public Bodies Duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. We were an early adopter of the new reporting framework and continue to report annually under this new framework.

We continue to make good progress in the reduction of Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions against our 2015-16 baseline, with a 49% reduction to 2018-19, significantly ahead of our Climate Change Action Plan objectives. We have expanded the collation and collection of Scope 3 emissions and will be reviewing the boundary and action plan in relation to these in the forthcoming year.

The refreshed University Strategy places sustainability in the context of the climate emergency through the need for change and adaptation as a core value alongside social justice. As part of the delivery plan the following sub-objectives will be considered and developed:

- Strengthening board level responsibility and accountability for delivery;
- Relaunch and revitalisation of the Sustainability Committee;
- Alignment with and adoption of the UN SDG's to broaden the range of areas engaged in sustainability activity;
- Review of the Climate Change Action Plan in the context of the Climate Emergency Declaration and Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill

At an operational level we promote our sustainability through positive actions:

- reducing single use plastics through the provision of public drinking water fountains, replacing plastic straws with paper, and using paper bags in place of plastic;
- reducing use of disposal cups by providing discounts for reusable cups;
- reducing consumption of meat through expanding and promoting vegetarian and vegan menu options.

Future actions around plastics and disposables are likely to be heavily influenced by the implementation of Scottish Government proposals for the bottle deposit return levy and

single use cup levy. The bottle deposit return levy will represent a paradigm shift in cultural behaviours, and in our waste and recycling policy, which will require detailed consideration once implementation plans are brought forward.

The 'social' pillar of sustainability is embedded throughout the university's 'purpose', and its values and goals. It is in evidence from our academic curricula to our approach to learning and teaching. In everything we do, we are committed to social justice. Previous sections of this report provide examples of this commitment in action.

Our Employability Strategy references social sustainability principles insofar as we aspire to create graduates equipped with the skills to benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. It links to our graduate attributes, among which are skills of problem solving, behaving ethically, and being 'a positive contributor to building a just and sustainable society'.

We continue to work with the EAUC, who remain housed on our Musselburgh campus. We engaged the EAUC as consultants to advise on our draft CCAP, and representatives of the EAUC are co-opted members of our Sustainability Committee. Academic staff both participate in, and in some cases, lead EAUC groups and events.

Queen Margaret University recognises a need to take action beyond simply fulfilling mandatory reporting duties. For climate change action to work most effectively, all the university's occupants and stakeholders need to be invested in the cause. While there may be growing recognition for action on climate change, it is important to maintain and build momentum over the long-term. To move beyond compliance, into a position of leadership, Queen Margaret University will continue to take the necessary steps in educating and engaging with staff and students.

8 GOVERNANCE

The University Court has overall responsibility for the strategic direction of the University, the approval of overall institutional budgets and major developments. In discharging its obligations, Court receives strategic advice and regular reports from executive officers on the day-to-day operation of its business and its subsidiary companies. The University Senate has delegated authority from the University Court for oversight of all academic matters.

In response to the Coronavirus Emergency, meetings of the University Court and the University Senate have been held virtually since March 2020. The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator recognised that holding meetings virtually is a good option, and states that charities may hold their meetings in this way, even where the governing document is silent on the matter. In line with good governance, the discussion and decisions of the University Court and the Senate have been recorded in the form of confirmed minutes approved by members. Meetings have considered key matters relating to the University's response to the Coronavirus Emergency, including matters concerned with the maintenance of academic delivery, protection of academic standards, and wellbeing and other support for students and staff.

Importantly, during the period of the coronavirus emergency, the University Court concluded on its recruitment to the vacancy in the Chair created when Dr Frances Dow demitted office in March 2020. The election was conducted under 'Regulations for Election' approved by the University Court, and incorporated within the University Court Standing Orders, such regulations being aligned fully with the provisions of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

After a detailed and lengthy recruitment process, two persons were identified as having met the necessary criteria to stand candidates in an election. The election was conducted in January 2021, using a secure online voting system administered by the election management experts, Civica. As part of the election process, the opportunity was provided for eligible voters to meet with both candidates through two separate Open Meetings, delivered by Teams Live, to accommodate the coronavirus restrictions.

The successful candidate, Pamela Woodburn, takes up the role of Chair of the University Court on 1 April 2021.

The University's Gender Action Plan 2017-20 restates the University's commitment to ensuring that the University Court (Court), Senate and all committees and decision-making bodies of the University are representative of its community. In particular, the University is committed to achieving the following goals and targets:

- Achieving practical gender balance amongst lay members of Court. Practical gender balance will be achieved where the lay membership of Court constitutes not less than 40% of either gender.
- Undertaking an annual review of the equality and diversity characteristics of the Court or as a specific need for review is identified.
- In undertaking any recruitment activity concerning the appointment of lay members of Court, the Court will have regard to equality and diversity characteristics of the Court and will take positive actions to increase the likelihood of applications being submitted from applicants that would enhance the representative character of the Court.

At the time of writing, the gender balance of membership of Court sits at 50% female and 50% male. Equality Monitoring was extended to all Court members during 2017/18.

The University Court commissioned an externally facilitated review of its effectiveness in 2015, the final report of which is published on the University website at:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/6218/court-effectiveness-report-part-1.pdf>
<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/6217/court-effectiveness-action-plan.pdf>

The next externally facilitated review will take place in 2021.

At the last HESA data return, gender balance in terms of Professorial staff was 60% female and 40% male. The relatively small size of the academic staff population of the University means that the loss of one or two staff can alter the gender balance significantly.

We are committed to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, free from bias and based on objective criteria. Our Equal Pay Review for 2018 suggested that, for all staff at all grades, including the Executive Board, there was a positive pay gap in terms of mean salary of some 0.27% between male and female employees. Excluding the Executive Board (Now succeeded by the Senior Leadership Team), there was a positive mean pay gap in terms of female employees of 0.23%.

We will complete an Equal Pay review in 2021, and report as part of our Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes.

A commitment to equality shapes our institutional Strategic Plan. This Agreement embodies our commitment to attract and retain students from a wide range of backgrounds, and to support them to achieve successful outcomes. Equally, we will attract and retain good staff by valuing them through transparent promotion opportunities, appropriate staff development, inclusivity and equality, and through instilling in our staff a strong sense of social responsibility.

