

## **Robert Gordon University – Amended UIF Action Plan (in response to the additional funding for Research and Innovation AY 2018/19) – September 2018**

### **Annex B to RGU Outcome Agreement 2018/19-2020/21 [Measure 14: Individual HEI UIF progress measures and sector wide reporting]**

#### **University Innovation Fund (UIF) 2018/19 - this plan outline the use of the UIF allocation in support of individual and national outcomes**

##### **Introduction**

The university has highlighted, through its Outcome Agreement (OA), its commitment to deliver the Scottish Government's strategic priorities set out in its Economic Strategy. To underline this commitment, RGU will match the £250k funding it will receive through the Platform Grant in support of the University Innovation Fund (UIF) objectives with a similar figure to develop a core support infrastructure for enterprise, business development and knowledge exchange. Further details of anticipated outcomes for these areas are contained in the OA 2018/19.

RGU will work collaboratively with the rest of the HEI sector, through Universities Scotland Research & Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG), to address these outcomes. RGU has committed to delivering on five of the seven Outcome Groups – demand stimulation, simplification /commercialisation, simplification/greater innovation, entrepreneurialism and international.

To help realise this ambition and to drive a step-change in innovation, RGU recruited a Vice Principal Commercial and Regional Innovation who will lead on the universities innovation agenda, drawing upon his experience of successfully implementing innovation and entrepreneurship strategies and initiatives in a number of international universities. This paper sets out RGU's ambition in AY2018-19, with particular reference to the increase in funding allocated to RGU.

To stimulate demand for innovation services and simplify access to cross-university capabilities and facilities HEIs need to exhibit an increasingly collaborative approach by delivering a programme of "Innovation Challenge" events aimed at understanding and addressing 'real' industrial challenges. The output can then be developed into expressions of interest and used to set the direction of future waves of the ISCF. These workshops will focus on SME participation, supply chain development and leveraging the UK and international industry networks of all university partners. RGU intends to be an active participant and in particular has strong capability - and potential to lead consortia development - in the areas such as Oil and Gas, Subsea and Big Data Technology.

Subject to agreement, and sufficient funding being allocated from all other participating universities, a new Industry Challenge Innovation Manager post (to work at the national level across all Scottish HEIs) will form part of the new UIF collaboration framework led by RCDG. If agreed, this post will provide additional capacity to support partnership working across the HEIs, Industry, Scottish partners/agencies (e.g. SE/HIE/Scottish Government) and InnovateUK/UKRI. The role would also coordinate Innovation Challenge events, broker new relationships in response to any calls and act as a central point of contact. It has been proposed that a small percentage of the additional UIF funding from each university will be used to co-fund this secondment during AY2018-19.

##### **Outcome 1 (Demand Stimulation): Working with Enterprise Agencies, Scottish Government and Business Networks, Interface and others...help increase the demand and quality of engagement for business and the public sector for university services.**

The university has a strong reputation for employability, business engagement and undertaking industry relevant teaching and research. As a founding partner of the Aberdeen City Regional Deal, RGU works alongside all partners, including Opportunity North East (ONE), to meet the demands of industry and address the region's economic development needs through job creation and innovation. The university played a leading role in developing the innovation

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section of the Aberdeen City Region Deal, and is integral to its implementation, taking a leading role in the oil and gas and the big data elements, and partnering the University of Aberdeen in the biopharmaceuticals and the food & drink themes.

Working alongside the Oil and Gas Technology Centre, and other stakeholders RGU are looking to establish a National Subsea Centre that will offer an internationally leading, well-resourced environment dedicated to driving industry demand-led transformative technology research in Scotland related to subsea.

RGU will use £100,000 of the additional UIF funding to support the collaborative efforts in the planning, implementation and realisation of the National Subsea Centre to ensure that it has a transformational impact on technology research in Scotland.

RGU encourages industry partnerships and enables the delivery of applied research and consultancy projects between university researchers and industry. In addition, RGU's own Oil and Gas Institute continues to provide a gateway for the industry to access RGU expertise and facilities, including our drilling simulation suite.

