



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH



College of Arts, Humanities
and Social Sciences

Strategy for
Research
and
Knowledge
Exchange
2016 to 2021

To create research that is recognised by our peers as world-leading, contributes to major advances in knowledge, and has impact

The research and knowledge exchange strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to create a shared vision for how we will develop research and knowledge exchange in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS).

At the heart of this vision is a College that values research and knowledge exchange and celebrates the difference it makes to individual researchers, to the academic environment in which we work and to the wider world. Our overall aim is to create research that is recognised by our peers as world leading, contributes to major advances in knowledge, and has impact.

The College recognises that success depends on the talent and skills of our researchers and those who support them and seeks to make it as straightforward as possible for individuals and groups to bring their research plans to fruition. Research is a core activity for most (86%) of the academic staff in CAHSS. We want it to be a place where we can enjoy contributing to the development of a lively and well-funded research culture that enables our scholarly endeavours to flourish and where we feel well supported and enthusiastic about our work and perceive it to have value and meaning for the individuals and the communities with which it engages. The strategy provides a framework that assists researchers at all

stages of their careers to achieve that vision in the period to 2021. The associated action plan enables us to identify the steps we will take to translate our values and vision into continuing future success during the first three years of this period.

The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and its researchers

The role of the College is to provide strategic direction, leadership and resources. It also provides an overview of research activity across its eleven Schools, each of which has a research and knowledge exchange strategy that reflects local practices and disciplinary differences. The College advocates for the role of arts, humanities and social sciences within the University and further afield but also values interdisciplinarity and, through its relationship with the other Colleges, seeks to support emerging areas that are at the forefront of discovery and innovation.

The goals outlined in this strategy are ambitious. We will achieve world-leading research, knowledge exchange and impact by being committed to the quality of our research outputs, increasing research income, extending our knowledge exchange activities and developing our provision of postgraduate research training. There is an expectation that all academic staff with research

as a core activity will join in pursuing these goals; the College and its Schools will create a positive working environment that values both individual scholarly research and collaborative ventures, protects time for these activities and will provide the strategic direction, leadership and resources necessary to fulfil these expectations.

Why are research and knowledge exchange important?

Research in CAHSS can be defined as any form of considered enquiry that aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or practice. The research questions or approaches may draw upon analytical, creative, critical, empirical or theoretical investigations, with outputs that may include audio-visual, three-dimensional or written texts, performances and exhibitions.

Research enables us to ask, and respond to, questions about our world and who we are. We explore, interpret and share advances in knowledge as educators and scholars, empowering ourselves and others to increase understanding of the contexts in which we live. We aim to reach beyond the academic environment to make a difference to others by engaging diverse audiences and ensuring that our research brings social, cultural and economic benefits.

What are our underlying values?

We aspire to undertake research with integrity. By attending to ethical considerations at all stages of the research process, we commit to having due regard for the wellbeing of other researchers, of participants, and of the environments in which our activities take place. We aim to embed a culture of respect and awareness of equality and diversity in the management of research projects and the recruitment and employment of research staff. We embrace the principles of freedom of enquiry and expression and affirm the role of academic provocation, innovation and experimentation. We are accountable for our research and its dissemination, openly recognising the contributions of others and the need to share its outcomes widely for cultural, economic and societal benefit.

What is distinctive about our research?

Based in Edinburgh, we create opportunities that take advantage of our location in a capital city. Attuned to changing policy landscapes, we engage with local, national and UK government priorities and with arts, cultural, design, educational, financial, health and legal organisations to make major contributions to Scotland's and the UK's prosperity and wellbeing. Internationally, we maintain a world-leading profile of research by building networks that create

and nurture knowledge exchange and scholarly activity, ensuring that our research benefits from global opportunities and addresses global priorities. We are informed by an awareness of agendas for environmental and social justice and play a major role in addressing challenges such as tackling poverty, responsible management of the environment, and the promotion of health, wellbeing and social cohesion. We engage in research that challenges perspectives and meets needs. Our research makes a difference, and we want it to continue to do so.

With eleven Schools in the College, we represent an unusually diverse community that benefits from a profusion of different forms of expertise and the resources to undertake internationally excellent research. We are bold in our innovative methods, theoretical perspectives and approaches to achieving impact. We embrace a diversity of approaches and build on the excellence for which our university has been acclaimed over centuries while ensuring that we stay at the forefront of intellectual enquiry.

Achievements in research and knowledge exchange

The Times Higher Education world university rankings for 2016 place the College 16th in the world for Arts and Humanities and 30th for Social Sciences. The

Research Excellence Framework 2014 judged twelve of our Units of Assessment to have achieved top five positions in the UK by research power, with 69% of our outputs, 89% of our impact and 95% of our environment deemed world-leading or internationally excellent. These strengths are a testament to the efforts of staff past and present over many years but they also provide a springboard for our future plans. This strategy sets out the College's proposals to build on this reputation and looks forward to even greater achievements through to 2021 and beyond.

The challenges

We have a powerful legacy on which to build, but realising our ambitions needs to take account of an increasingly challenging environment. The Research Excellence Grant is distributed by the Scottish Funding Council according to a formula based on the results of the REF2014 and funds the University's research infrastructure. This finances our time for research and provides a base from which individuals and teams can bid for funding from other sources, such as the research councils, EU, government departments, charitable foundations and industry.