We are a Disability Confident employer, and an accredited Living Wage employer. The Living Wage commitment sees everyone working at QMU, regardless of whether they are permanent employees or third party contractors, receive a real Living Wage. The University's third party contractors adopt the Living Wage as and when existing contractual arrangements are renewed.



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

University Innovation Fund (UIF) Priorities AY 2020-21 - Updated January 2021

Statement re the Platform Grant Allocation

QMU welcomes the allocation of the Platform Grant. The Grant will be used to underpin the ongoing delivery of the [QMU Strategic Plan 2020-25](#) and the Outcome Agreement 2020-2023, aligned to the priorities identified below. As these form a core part of our activity we are committed to matching this funding through leverage of external funding and existing staff costs incurred across the wider research and innovation agenda.

Commitment to All Outcomes

Through the Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG), Researcher Development and Training Sub Committee (RDTTC) and the UIF Clusters, QMU recognises the importance of partnerships in the delivery of national outcomes and is committed to collaboration in creating synergies, building critical mass and enhancing the interactive space and flow of staff and researchers between HEIs and industry. We welcome and continue to embed the progress made in developing a national agreement on the UIF outcomes and the development of a framework for priority actions for delivery through joint and individual approaches.

Institutional Context – to support all of the agreed National Outcomes

As one of the first UK HEIs to sign up to the new 2019 Concordat for Researcher Development and receive the 10 Year European HR Excellence in Research Award for this work, we will align our UIF activity much more closely with our [Concordat for Researcher Development Action Plan 2020-22](#) with a refreshed emphasis on Environment and Culture, Employment and Career Development. In 2021 this work will be closely aligned to QMU becoming a signatory to the new KE Concordat and our participation in the development year.

Recognising the increasing imperative of place we will continue to prioritise innovation and enterprise through collaboration and working with the private, public and third sectors to achieve economic and societal transformation, regionally, nationally and internationally. Our research and innovation will be transformative; inspiring and enabling people and places by challenging conventional thinking and discourses; and achieving social, cultural and economic success. We will use UIF to challenge conventional wisdom and inform new agendas, injecting knowledge and seeding ideas.

To maximise the economic, cultural and social impact of our research, we aim to provide applied, translational and market ready solutions to strategically identified external priorities, generating income in order to drive sustained growth in capacity. Skills as a key driver for innovation has become a primary focus for our enterprise activity. The importance of innovation within QMU has increased significantly, with growing acknowledgement of the pivotal role it plays in enhancing our student experience and delivering impact. A central tenet of our strategy is the development and sustainability of a changing culture that supports the capacity of our staff and students to be entrepreneurial in a variety of contexts. We will ensure that we maximise the impact of our UIF investment to diversify our income streams and that our offer to industry has currency, adds value to both parties and develops longer-term relationships.

We welcome the UIF as a focal point for Scottish Universities to develop and co-ordinate resources to address innovation challenges and opportunities. Institutionally we will continue to pursue bold ideas in an environment where creativity, innovation and success is encouraged and celebrated. We will work consultatively and collaboratively with the other Scottish HEIs to benefit from new perspectives, and will continuously improve our innovation profile, as measured by key national/international benchmarks, and strive to deliver maximum benefit to society from our activities.

National Outcome one (demand stimulation): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership) (Ref PA5) (Ref PA6) (Ref PA10)

UIF Outcome 1, 2 and 3 and Innovation Cluster

QMU will continue to use the UIF to build a sustainable platform for innovation led economic growth. We recognise that the last few years have seen fundamental change in the external landscape as funding and policy increasingly straddles the domains of research, innovation, skills and place.

By refreshing our Centres in 2019 we now have the foundation on which to build core strengths and cultivate and expand our research and innovation footprint. Specifically how we establish the position of QMU Research Centres and KE Centres and their points of distinction in the current external focus of interdisciplinarity and challenge led research. We will continue to invest in these areas to enhance interdisciplinary areas of focus. We will use this as the foundation for enterprise, innovation, impact and income generation to support the following objectives:

- Prioritising entrepreneurship to accelerate strategic opportunities in economic and societal contexts.
- In the past and with limited success, QMU has sought to increase industry engagement through internal competition. Future approaches will shift our emphasis towards strategic priorities focused on activity where researchers are already working together on coherent and successful collaboration.
- Supporting an innovative environment and campus space where collisions between QMU, Government, NGOs, industry and society stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Embedding the knowledge and expertise of our external partners to ensure our KE portfolio is demand led.
- Promoting QMU as an anchor institution and catalyst for economic growth and new enterprise creation in the regional economy.
- Strengthening links with talent creators, enterprise growth agencies and sector commercialisation competitions.
- Championing skills and employability in economic sectors where innovation is a priority and strengthening KE links with the FE sector.
- Maximising links with alumni, honorary doctorates and University Court members.

Key Priorities for 2020/21 are summarised as:

- **Elevate our strategic profile in Female Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation.**
- **Work with the Scottish Government, Women's Enterprise Scotland and East Lothian Business Gateway to promote QMU as a location for a new Women's Enterprise Hub.**
- **Investment in two high profile collaborative and industry focused Entrepreneurship programmes:**
 - **Development and launch of Thrive - focused on the Food and Drink Sector with SRUC and Abertay University.**
 - **Growth and expansion of SHIFT - focused on the Creative Industries with The Glasgow School of Art and The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.**
- **Continue to support QMU's strengths in Food and Drink and Creative Industries. Scaling up activity where exemplar models of SME engagement exist.**
- **Empower our researchers to act as agents of change and encourage and enable them to share insights and maximise impact pathways. Ensure that public participation and civic engagement are more strategically defined in the QMU researcher journey as we grow the number of high quality, outcome driven partnerships with public, private and third sector.**