RGU hosts the North of Scotland KTP centre and through our relationship with KTP and Interface we ensure the successful development and delivery of collaborative knowledge exchange projects with SMEs. RGU had the second highest number of KTPs awarded in Scotland in 2017. To enhance the quality of engagement with the Innovation Centres RGU has a representative on the board of OGIC, hosts DataLab and works closely with CENSIS, CSiC, SAIC and IBiolC.

Under Priority Actions 4 and 5 RGU has taken significant steps to improving the skills of early career researchers through "Dragons Den" style events and has developed academic and support staff through sponsorship at 'Scotland Can Do Scale' and conferences, raising their awareness of good practice.

In 2018/19 RGU will:

- In collaboration with OGTC and other stakeholders launch a National Subsea Centre to offer industry a high quality, well resourced environment dedicated to driving industry demand-led transformative technology development in Scotland
- Increase the number of active KTPs from 8 in 2017/18 to 12
- Work with Innovation Centre staff to promote opportunities throughout RGU; improve the quality and variety of applications; and explore the opportunity to host another regional satellite of an Innovation Centre.
- Continue to improve the conversion of SFC Innovation Vouchers and prioritise follow-on activity to ensure staff maintain continued engagement with the participating SMEs
- Where appropriate, promote secondments and sabbaticals to enrich the skills of academics and researchers for effective collaboration with industry.

### **Outcome 2 (Simplification/Commercialisation): In partnership with Enterprise Agencies, and Interface and others...demonstrably simplify business access to knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities.**

The university has adopted the standard contracts and guidance for Scottish Funding Council's Innovation Vouchers Programme and continues to work with the relevant Research and Commercialisation Directors Contracts sub-group to further develop simplified contracting arrangements and refresh templates (Priority Action 7). In addition, RGU works closely with Interface and the North of Scotland KTP Centre on the implementation of a Post Referral Protocol to ensure both continuity of support with businesses and selection of the most appropriate academic partners.

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RGU's 'Business Services' web pages articulate the benefits of working with the university and provide an easy access route to expertise, services and resources that can support growth and innovation. In 2017/18, RGU received 135 graduate apprenticeship places for a September 18 start from Skills Development Scotland. Successful recruitment has resulted in 66 companies signing collaboration agreements with the university.

In 2018-19 RGU will:

- Meet regularly with Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, InnovateUK and other funders to understand their range of funding opportunities with the objective of simplifying business / academic access to innovation support
- Recruit a new Contracts Manager to oversee the simplification process
- Develop an enhanced web presence to provide easier access for business
- Ensure that the 66 companies participating in the GA programme with RGU are made fully aware of the wider university opportunities available to them.

### **Outcome 3 (simplification/greater innovation): In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface at a national level make use of their sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy (including beyond non-STEM)**

The university is committed to partnering with other universities and enterprise agencies using sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation and enhance enterprise in the Scottish Economy.

RGU delivers relevant research in several of Scotland's key economic sectors, notably Oil & Gas, Subsea, Smart Data, Health & Wellbeing and the Creative Industries. Together with Opportunity North East (ONE), and the University of Aberdeen, RGU will shape and support the development of the Aberdeen City Region Deal and the 10-year investment in innovation, internationalisation, digital connectivity and infrastructure across the region.

In 2018/19 RGU will:

- In collaboration with OGTC and other stakeholders launch the National Subsea Centre to offer industry a high quality, well-resourced environment dedicated to driving transformative technology research in Scotland
- Broaden research and innovation opportunities aligned with the key themes and City Region Deal to increase incubator space, broaden research opportunities and increase the volume of start-ups in the big data, biopharmaceuticals, food science and drink sectors. This will build on the existing expertise currently in the Aberdeen City Region and beyond.
- Maintain and grow the university's position with the KTP Programme and continue to increase the uptake of SFC Innovation vouchers (Measure 13 of Outcome Agreement 2018/19)
- Continue to demonstrate commitment to the Innovation Centres programme. As well as hosting DataLab, RGU will work in partnership to co-locate satellite centres for the region, thereby enhancing innovation opportunities.
- Work in collaboration with Interface and other HEIs, through RCDG, to support the development of a Scottish Training Programme for staff working at the academic / business interface.
- Capitalise on opportunities for staff mobility between the university and business arising from the economic diversification component of the Aberdeen City Region Deal.

