Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Research and Knowledge Exchange (KE) Strategy 2022-2027

April 2022

Build on our strengths in applied research to support the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of our global society through interdisciplinary work, collaboration and excellence. Focus our activity and investment in research and KE on areas of potential growth, demonstrable strength, and greatest likely benefit to society.

(QMU Strategic Plan 2020-25).

Vision

Our vision is to be a leading and inclusive modern University, known for transformative research and KE, excellent in our outputs, progressive and distinctive in our culture, and far reaching in our impact.

By challenging conventional thought we will improve wellbeing and quality of life through internationally excellent and world-leading interdisciplinary, research and KE – making an impact and responding with integrity, we will be known for the creation of research-based evidence and innovation in policy and practice.

We value diversity in our thinking and culture to drive excellence and ensure equality of opportunity in the development and capacity of all our researchers and their contributions to addressing societal challenges.

Our Approach

- Focus on consolidating and developing areas of research excellence with the greatest potential.

- Prioritise increasing the quality of research outputs and impact rather than the volume.

- Support the initiation and development of mission-led/challenge-based ideas that contribute to social, cultural and economic prosperity and wellbeing.

- Enable and value internal and external collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches.

- Secure greater diversity of income to enable the sustainability and growth of our research and KE activity.

- Realise the potential of all our researchers through a positive, inclusive and healthy culture that is underpinned by integrity and values diversity.

- Encourage a supportive environment for doctoral research study, drawing from a range of disciplines and collaborative partners to nurture next generation scholars and engage with diverse communities.

- Contribute to post COVID-19 economic recovery and social renewal.

- Embed more sustainable research and KE practices and find solutions to contributing to a net zero society.

- Become more internationally leading yet rooted in our region by building and enhancing national and global collaborations.

- Elevate our focus on "place–based research and KE" through our participation in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal to ensure connectivity and coherence with the regional growth agenda.

Cross-Cutting Themes

People

Attract, develop, retain and reward excellence in research and KE by enabling capability and building capacity at all career stages.

Culture

Value all contributions through an open, positive and healthy research and KE culture based on diversity, inclusivity and mutual respect across all activities and underpinned by integrity and a sustainable environment.

Impact

Become increasingly impact-intensive and embed and enable impact across the research lifespan.

Strategic Objectives

1. Drive excellence through impact

Support high quality research and KE that is, or has the potential to be internationally excellent or world leading. Focus on the quality and impact of our outputs, and secure greater diversity and sustainability of income streams.

Priorities:

1. Using selective investment, support staff to engage in high quality research and KE through continuous improvement of enabling policies, workload allocation models and a supportive research infrastructure.

2. Ensure the sustainability of our research and KE through external income generation and the selective investment of internal funds. Prioritise strategic investment of funds to enable competitive and collaborative challenge-led funding bids and support Early Career Researchers (ECRs) in strengthening their research identities and profiles.

3. Embed support mechanisms for research impact, improving capture, curation, recognition and reward.

4. Attract and nurture high-quality doctoral candidates and develop supervisory capacity to support the next generation of influential researchers.

2. Focus our Strengths

Pursue sharper definition in the articulation of our identity by focusing on existing areas of excellence with the greatest potential for growth, increasing interdisciplinary collaboration and being alert to emerging areas of opportunity.

Priorities:

1. Informed by the results of REF 2021, review Research Centres and invest in existing areas of excellence and identify and support nascent areas of strategic opportunity.

3. Develop and Value People

Enhance the capacity and capability of our researchers and secure development time for their success across multiple career pathways and varied contributions through leadership, mentoring, profiling research talent and unlocking the potential of ECRs and Contract Research Staff (CRS).

Priorities:

1. Enable a step change in our environment and culture for research and KE by providing clear and supportive career development pathways for research, KE and impact; nurturing early and mid-career researchers; and investing in research mentorship and leadership competencies.

2. Improve our research and KE culture and value the diverse range of contributions researchers make including skills and experiences.

4. Promote Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity

Be exemplary in our approach to collaboration and interdisciplinarity in order to be the partner of choice nationally and internationally by making more informed and efficient decisions about how we deploy our resources for maximum return.

Priorities:

1. Embed a challenge-led approach and improve alignment with external priorities by ensuring preparedness for calls from key funders.