- **Continue to invest in QMU Innovation Fellowships to maximise all opportunities to engage with the UK Industrial Strategy.**
- **Exploit the full potential of the open innovation paradigm by exploring ways to make the outcomes of our knowledge exchange more open and accessible to industry and enhance research infrastructure for impact husbandry and curation.**
- **Recognising the constraints of COVID-19, where possible explore ways to make our campus more open and accessible and increase the flow of people between QMU and government/industry/third sector and vice versa to promote action learning.**
- **Through the Innovation and Skills strand of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and in partnership with the University of Edinburgh, Heriot Watt University and Edinburgh Napier University seek to elevate our position as a collaborator that provides connectivity and coherence in innovation and is strategically integrated into the regional growth agenda.**

The creation of major, crosscutting, thematic funding streams such as the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) is reshaping our approach. We are using UIF to support emerging areas that challenge convention to support research at the interfaces between disciplines that exploit synergies to address grand challenges. We will work more closely with Innovate UK and the KT Network to identify calls that align with our research strengths. In particular, we recognise that the GCRF and ISCF require more concerted actions to develop external partnerships and collaborative research activities that build on our key research strengths. QMU is further developing strategic relationships with business in order to fully embrace the opportunities afforded in the areas of Healthy Ageing and Next Generation Services, Audience of the Future and Transforming Food Production. UIF will support QMU in smoothing the pathway from translational research to commercially and socially valuable benefit. We will continue to use the UIF to invest in an institutional Innovation Fellowship Fund to review, map, build and identify in-house academic capacity to respond to ISCF opportunities, ensuring our offering is demand led and responsive.

Our focus will continue to be on the Scottish Government priority economic sectors of Food and Drink and Creative Industries (including Tourism and Events); with a developing emphasis on Service Innovation that cuts across other sectors such as Financial Services, Health, Retail, and Public Services. Social Innovation continues to be an area of enterprise resonating firmly with our institutional mission. We will continue to explore this emerging position in Service Innovation, recognising that the primary driver of innovation in many key economic sectors is market opportunity. Responding to the structure of Scotland's large, low research-intensity service sector, presents untapped and new opportunities for industry/academic collaboration. QMU is keen to play a key role in defining the contours of service innovation and its significance as a cross cutting priority across many of the economic sectors including Tourism, Events, Retail, Creative Industries and Construction. QMU continues its membership of the Scottish Institute for Policing to support research in public service innovation. Our Centre for Person-centred Practice Research continues to drive innovation in person-centredness and is at the forefront of developments in caring sciences, the care home sector and new models of care delivery that keep the person at the Centre as well as "humanising healthcare".

By strengthening links with Scottish Enterprise (SE), Interface, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Business Gateway service and Industry Bodies we will progress our ongoing commitment to move from transactional to strategic, well-embedded relationships that are firmly aligned to our research and values. We will continue to engage with the innovation landscape in Scotland including Innovation Centres (where possible), Interface, Innovation Vouchers, and the Scottish and UK Government's innovation reforms i.e. UKRI.

We will monitor our performance to drive cultural change in support of key Scottish Government initiatives – Inward Investment Strategy, Making it Happen, the Universities Scotland 5 Point Innovation Action Plan and Innovation Scotland Action Plan; while supporting the shared national vision for innovation (Muscatelli Report 2019 and Cumberford Little Report 2020). We will re-invigorate Innovation Voucher activity in new and emerging areas including the care home sector, retail and in events/tourism. We will continue to push specific partnership initiatives that support traction in industries with historically low levels of R&D spend i.e. Creative Industries We will facilitate increased internal research collaboration, specifically between the arts and health as we look for sharper definition in the articulation of our distinctive identity. Such facilitation will increase the

volume, quality and impact of our outputs, secure greater diversity of income streams and enhance the doctoral research experience.

We will continue to build on existing projects in the Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation (SCFDI) arising from the Advanced Innovation Voucher scheme looking at two diverse projects – one creating an allergen free vegan bacon alternative for foodservice where 91 million foodservice servings of bacon are served annually in the UK; and the other in assisting a drinks manufacturer to provide a truly value added creative service to their portfolio. In addition we will build on the highly innovative work that the team are undertaking to develop a novel vegan texturing ingredient for palm fat replacement in bakery products, and the screening of an underexploited soy industry co-product as a novel food ingredient.

The controversial use of palm oil in food products is a challenge for the food industry due to environmental issues with its harvest, but is extremely challenging to replace in application. Building on previous research, the SCFDI will continue to focus on a sustainable palm oil alternative for use in industrial applications, investigating palm free, lower saturated fat formulations. In 2020, the team were successful in obtaining an Innovate grant and are currently finishing their phase 1 project, where they have demonstrated the technical feasibility of the novel palm fat replacement strategy in bakery applications. They are in contact with a number of major national companies to become partners of the project in a phase 2 application which is due to be submitted in early 2021.

Another project that the team are actively investigating is to assess the feasibility of developing SSSR (Soy Sauce Squeezing Residue) as a under-exploited co-product of soy sauce production, as a novel food ingredient. Soy sauce manufacturing produces 110,000 tonnes of worldwide every year following mechanical pressing of fermented soybeans to extract the liquid. Due to its specific sensory profile, high salt content and residual oil content, unprocessed SSSR is currently a low-value stream sold as animal feed, fertiliser, soil conditioner and papermaking material. The project will assess the feasibility of a number of SSSR processing methods and the suitability of processed SSSR in a range of food applications with potential health benefits.

We will continue to prioritise shifting our business engagement from a transactional portfolio to a model based on strategic partnership. This will allow us to expand our portfolio of clients and add value to relationships through formal key account management. In the SCFDI this approach supports major ongoing contracts for sensory work on behalf of large UK retailers and with a number of national companies. Our purpose-built sensory analysis suite assesses both new products before they are launched, as well as existing products already on the market. We will increase our client base of New Product Development contracts from UK Research Institutes and Industry Bodies. Our emphasis is on “market ready” research that can be easily adopted by industry and support new product development. Our innovation space provides a seamless range of research support measures to help Scottish SMEs fully realise their growth potential and support linkage into the UK retail supply chain. It will target SMEs across the food and drink supply chain, whether they are seeking to maximise the opportunity in naturally healthy food and drink products, develop leading edge functional foods, or are seeking to reformulate existing products.