### **Outcome 4 (entrepreneurialism): Sector will have made significant positive change in the way entrepreneurial opportunities are promoted and delivered to students, staff and businesses**

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RGU is supporting the Scottish Government's Scotland Can Do framework and will extend its commitment to the promotion of entrepreneurial opportunities to its students and staff and will grow its enterprise activity to stimulate business start-ups. The university has recruited VP for Commercial and Regional Innovation, who has a decade of experience of developing and implementing a variety of entrepreneurship and innovation programs at Arizona State University as well as in Ireland and Saudi Arabia. In the coming months, RGU will launch a range of new innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives as part of the implementation of this revised strategic intent and the new RGU Strategic Framework document.

Additional UIF funding will go towards the establishment of a dedicated Digital Incubator space in Aberdeen City Centre. In partnership with Opportunity North East (ONE) and Codebase RGU will open a Digital Technology Incubator, at the RGU Schoolhill administration building aimed at accelerating the growth of early stage and established digital tech businesses in the region. In addition, it will assist our key industries (including Oil and Gas) in embracing transformational digital solutions to improve their productivity. The development of the Hub on Schoolhill will provide a dedicated environment for digital business incubation and growth and enhance the entrepreneurial environment to support company creation and scale-up.

To meet the needs of nascent entrepreneurs in the region, particularly those in the gig economy, RGU will launch the Library Innovation Network Aberdeenshire (LINA) to advance equality and diversity and reach out to those underserved communities who want to learn how to start a business, meet likeminded entrepreneurs and engage with local mentors. The LINA programme aims to stimulate economic development opportunities for north Aberdeenshire and act as the starting point of a pipeline of innovation and entrepreneurship. The initiative provides an opportunity to connect the entrepreneurial and innovation activities in Robert Gordon University with the development of an 'entrepreneurial mind-set' in North Aberdeenshire leading to business startup and job creation.

In 2018/19 RGU will roll-out the following initiatives aligned to UIF priorities:

- New Entrepreneurship Start Up Accelerators: Accelerator program with initial 'bird seed' investment funding for 20-30 startups / spin outs a year. A new 2 fund will be created to support the identification and protection of University Intellectual Property.
- In partnership with Opportunity North East (ONE) and Codebase open a Digital Incubator in Aberdeen City Centre aimed at accelerating the growth of early stage and established digital tech businesses in the region
- In partnership with Aberdeenshire Council launch the Library Innovation Network Aberdeenshire (LINA) to advance equality and diversity and reach out to those underserved communities who want to learn how to start a business, meet likeminded entrepreneurs and engage with local mentors.
- Non-Credit Innovation and Entrepreneurship Teaching and Learning: Launch of a series of new non-credit bearing 'pracademic' (practitioner taught, practice oriented) training programs for RGU students, staff and alumni.
- Pracademic Innovation Training for Scottish Companies: Launch of a short course, team-based innovation and new product/service development program. These new corporate and SME Innovation training programs will include: Ideas & Creativity, Innovation Acceleration, Design Thinking and Strategic Leadership & Change.
- Establishment a cross-university credit-bearing module that allows all RGU student to access entrepreneurial learning focusing upon idea and opportunity recognition. This builds upon the successful delivery over the last 4 years of the Business Idea and Opportunities module to over 300 students and has resulted in a student trade fair in which highly innovative student ideas were showcased to the local community including Sir Ian Wood and local MSPs.
- RGU continues to engage with SFC and other stakeholders in the development of follow-on activities relevant to the SCALE programme. With other universities in Scotland, RGU is participating in the current Beta-test of Virgin Startup's 'Lifestart' online programme on employability and entrepreneurship.

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In addition, RGU will continue to encourage and promote a sustainable Student Entrepreneurship Society and hold an annual Entrepreneurial Summit as well as provide regular 'Meet the Expert' workshops and networking events throughout the year. The University's digital incubator continues to provide start-ups and young companies with physical space and access to a network of mentors to nurture and grow their ventures. The incubator continues to play a key role in anchoring and promoting enterprise activity at RGU and through its Strategy group although will be significantly enhanced through the leadership of the Vice Principal.