2. Increase the Graduate School's engagement with the Scottish and UK bodies of which it is a member, enhancing the experience of Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs)

5. Embed a Healthy and Positive Culture

Develop and sustain a distinctive, positive, inclusive and healthy research and KE culture that supports the capacity of our staff and students to be curious, creative and innovative in a variety of contexts. Ensure that our leadership and structures are enabling and allow all our researchers to pursue bold ideas and alliances while working to the highest standards of integrity.

Priorities:

1. Be exemplary in our compliance with Concordats for Researcher Development; Research Integrity; KE; Open Research and Public Engagement.

6. Embrace Open Innovation

Ensure that open research and KE increasingly defines our outputs, culture, campus and practice: open to people, place, collaboration and looking beyond disciplinary boundaries, including co-creating, we will be connected and proactive, promoting social justice and receptive to mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge, ideas and expertise.

Priorities:

1. Co-create social justice focused solutions to place-based challenges with local stakeholders, including implementing new academic engagement opportunities for the QMU Innovation Hub and wider Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal ambitions.

2. Increase our emphasis on social innovation, wellbeing and female entrepreneurship; and enhance support for researchers in engaging in public sector tendering activity.

3. Enable a step change in our environment and culture for research and KE and associated career development pathways.

Outcomes (from QMU Strategic Plan)

1. An optimised percentage of research and KE active staff creating a critical mass with the ability to drive research and KE strategy.
2. An increase in the overall quality profile of research publications.
3. An increase in externally secured research and KE income.
4. An open, positive, inclusive and healthy research and KE culture as evidenced by improved performance in the national Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS).

Delivery Plan

Priority	Action (Some actions will be cross-cutting across multiple priorities)
1. Using selective investment, support staff to engage in high quality research and KE through continuous improvement of enabling policies, workload allocation models and a supportive research infrastructure.	1.1 In line with sector guidance, review how we support and define Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), ensuring clarity and consistency in roles and allocated time. 1.2 Ensure our sabbatical policy and other support mechanisms for researcher development are visible and embedded. 1.3 Publish and refresh clear institutional definitions for Early Career Researchers (ECRs), Contract Research Staff (CRS), routes to independence and Research Centre membership and engagement. 1.4 Ensure School, Research Centre and Professional Services Operational Plans are aligned with strategic priorities for research and KE and provide transparent and robust enablers.
2. Ensure the sustainability of our research and KE through external income generation and the selective investment of internal funds. Prioritise strategic investment of funds to enable strong and collaborative challenge-led funding bids and support ECRs in strengthening their research identities and profiles.	2.1 Identify four cross institutional, strategic interdisciplinary mission-led research and KE themes. 2.2 Support the development of interdisciplinary, challenge-led funding calls. 2.3 Support ECRs and CRS in consolidating external research identities and profiles. 2.4 Engage in sector developments to address precarity in researcher careers. 2.5 Enhance support for researchers returning from periods of absence e.g., parental leave or secondments. 2.6 Set ambitious but responsible targets for Research Centres for external research and KE income.
3. Embed support mechanisms for research impact, improving capture, curation, recognition and reward.	3.1 Procure and embed a new institutional research management information system. 3.2 Develop and maintain an institutional database/long-list of impact case studies.
4. Attract and nurture high-quality doctoral candidates and supervisory capacity to support the next generation of influential researchers.	4.1 Support the Graduate School to provide enhanced supervision for doctoral candidates to encourage transformative research as well as enabling supervisors to succession plan and increase capacity and competency. 4.2 Undertake an institutional doctoral programme review.