By embodying place-based dimensions through the new Edinburgh Innovation Park, we will translate our research in dietetics, nutrition and biological sciences and academic expertise in food and drink in SCFDI to support Scotland's food and drink industry in an unprecedented post Brexit landscape. We will continue to build collaboration with other Scottish HEIs and Research Institutes to shape the future of sustainable food across the agri-food chain. Developing the domestic healthy eating market comes with some major public health challenges but also some massive opportunities to work with industry to expand, create and add value from new or reformulated products. SCFDI already has an established position in reinforcing the reputation of the food and drink sector in Scotland, recognising that working with industry has more immediate impact and is more cost effective than clinical solutions. The team will continue to work to promote understanding by the industry of the challenges faced in reformulating products to meet the government requirements. They are working with Scottish Food and Drink Federation (SFDF) to deliver interactive online training for reformulation to reduce sugar, fat and salt content to a range of industry partners

Development of skills in the industry is key and QMU is a member of the Scottish FE-HE Food Science Articulation Group focusing on student recruitment strategies with the Scottish Food and Drink Federation and other Scottish universities and colleges. .

Building on the success of existing UKRI funded projects in the creative industries, including the UK Centre for Cultural Value with the Universities of Leeds, Hull, Sheffield, York and the Audience Agency, our strategy over the next three years will be to increase the number of grant applications submitted as part of a consortium of HEIs. We would also like to extend our partnership with Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) to explore the development and advancement of Practice as Research (PaR) in Scotland, framed around innovation in creative practice. We will continue to expand our Professional Doctorates to include Professional Doctorates in Cultural Leadership and Cultural Practice, supporting the development of industry-instigated research, conducted by those who have the greatest affinity and insight into the problems faced by the sector and as such intended to have meaningful impact and affect positive change. New expertise in initial teacher education will open up the possibility of us developing research and innovation activity around media literacy for teachers. Supported by funding from the UIF QMU academics are currently working with Screen Scotland to deliver a pilot project which they anticipate will strengthen an AHRC bid. The project aims to investigate how student teachers respond to being introduced to the ways in which film can be used in the classroom.

Scotland has a long history of innovative public engagement within the arts and cultures, especially those rural arts organisations that operate in complicated, isolated communities. The rurality of these places plays a significant part in both the unique innovations to creatively engage place and people but also to indices of multiple deprivations. Through investment to support collaborative proposals to develop a Rural Arts Network (RANS) with the University of the Highlands and Islands and the creative industries, we will support and strengthen the sustainability of the rural cultural sector in Scotland, recognising the need for more infrastructural mechanisms to support exchange between rural arts organisations and the creative industries within their SIMD communities. We believe that additional work is also required around funding interventions that support micro enterprises, sole traders and owner/practitioners who form the business model that dominates many of the sectors that define the creative industries.

We will support our researchers in articulating research outputs to external stakeholders and potential end-users through our institutional e-repository and website. Increasing the visibility of the QMU offer to industry and the benefits of working with our talent continues to be a priority. We are also keen to work with the sector to raise the profile of enterprise and innovation by supporting joint events, drawing on current partners, and opening our doors more widely to targeted collaborators.

Outcome two (simplification/commercialisation) (Ref PA8) (Ref PA7)

An underpinning driver is to continue to support the development of unified support for innovation in regional SMEs to catalyse the flows of knowledge between QMU and external partners. Increased emphasis will be placed on Open Innovation to maximise support to enterprising researchers through the use of our institutional e-repositories to exploit the full potential of the open innovation paradigm, recognising that institutional repositories represent a major and an alternative gateway to knowledge. QMU needs to become more efficient in accelerating the transfer of research and knowledge into the hands of the best external partner who can develop it to benefit the economy and society. We welcome the opportunity to promote access to cutting-edge facilities and equipment, proprietary data and industry resources. In emerging sectors this can strengthen the innovation absorption process by enhancing researcher capabilities and the mutual understanding of needs, capabilities, constraints and contexts.

We will continue to build a quality governance framework to enable responsible research and innovation. We will uphold the highest standards for rigour and integrity as these are an essential element of quality. New implementation and communication measures will be rolled out to ensure that all dimensions of integrity govern our activity. QMU continues to be a member of the UK Office for Research Integrity (UKRIO), the Scottish Research Integrity Network and the University Innovation Fund (UIF) Collaborative Group for Responsible Innovation.

With these in place we will work collaboratively to respond to the new Concordat to Support Research Integrity. We are prioritising new measures to enhance our position in responding to the Concordat for

Engaging the Public with Research and the Concordat on Open Research Data and are working pro-actively with the sector to develop new governance structures and public facing narratives to support this commitment.

Following a rigorous process of external peer review, in December 2020 the European Commission (EC) awarded QMU with the 10 Year European HR Excellence in Research Award in recognition of our commitment to the 2019 Concordat for Researcher Development. We are in the first cohort of only 7 UK HEIs to secure and retain this award. Our [2020-2022 Action Plan](#) supports and welcomes the renewed vigour of the principles of this revised Concordat and we are proud to uphold our obligations and responsibilities as a signatory, reaffirming these in our strategy and embedding them within a research culture that is both supportive and inspiring. With Brexit on the horizon, endorsement by the EC of our commitment to researcher development, international research and researcher mobility could not have come at a more important time. The development of our researchers in the areas of innovation and enterprise will be further enhanced in 2021 will two new collaborative mentoring schemes: Rapid response mentoring in response to COVID-19 with Edinburgh Napier University; and QMU joining the Teaching, Research & Academic Mentoring Scheme (TRAMS) led by the University of St Andrews and the University of Dundee.

QMU very much welcomes and was an early signatory of the new KE Concordat and has **signed up to both the principles and the development year 2020/21**. This comes at a vital time as the sector responds to COVID-19 and as QMU continues to demonstrate the importance of knowledge exchange to local and national economic and social outcomes. We will collaborate with Edinburgh University, Heriot Watt and Edinburgh Napier to develop a suite of online workshops and training for Academics and Researchers at the partner institutions to develop skills required to engage in Knowledge Exchange activities. This is one of the key areas required in the new KE Concordat.