RGU will collaborate with other Scottish HEIs to increase the visibility of Scotland-wide initiatives including the Converge Challenge, Scottish Edge and RSE Enterprise Fellowships.

### **Outcome 5 (international): In partnership with SDI, connected Scotland and others pool knowledge and networks and shared good practice to promote and engage Scotland internationally**

The university will continue to work closely with Scottish Development International, Department for International Trade and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to maximise opportunities for the Scottish economy internationally and provide a central location for hosting overseas delegations with other institutions and agencies, thereby supporting the actions set out in the Enterprise and Skills Review actions.

RGU will continue to develop mechanisms through multi-partner working to build markets in key international regions and provide proactive support to colleagues and companies to trade on an international stage. The university draws upon its internationally recognised expertise in oil and gas, including thought leadership through its Oil and Gas Institute, and leverages its intellectual and physical assets, including its drilling simulation suite, to maximise benefit to the university, the region and Scotland.

Building on the back of the President of Mexico's visit to RGU in 2015, the university has continued to build its profile and reputation in Mexico, through:

- The development of a Skills Development Framework for the Hydrocarbon Sector (SDFHS), post Mexico's Energy Reform funded by the FCO Prosperity Fund and in support of both the Mexican and UK economies
- The development of a pilot Sector Leadership Programme funded by the FCO Transition Funds – a key recommendation from the SDFHS
- The university being one of five UK universities to partner with the Mexican Government to develop strategic funded alliances with Mexican institutions, with the view of developing capability and capacity in the Higher Education sector in Mexico to support Energy Reform from 2018

Aligned to the City Council's Aberdeen-Japan strategy to further develop trade, tourism, academic and sporting links, RGU and Japan's Nippon Foundation recently signed a Letter of Intent under which they will collaborate with each other and industry in areas of strategic significance in ocean innovation. In 2018-19, RGU will deliver its 3rd Summer School for the Nippon Foundation and is building relationships with companies, universities and regional governments in Japan in this area of marine development and will address key technology challenges such as predictive and preventative maintenance and underwater communications. In addition, RGU will actively explore opportunities to grow transnational education within and out-with the EU, with a view to mitigating the potentially negative effect of Brexit.

In 2018/19 RGU will:

- Continue to implement its international strategy and work in partnership with HEIs and agencies to strengthen and grow international relationships, leveraging expertise and excellence with a particular focus on Japan and Mexico

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- Continue to work closely with SDI and other relevant bodies in a structured way to promote and represent Scotland internationally and host incoming visits
- Pro-actively build upon existing European networks with a view to mitigating potentially negative effects from Brexit

### **Outcome 6 (inclusive growth and social impact).**

Through its strategic framework, RGU articulates its commitment to 'Prioritise Societal and Economic Impact' and enriching the community and individuals' lives. To do this, RGU has continued to build on its published report on "Regenerating Aberdeen and Creating a New North"; by being an active stakeholder in the Aberdeen City Region Deal; and by actively engaging in supporting the region's cultural heritage, provenance and identity.

With the additional UIF funding RGU will accelerate the launch of the Library Innovation Network Aberdeenshire (LINA) to advance equality and diversity and reach out to those underserved communities who want to learn how to start a business, meet likeminded entrepreneurs and engage with local mentors. The LINA programme aims to stimulate economic development opportunities for north Aberdeenshire and act as the starting point of a pipeline of innovation and entrepreneurship. The initiative can deliver a social inclusion-focused programme that facilitates the capturing of harder to reach individuals who have unrealised ideas. It can also support innovation programmes in the rural sectors such as food & drink, arts & crafts, and tourism for key rural stakeholders (for example innovation development within the farming and fishing communities);

Through the partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, LINA offers a huge opportunity to connect the entrepreneurial and innovation activities in Robert Gordon University with the development of an 'entrepreneurial mind-set' in North Aberdeenshire, providing the currently missing link between communities and entrepreneurship development whilst having a positive economic development impact throughout the wider Aberdeen region.