5. Informed by the results of REF 2021, review Research Centres and invest in existing areas of excellence and identify and support nascent areas of strategic opportunity.	5.1 Review existing Research Centres, prioritising areas of strength with the greatest potential and emerging areas of opportunity.
	5.2 Elevate the visibility and leadership of Research Centres in supporting interdisciplinary collaborations.
	5.3 Set ambitious but responsible targets for Research Centres in terms of outputs, income generation and the development of KE and impact activity.
	5.4 Ensure doctoral research is fully integrated into Research Centre strategies.
	5.5 Informed by the outcomes of REF 2021 and aligned to institutional mission-led priorities, invest in a long-term programme of focused and selective support for research, KE and impact.
	5.6 Maximise opportunities for alignment with evolving Scottish Funding Council (SFC) developments relating to Alliances for Research Challenges (ARCs) and Innovation Centres.
6. Enable a step change in our environment and culture for research and KE by providing clear and supportive career development pathways for research, KE and impact; nurturing early and mid-career researchers; and investing in research mentorship and leadership competencies.	6.1 Continue to develop and enhance policies that support the career development of CRS.
	6.2 Provide a clear KE and impact career pathway.
	6.3 Consider how we improve and sustain PGR supervisory capacity.
	6.4 Pursue further avenues for collaborative and externally funded doctoral research supervision.
	6.5 Review how we best support internal and external collaboration including through sector researcher development, leadership and ECR networks.
	6.6 Appoint a professorial lead for key strategic areas including integrity and metrics; culture and career development; KE and Public Engagement; and impact.
	6.7 Continue to strengthen support and infrastructure for researcher development by growing external and collaborative researcher training and mentoring, including the Teaching, Research and Academic Mentoring Scheme (TRAMS.)
7. Improve our research and KE culture and value the diverse range of contributions researchers make including skills and experiences.	7.1 As a signatory to DORA and the Leiden Manifesto, build on and enhance institutional principles to support the responsible use of metrics.
	7.2 Promote and monitor uptake of the institutional policy for 10-days professional development for research and KE.
	7.3 Embed training and development opportunities for doctoral, ECR, and experienced researchers to improve skills and update learning to respond to current research environments.
	7.4 Aspire to excellence in the way we integrate and reinforce research and KE and teaching and learning.
	7.5 Increase the use of equality impact assessments in key processes including internal bid funding, researcher reward and recognition, impact and KE.
	7.6 Roll out and embed the Concordat to Support Research Integrity Self-Assessment Toolkit.
	7.7 Align with sector best practice and consider how narrative CV resources can be fully embedded.

8. Embed a challenge-led approach and improve alignment with external priorities by ensuring preparedness for calls from key funders.	8.1 Improve horizon scanning and proactive positioning and targeting of key collaborative strategic bids. 8.2 Intensify involvement and profile in the Edinburgh Beltane Network for Public Engagement through a revised place-based approach.
9. Increase the Graduate School's engagement with the Scottish and UK bodies of which it is a member, enhancing the experience of Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs).	9.1 Promote the opportunities our membership of the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH), Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences (SGSSS) and UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) offers to PGRs and supervisors.
10. Be exemplary in our compliance with Concordats for Researcher Development; Research Integrity; KE; Open Research and Public Engagement.	10.1 Continue to be at the forefront of sector national concordat developments and awards. 10.2 Implement new systems and processes for the governance of research ethics and ensure alignment with national guidance on safeguarding and research. 10.3 Use sector concordats to underpin strategy development. 10.4 Commit to ongoing participation in the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) to monitor excellence in our research culture and environment and allow for national benchmarking and longitudinal comparison. 10.5 Enhance Research Data Management policies and associated training to ensure that research data are managed in a way that considers the requirements of collaborators, funders, and research participants.
11. Co-create social justice focused solutions to place-based challenges with local stakeholders, including implementing new academic engagement opportunities for the QMU Innovation Hub and wider Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal ambitions.	11.1 Embed a City and Region Deal Academic Engagement Strategy in support of Innovation Park developments. 11.2 Contribute to economic recovery and social renewal to address the challenges caused by COVID-19. 11.3 Embed more sustainable research and KE practices and find solutions to contributing to a net zero society.
12. Increase our emphasis on social innovation, wellbeing and female entrepreneurship; and enhance support for researchers in engaging in public sector tendering activity.	12.1 Continue to address issues and provide solutions to gender disparity in entrepreneurship. 12.2 Maximise alignment of KE opportunities with learning and teaching. 12.3 Enhance institutional support and infrastructure for public sector tendering. 12.4 Prioritise activities aligned to emerging demand-led external opportunities including the wellbeing economy.
13. Enable a step change in our environment and culture for research and KE and associated career development pathways.	13.1 Review and refresh our strategic KE profile and maximise alignment with funder metrics. 13.2 Continue to invest in QMU Innovation Fellowships. 13.3 Review our strategy for innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprise creation in line with sector Entrepreneurial Campus developments. 13.4 Prioritise areas of KE strength – creative industries, food and drink, social innovation and female entrepreneurship.

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