Following a successful collaboration with the University of St Andrews in commercialisation support, QMU has implemented a new Intellectual Property (IP) Policy based on the principle of "Easy IP". This does not replace the traditional routes for exploitation of high value opportunities but aligns much more closely with our institutional vision and commitment to impact and translational research and has provided a new IP exploitation framework to maximise user engagement with our research.

Outcome three (simplification/greater innovation): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership) (Ref PA3) (Ref PA4) (Ref PA7) (Ref PA5) (Ref PA10) Outcome five (international): (Ref PA11)

Our activities will continue to focus on the Scottish Government Economic Strategy and the Scotland CAN DO Framework. There will be a continued emphasis on an evidence-based approach on the targeted investment and impact of the UIF, ensuring that it is embedded across the institution and understood as a key enabler for industry interaction. Within QMU we will justify and demonstrate a clear rationale for investment and evaluate and celebrate the results. Working closely with Research Centre Directors and through continued investment we will align expertise to ensure a clear offer to industry. We will maximise all opportunities to engage our University Court members; and gain valuable insight from our industry partners and business support intermediaries such as the Business Gateway to continually monitor our impact and adjust our response to market need.

The QMU partnership with the Business Gateway, delivered by East Lothian Council, will continue to exemplify QMU's ongoing commitment to supporting sustainable enterprise creation in the region and to assisting students, staff and graduates considering setting up their own businesses as well as providing an important and accessible resource for members of the public in East Lothian.

Eight years since the launch of the service in 2012, we are incredibly proud to still be the only Scottish University with an on-campus Business Gateway located in our business incubation space the Business Innovation Zone (BIZ). We will continue to increase the number of referrals from external Business Gateway users for innovation and research from QMU. A key strength is having a service rooted in the local community and the Business Gateway partnership has allowed us to increase the reach of the wider activities of the University, enabling students, researchers and local start-ups to share space, knowledge and experiences. By bringing entrepreneurs from the local community to the University campus at the point of company inception,

the on-campus Business Gateway is also planting a seed very early on in the entrepreneurial journey of the opportunities of working with a University and accessing research and innovation for economic growth.

We welcome Scotland's new AI Strategy and will build on existing links with the Bayes Centre, School of Informatics, University of Edinburgh to understand the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our areas of strength and in increasing collaboration with data driven SMEs and accessing ISCF. We recognise the pressing need to embrace opportunities in AI and accessing ISCF. We will maximise the benefits of hosting Scotland's first Virtual Reality Social Enterprise, Viarama, on our campus, by progressing research collaborations in Palliative Care and Festivals/Events. . Dependent on the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, we are keen to increase the number of campus-hosted SMEs. We will promote intersectoral mobility to facilitate movement of staff between QMU and industry, government and the third sector.

Through the external UIF Collaborative Groups we are working with the sector to maximise all opportunities to engage with the ISCF. We will use UIF to support emerging areas that challenge convention to support research at the interfaces between disciplines that exploit synergies to address grand challenges. In particular, we recognise that the GCRF and ISCF require more concerted actions to develop external partnerships and collaborative research activities that build on our key research strengths. UIF will support QMU in smoothing the pathway from translational research to commercially and socially valuable benefit. We will use the UIF to underpin our institutional Innovation Fellowship Fund to review, map, build and identify in-house academic capacity to respond to ISCF opportunities, ensuring our offering is demand led and responsive.

Based on the success of previous investments in 2019 we have continued to support QMU Innovation Fellowships to explore and develop a range of projects with the potential to have significant health, cultural, economic and environmental impact.

Professor Cathy Bulley, Dr Derek Santos and Dr Kavi Jagadamma (Division of Dietetics, Nutrition and Biological Sciences) were granted a University Innovation Fellowship in 2018/19 to progress Smart-Strap Technology, developed in QMU's Orthotics Laboratory, to be used in footwear for people who experience foot-drop and are at risk of tripping, falling and fatigue. In 2020/21, after filing their patent application, they were awarded a further University Innovation Fellowship entitled Footwear with Smart-Strap Technology - developing the Minimum Viable Product.

Dr Julien (Division of Dietetics, Nutrition and Biological Sciences), was awarded an Innovation Fellowship in 2018/19 to develop a novel vegan texturing ingredient for palm oil replacement in selected bakery applications with colleagues at the SCFDI . This fellowship led to a successful application for an innovate grant to continue the work as outlined earlier. In 2020/21, he was awarded a further Innovation Fellowship to screen an underexploited soy industry co-product as novel food ingredient.

Dr Felix Schaeffler (Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences), is the recipient of three QMU Innovation Fellowships. In 2018/19 he was awarded an Innovation Fellowship for The Voice Distillery – voice quality tagging for the creative industries. In 2020/21, following a successful application for Scottish Enterprise SMART: Scotland grant to conduct a feasibility study, Dr Schaeffler was awarded another Innovation Fellowship to continue to support this project. In addition, has been awarded a further Innovation Fellowship grant to support a project working with the NHS looking at remote clinical recordings in the context of COVID-19 and beyond. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a major crisis in the health systems, where routine procedures such as laryngoscopy are more difficult to perform. Whilst acoustic voice recording cannot replace this, they have the potential to support voice assessment and therapy if other means of assessment are not available.

Dr Karin Dacinou, Dr Arek Dakessian and Dr Alison Strang (The Institute of Global Health and Development) were granted an Innovation Fellowship in 2020 to support the set-up of a new social enterprise to offer access to web applications. IGHD has invested in the development of three novel application to support health service, population health and refugee integration research. These applications distinguish themselves from other survey tools and web-applications through their focus on settings experiencing inaccessibility and crises. The applications have already been deployed during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Sierra Leone, Lebanon,

Liberia, Sri Lanka, El-Salvador and the UK, to study community connectedness, wellbeing and coping, and challenges in the delivery of vital health care services. The new social enterprise will revolve around a web-portal, which hosts the web-applications and makes these and their functionality available to other organizations engaged in health-related research globally.