The following examples illustrate RGU's work:

RGU is building a wider programme of collaboration with other universities to support business and industry and economic and social development in the Highlands and Islands across a range of industry sectors. With Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Orkney Islands Council and the University of the Highlands and Islands and Heriot Watt University, we delivering greater engagement and exploitation of Higher Education, research and innovation in the region and helping to lay a foundation for additional investment in the region through the islands deal. Following a number of smaller scale interactions between RGU and various stakeholders on the Island, a wider collaborative effort has been launched with the aim of translating RGU research for the direct benefit of the people, society and businesses of Orkney in 2018/19.

RGU continues to grow its award winning Streetsport initiative, founded in 2007, which offers free doorstep sports and other events directly to young people within their own communities, including seven local priority neighbourhoods highlighted by the Scottish Government as being in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland.

*The CityLab! project is an interdisciplinary opportunity for students from both Robert Gordon University (RGU) and the University of Aberdeen, to identify and develop a range of initiatives across the city, which will have a positive student-led impact. CityLab! aims to transform and innovate Aberdeen by initiating and supporting solutions for citywide change. Previous CityLab! projects include working with social enterprise cFINE on a food upcycling and redistribution platform and successfully selling three 'Soofa' interactive benches to Aberdeen City Council which were placed both in city centre and on campus locations. RGU and University of Aberdeen provide academic support so that students gain the transferable skills for dealing with clients and prototyping ideas needed to complete the project.*

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RGU, Aberdeen City Council and the University of Aberdeen have collaborated to organise a series of evening talks on the theme of 'Connected Transport Systems of the Future' to run from February to May 2018. The presentation series will look, not only at how the future of transport systems may look and the increasing role of smart phones, but also how sustainable transport solutions can be further developed between cities and rural areas linking to national, regional and local transport policy.

The Aberdeen Youth Games was developed in 2013 in partnership between RGU's Sport and Exercise Science team and Sport Aberdeen's Active Schools team and run annually. Aberdeen Active Schools take 35 second year BSc (Hons) Sports and Exercise Science students on a four week placement and they are provided with training to deliver coaching in badminton, tennis and squash, and delivered four weeks of training in 30 primary schools across Aberdeen. At the end of the placement three small festivals are held at different venues celebrating each of the sports. Approximately 3,500 primary school pupils are involved in the activities. The 2018 games will take place in May.

Each year the university runs a series of professorial lectures to engage the public covering a wide range of topics and research, encouraging intellectual thinking and discussion. RGU also runs a number of public engagement activities and events through Gray's School of Art including the successful degree show, the fashion show and photography exhibition. They also deliver a series of short courses for the public.

In 2018-19 RGU will:-

- Support the implementation of City Region Deal, focusing on key themes of innovation and impact
- Launch LINA – a Library Innovation Network throughout North Aberdeenshire focusing on innovation and entrepreneurship aimed at the rural gig economy
- Continue to focus partnering with stakeholders to develop cultural initiatives and strategies within our region – including StreetSport, Aberdeen Youth Games
- Progress work in Orkney to accelerate societal impact
- Clearly define social and cultural benefit as part of programme deliverables/impact.

### **Outcome 7 (equality & diversity): Ensure positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of UIF**

The university will continue to ensure that its activities in support of UIF outcomes reflect its deep commitment to advancing equality and diversity. RGU has an Equality and Diversity Advisory Group to advise and make recommendations to the Executive on matters relating to the promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity issues throughout the university.

RGU is one of 143 universities and research institutes that are members of the Athena SWAN Charter. The university is committed to the aims and principles of Athena SWAN. The Membership of the Charter assists higher education institutes in fulfilling their gender duty commitments, working towards equitable working environments and identifying themselves as employers of choice, both to their staff, and also to students, funders, research councils and industry.

RGU applied for the Athena Swan institutional bronze award to recognise its approach to tackling equality and diversity issues. The university is reviewing its equality outcomes and will address equality and diversity as part of its refreshed strategy.

Over 40 women have undertaken the women-only leadership development programme, Aurora, offered by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Many others have been involved in the programme as mentors and role models.

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Throughout 2018/19, RGU will continue to consider and prioritise the equality and diversity impact on UIF in our wider outcome agreement.