Through our long standing QMU and East Lothian Council Business Gateway collaboration, we will stimulate business growth and incubation by maximising the opportunities arising from the global market for healthy and functional food. QMU hosts the on-campus the East Lothian Business Improvement District (BID) and is also a BID member – the first UK BID to be industry specific, in this case food and drink. The BID represents 42 SMEs and offers a great network for business engagement to our BIZ tenants and wider academic community. Future priorities will respond to the interplay arising from place-based principles and our ability to ensure that QMU research and innovation interfaces with the economic development instruments of the region. For example, we will expand our ongoing work with the East Lothian Council Economic Development Team, including increasing the number of start-ups benefiting from the provision by the Council of an attractive location package to encourage QMU students to stay and set up a business in East Lothian.

Within QMU the UIF plays a critical role in creating and strengthening the underlying innovation conditions of place: it helps us influence the factors that create a conducive environment for innovation that lead to a competitive place that can attract and retain resources and high value added, innovation-driven activities. Through the Innovation and Skills Strand of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, QMU will use UIF to underpin its commitment to working together to support innovation and drive economic growth across the region. By collaborating with other Universities, we will actively participate in the UIF collaborative cluster group, led by the University of Stirling. We will progress an early stage proposal to set up a network of the universities (Heriot Watt, Napier, Edinburgh and QMU) and other stakeholders in the region to strengthen our collaborative offering in the delivery of the innovation component relating to the provision of support to emerging and fledgling companies with the objective of delivering c400 data driven, innovative new companies over the duration of the project. This aims to enable change across the sector, featuring shared services, enhanced collaborative innovation capacity – drawing on the research strengths of all of the Universities, common contracts resulting in improved business access to our respective expertise and facilities (including incubation space). Again through the Innovation and Skills Strands, the Edinburgh Beltane Partnership will help support innovation through public engagement with university research.

We continue to lobby for more flexible Scottish interventions for innovation led economic growth that do not assume one size fits all. QMU is focused on encouraging traction in high growth sectors such as Food and Drink, where SME R&D spend has historically been low but sector growth projections are high and the opportunities for employability are unprecedented. We will however try to re-establish links with the Digital Health and Care Institute, Data Lab, Aquaculture Innovation Centre and the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre.

We will secure our position as the partner of choice for industry in key markets through the quality and focus of our research and efficiency of our outward interfaces; this will include maximising the societal impact of QMU activities through marketing, communication and brand development.

Outcome four (entrepreneurialism): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership) (Ref PA1) (Ref PA5) (Ref PA2)

Our underpinning strategy is to grow research and innovation interactions with external stakeholders that enhance the student experience by fostering collaboration in economic sectors of prime relevance to teaching and future graduate careers. Through alignment of priorities, we will ensure that enterprise and employability are a core component of academic provision at all levels by: increasing start-up activity; supporting opportunities for developing and understanding enterprise skills both within QMU and externally, including placements, internships and participation in enterprise competitions; presenting a single, coherent message about enterprise to all stakeholders; and nurturing relationships developed with employers through other interactions to maximise graduate employment opportunities.

Long term we will maximise opportunities to embed research and knowledge exchange and entrepreneurial skills within the curricula and develop channels for student input into these activities by creating curricula that showcase and reflect our critical and applied research and practitioner expertise.

We have rebalanced our emphasis towards academic capacity building to respond to external demand and capture high value academic links with industry. As cited in our commitment to the 2019 Researcher Development Concordat, we are committed to working in partnership to develop people exchange between academia and industry. We are also keen to explore the tracking of researcher career destinations as the training and movement of skilled researchers is one of the most impactful routes of knowledge exchange but is one of the most challenging to capture. We will work with the Business Gateway to deliver training for our researchers to enable them to have the skills and knowledge to become independent consultants.

We will continue to develop incubation services for the creation of graduate start-ups and support for innovation in local companies through proposals for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, supporting the increasing role of the University as a catalyst for innovation led economic growth. In particular we will focus on female entrepreneurship and will work with the Scottish Government on their plans to establish national and regional hubs. Female Entrepreneurship is an area of increasing strategic priority for QMU. We will continue to champion alignment between the focus of innovation and the pressing enterprise and societal issue of gender inclusion. We are committed to addressing gender disparity in entrepreneurship and are proud that nearly two thirds of QMU start-up companies are created by females. Providing a dynamic, supportive and connected environment in which female entrepreneurs can grow and sustain resilient businesses is an area of growth and where we want to lead the sector.

Within QMU there is growing recognition that graduates in the humanities and social sciences have much to contribute to the innovation spectrum. We continue to work with the sector to improve the articulation of the industry need for graduates in this area. Entrepreneurialism offers a specific opportunity to engage externally, drawing in new actors outside our traditional networks. Discussions continue with GSA and RCS to establish a number of initiatives to explore and stimulate collaborative activity in Creative Entrepreneurship; these include the collation of persuasive case studies of creative industries' students engaging with enterprise; devising and designing training to illuminate the actual professional ecology of creative industries; and developing initiatives to support enterprise in sectors with high growth rates but where the business model is sole trader/owner practitioner. Collaboratively we are keen to develop interventions and rhetoric aligned to these in non-STEM sectors.

Within QMU our Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Advisory Group is now well established and our Academic Enterprise Champions continue to act as exemplars and role models to proactively embed our enterprise objectives.

There are over 55 start-ups located in our Business Innovation Zone (BIZ) and we have piloted access to this space with local start-ups referred to us by the Business Gateway, including the social enterprise - Lead a Bright Future and Viarama. We will continue to grow our start-ups and encourage SMEs to locate in the region by ensuring our physical space is open and accessible (subject to COVID-19 restrictions). We will set ambitious targets to grow the number of female start-ups and number of females accessing our enterprise services.

Researchers in the QMU Business School are exploring the impact of economic change on women in terms of their economic activity and this aligns with emerging work on entrepreneurship and inequality. Further studies in the areas of family run business, minority ethnic business and SME/start up business experiences, include research that looks at gender and leadership in family business in an international context, the role of women and other family members in businesses run by a wide variety of minority ethnic and migrant communities in Scotland and beyond. Our work also supports a range of projects in the areas of social enterprise and women in business. Other activities include recent work with and awards of Honorary Doctorates to entrepreneurs as diverse as Alice Thomson (Social Bite), Mrs Unis (Mrs Unis Spicy Foods) and Mairi O'Keefe (formerly of Leuchie House). We will continue to grow our strategic collaboration with the Social enterprise, Women Being, who brought their first interdisciplinary conference to QMU in 2017. A second conference was planned for earlier this year but had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will actively promote sector wide accelerator programmes specifically catered towards female entrepreneurs and will work with external organisations such as Women's Enterprise Scotland (WES), the Royal Bank of Scotland and Santander who are championing female entrepreneurship in an effort to create an environment where more women can start up in business and enable businesses to thrive and grow. We are in ongoing discussion with the Scottish Government who are exploring options to develop a network of national and regional hubs for Womens Business Centres across Scotland that are embedded in the local regions and economy, flexed to the local needs and enhancing existing business support services such as the Business Gateway. QMU was proud to be included as a case study in the report by Dr Norin Arshed (University of Dundee) and Dr Stephen Knox (University of Strathclyde) to the Scottish Government entitled "Understanding the needs of Women Entrepreneurs in Scotland: A Case for a Scottish Women's Business Centre".

We recognise, that while the divergent initiatives in entrepreneurial education within the public and private sector spark great promise in closing the gender gap, further progress is needed, as women seeking to set up in business can be disadvantaged at various stages including, gender based policy making, and discrimination as a result of stereotypical attitudes towards women in business as evidenced in the Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship. As a University rooted in inclusiveness (in 1875 the institution that became QMU provided education for women at a time when society made that challenging) and with a female staff/student population of approx. 78%, QMU is well placed to lead the sector in this area.

Through their on-campus location, the Business Gateway Advisors provide ongoing mentoring and support to our staff, students and alumni – bringing an invaluable, fresh and real time perspective on company creation and entrepreneurial skills. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the importance of this work and the team have actively engaged and presented virtually into a wide range of modules. By 2023, we will have doubled the direct delivery of entrepreneurial education into the curriculum, including doctoral education by the Business Gateway.

Building on this we will progress a changing culture that supports the capacity of our staff and students to be entrepreneurial in a variety of contexts. QMU is playing a leading role in the sector in challenging the contours of entrepreneurship and the evolution of inspiring entrepreneurs from business, creative, social and service innovation perspectives. In 2020 we partnered with CEIS (the UK's largest social enterprise support agency) and Firstport to deliver the Social Shifters programme, providing free access to specialist digital learning resources along with 1:1 start up advice to encourage anyone who has an idea that has a social or environmental impact. This initiative has been extremely successful and is being embedded in a range of Health Science courses, such as physiotherapy and nursing (areas which are not normally associated with traditional entrepreneurial learning) along with business modules.

As a small HEI our external profile in enterprise creation and competitions continues to grow and we will build on exceeding the results in previous years' figures in respect of participation in these competitions and our success in applications progressing through to the next stage and indeed winning! In 2020 we had semi-finalists in the Kickstart, Creative and Impact categories of Converge Challenge and Jake Elliot Hook and Ameer Ritchie of S'Wheat were the overall winner in the Scottish Edge, Young Edge Competition. In addition Ameer was the face of the RBS "Back her Business" national campaign.

We successfully delivered a range of workshops in February 2020 in partnership with the Business Gateway, Princes Trust, The School for Social Entrepreneurs, Scottish Edge and representatives from a range of companies who gave their time for free. In addition we ran a QMU enterprise competition during the month of February which looked for innovative ideas around food and drink and finalists were due to present their ideas at a high profile event with our Chancellor Prue Leith on the 17th March, but unfortunately this had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 as did our annual 2020 programme of on-campus enterprise skills events. However, we have actively supported and promoted a wide variety of online workshops that were being delivered by external partners such as Converge Challenge, Scottish Institute for Enterprise and Interface which enhanced the student learning and experience. In addition the ability to engage on line has enhanced the opportunity for range of entrepreneurial speakers to engage and participate in programmes across the

University. It is still our ambition to double the number of students, alumni and staff engaging in entrepreneurial activities by 2023

Over the next three years we will continue to position QMU as one of Scotland's largest providers of performing arts education and continue to increase the numbers of students being able to study the performing arts to degree level, either at our own campus or through our partnerships with the FE sector. We are also supporting the creative industries sector through the MA Stage Management partnership and the MA Applied Arts and Social practice that should develop the graduate skill set needed by the industry. A refreshed short course portfolio will ensure future skills provision is specifically responsive to the enterprise skills necessary for ensuring greater organisational sustainability in Scotland's cultural organisations. Furthermore, our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Capital Theatres Trust has resulted in a module based at the Festival Theatre, Edinburgh in which undergraduate students will work with the Theatre's archive so as to bring it to life through devised performance.

In 2019, we signed a 3 year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). Recognising the importance of collaborating across institutions and disciplines, the aim of the partnership is to deliver specialist events and resources to budding creative entrepreneurs, freelancers, artists, designers, producers and performers. In September 2019, the three partner institutions delivered the inaugural SHIFT Summer School, a collaborative and bespoke sector specific entrepreneurial programme aimed at helping students and recent graduates in creative industries move from higher education into their professional careers. The summer school was an intensive week-long series of workshops, small breakout conversations, creative activities and one-to-one clinics. Students and alumni from a range of disciplines across all three institutions, met under the guidance of experts from the creative industries.

In 2020, as a result of COVID-19, the whole event was redesigned and delivered online and a brand new website was launched www.shiftintoyourfuture.com. The programme was opened up to additional partner universities and over 100 participants took part from GSA, RCS, QMU, the University of the West of Scotland, the University of Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen. Plans are already underway for SHIFT 2021 which we hope to open up to a wider range of additional partner institutions.

Creative Industries is one of the eleven sub strands of UIF collaborative activity focused on entrepreneurialism that have been identified by Scottish HEI's. QMU is partnering with GSA, RCS and Edinburgh Napier University to jointly lead this strand and develop of a programme of activities following on from the success of the SHIFT programme.

The success of SHIFT is raising the international profile of best practice in collaborative models of entrepreneurial training in Scotland, with an invitation from the Scottish Government to the three partner institutions to present SHIFT as an exemplar of excellence at the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) virtual conference which is taking place on the 28th and 29th January 2021. The conference, which is being hosted by Glasgow City region with support from the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and Creative Scotland, is part of the Culture, Creative Economy and Local Development project funded by the OECD and the European Union

Using a model similar to SHIFT, QMU has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SRUC and Abertay University, to deliver an ambitious new collaborative entrepreneurship programme focused specifically on the food and drink sector, titled Thrive. This will respond to the unprecedented economic growth and opportunity for start-up in the food and drink sector in Scotland and a changing post-Brexit landscape. We will work collaboratively and build on regional cohesion to draw on institutional multi/interdisciplinary strengths to begin to address transformation in the next generation of entrepreneurs going in to food and drink and challenge the notion that the sector has a low propensity for innovation. Our ambition is to attract and develop new talent to support sustainable growth in Scotland's food and drink sector. The initial 2 day workshop will take place on the 5th and 6th November 2021 and the aim is to provide the participants from each institution with a blend of business and technical skills that will enable them to take their idea from concept to product development.

We have been particularly committed to leveraging external funds to support UIF activity. We will continue to grow our exclusive partnership with The Edinburgh Merchant Company through their Enterprise Fund, which is aimed at supporting start-up business who are based in Edinburgh and Lothians with a mentor and grants of between £500-5000. Due to COVID-19 the fund did not open this year but it is anticipated that it will reopen in 2021. The expert mentors from the Merchant Company continue to provide support to a number of our young businesses which has invaluable in these challenging times of Covid-19

Santander Universities increased their funding in 2020 for entrepreneurship to support the businesses through COVID-19. We received an additional £25000 from them and were able to support 30 businesses with a range of grants to help them continue to trade through Covid-19. This funding was welcomed by our BIZ members as it really helped them to pivot their businesses and trade through extremely challenging times. This academic year through our QMU/Santander Enterprise fund we are supporting a further 7 businesses with additional grant funding. In addition to this we will maximise opportunities provided by the Santander Internship Programme to support QMU start-ups located in the BIZ to help them develop and grow their companies.

Outcome six (inclusive growth and social impact): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership) (Ref PA10)

QMU will prioritise wider social agendas as well as economic goals, including contributions to civic life, social, community, health, cultural and intellectual enrichment. Specifically we are keen to play a key role in thought leadership on economic and societal impact, how it is measured and how it should be used. In the area of Service Innovation, we are keen to work with the sector on collaboration with users as a source of innovation, recognising, that in many economic sectors, the user is often more innovative than the manufacturer.

We value creativity and innovation in our research. We will work to actively engage and stimulate our students, communities, businesses and partners to help them understand better their place within society and to embrace the importance of knowledge and academic discourse that has significant impact for society, culture and economy. Our Research and KE Centres highlight our main inter-disciplinary strengths, our drive to deal with real world issues and show our strategic commitment to encouraging innovation within and between disciplines with our partners from across all sectors of society.

We want to empower our researchers to act as agents of change and encourage and enable them to share insights and maximise impact pathways. Public participation and civic engagement will more strategically define the QMU researcher journey. We will continue to play an integral role in public discourse and evidence based decision making, injecting knowledge, informed and measured views, shaping debates and seeding new ideas and will build on existing links with the Scottish Futures Forum, Scottish Parliament, and Scottish Institute for Police Research. Our institutional membership of the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange (SPRE) has supported our researchers in working with policymakers in the following areas: training and mentoring opportunities delivered in conjunction with partners; digital platforms providing tools for researchers and policy professionals; bespoke tools addressing particular policy challenges. We will grow the number of high quality, outcome driven partnerships with public, private and third sector including increasing the number of external Fellowships awarded such as the RSE, Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament Fellowships.

After over 10 years of ongoing collaboration, the four Edinburgh Universities signed a new Manifesto to continue to grow and develop the Beltane Public Engagement Partnership. The Beltane allows partner universities to share good practice, build on reciprocal researcher training arrangements and supports interdisciplinary pathways to impact. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 we built on previously successful collaborative researcher events including Explorathon and Cabaret of Dangerous ideas both of which were delivered virtually. Through the strong Beltane partnership, we will be pro-active in seeking collaborative external funds such as UKRI Enhancing Place-based Partnerships in Public Engagement. Over the past year we have invested in improvement in the Beltane web presence and infrastructure, enabling us to raise the profile of the collaboration, building on the increasing policy priority of regional cohesion through our Edinburgh and South East Region City Deal.

We are an active member of the Scottish Parliament Academic Network (SPAN). The network builds on an existing collaboration set up in 2014 between the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICE), Scotland's Futures Forum, Beltane and the Scottish Universities Insight Unit to encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange between the Scottish Parliament and the academic community.

We are supporting our researchers in responding to a rapidly changing external context with increased emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives, delivered through new and more strategic structures that prioritise collaboration and leverage of external funding. A recurrent theme across all of our innovation activity is the desire support a growing and vibrant community of academic innovators and researcher practitioners. This is evidenced by the growing success of our Innovation Fellowship programme of activity.

Social Enterprise and Community Interest Groups make an important contribution to our portfolio and we plan to grow activity in this area in terms of enterprise creation and demand for our services. By working collaboratively in applying social entrepreneurship to business solutions, the sector could make a significant impact in addressing social, economic and environmental issues. Social impact is core in many of our courses and our collaboration with CEIS and Firstport on the Social Shifters programme is enhancing and strengthening this delivery into the curriculum, which we hope will lead to an increase in numbers of social enterprises being created.

Inter-university Social Enterprise partnerships are an area we are keen to explore. Specifically we would like to collaborate with a wide range of cross-sector organisations to enhance and develop ecosystems of support for social entrepreneurs.

Collaboratively we would like to: explore novel forms of enterprise incubation – incubators in ideas and innovation in culture and society; improve systems for national data sets for impact capture around social and cultural impact and KE; and develop new mechanisms for collating data on researcher mobility and career destination.