In spite of our exceptional performance in REF2014, the Research Excellence Grant has been cut and funding agencies have to operate with reduced

Culture, collaboration, communication and coordination

budgets. Funders require rapid responses to specific funding calls, have introduced mechanisms to manage demand and have shifted the emphasis from small-scale funding for individuals towards fewer awards for large interdisciplinary research teams. Academics working in a higher education context of competing demands on our time already juggle priorities across the requirements of the REF, associated impact activities and teaching. These additional challenges mean that we must be alert to opportunities to shape funding priorities and nimble in how we respond to changes.

The College will underpin our continuing aspirations for excellence by providing sector-leading support for all aspects of the process of applying for funding, conducting research and knowledge exchange, and tracking its impact. We are able to build on an exceptionally strong base and aim to maintain those aspects that are recognised as working well while also identifying areas in which we can do better.

Our ambitions

Our overall aim is to create research that is recognised by our peers as world leading, contributes to major advances in knowledge, and has impact. Achieving this aim relies on creating a shared culture that values people and provides leadership

within a supportive working environment built upon collaboration, communication and coordination. Together, these four key areas provide a focus for our ambitions that enables us to respond robustly to the challenges outlined above. The following sections summarise the ways in which these themes relate to this aim; the separate action plan provides more detail on how we can make this happen.

1. CULTURE Ambition: to develop and sustain a culture in which excellence in research and knowledge exchange can flourish

We aspire to enhance a lively research culture that has at its heart the people that work and study in CAHSS. It builds on core values of collegiality, integrity and respect and shares a broad consensus on priorities. This culture is facilitated by the human, financial and infrastructural resources of the College and is created by staff and students who feel valued by, and contribute to, a distinctive scholarly community in which research is informed by ethical principles and conducted with integrity.

This culture develops organically and anticipates, influences and responds to external factors. Nevertheless, there are steps we can take to guide its direction and to develop a culture of excellence in which individuals have time

and space to think, research and knowledge exchange can thrive, ambition is nurtured and researchers are supported throughout their academic careers. The College will embed principles of equality and diversity in its activities. It will aim for sector-leading practice in mentoring, annual review and professional development opportunities that will support individuals to fulfil expectations relating to research outputs, income and impact. By providing high-quality postgraduate and postdoctoral training environments that are integrated into the intellectual life of research groups and Schools we can attract the most promising research students and recruit and retain talented researchers of international standing, enabling us to develop the next generation of researchers and to cultivate the outstanding leaders of the future.

Research is informed by ethical principles and conducted with integrity

Ambition is nurtured; researchers are supported throughout their academic careers; embed principles of equality and diversity

Establish mechanisms for creating and maintaining interdisciplinary collaborations

Create and maintain international collaborations

Create and maintain spaces for collaboration

Promote, support and broker partnerships

2. COLLABORATION

Ambition: to create the conditions in which we can forge and nurture collaboration within and beyond the College

The College has an overview of the disciplinary diversity represented by its eleven Schools and is uniquely placed to foster research collaborations that can synthesise concepts and techniques from different sources and produce new forms of knowledge and insight. The responses to many research questions are unlikely to be found within the scope of one discipline but to cut across boundaries, drawing on approaches from the arts, humanities and social sciences, often in conjunction with those represented within the College of Science and Engineering and the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. Whether their purpose is to explore curiosity-driven areas of knowledge and practice or to respond to research problems identified by funders, support should enable researchers to initiate their own collaborations as well as respond to top-down or external initiatives. The Challenge Investment Fund demonstrates the College's commitment to encourage early-stage adventurous interdisciplinary work that has the potential to open up new areas of enquiry, but as it can be difficult for existing institutional structures to provide optimal levels of support, establishing mechanisms for creating and

maintaining interdisciplinary collaborations is a priority.

Many of the most challenging research problems are global in reach and the search for solutions requires approaches that cut across disciplinary boundaries. **Creating and maintaining international collaborations** enables us to be ready to respond to these global research challenges by broadening our horizons and incubating new projects. These collaborations may build on hosting visiting researchers, the appointment of international staff and the co-supervision of research students, leading to multinational joint authoring, opening up new sources of grant funding and extending the reach of the impact of our research.

The College will continue to exercise foresight in **creating and maintaining spaces for collaboration**, currently achieved primarily through its research centres and its links to the prestigious multi-partner Alan Turing Institute and Administrative Data Research Centre-Scotland, the University-wide Global Academies of Development, Environment and Society, Health, and Justice, and hosting the Academies of Government and of Sport. The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities is a key resource for supporting collaboration. It coordinates the International and Interdisciplinary Research Groups, welcomes visiting researchers, expands

scholarly networks across national and disciplinary borders and provides a space for interactions between the Fellows it hosts, other members of the College and the public.

Forthcoming developments in the University's estate, notably in the Central Area, provide opportunities to think about how the spaces in which we work can support our research, and bring us together with one another, with students, and with external stakeholders. This should include the creation of places for collaborative work 'in between' our School structures that are open to the city and the world around them. The College will also continue to invest in digital resources that provide flexible support for different forms of collaboration in virtual spaces.

The College is renowned for its partnerships with the heritage, cultural and creative industries. We will develop the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits of our research by building on and extending relationships with these industries, the third sector, policy-makers, practitioners and the public. This will enable us to **promote, support and broker partnerships** that lead to interaction between private and public enterprises with academics. We will increase the number of co-funded collaborative research studentships and draw on expertise in the CAHSS Knowledge

Increase our
profile with other
academics

Increase our
visibility with
policy-makers,
practitioners,
industry and the
public

Develop our media
presence

Exchange Office to Increase our engagement with the private sector, to organise events for practitioner audiences and to assess opportunities for licensing, consultancy and other ways of commercialising research and linking with industry. The College-funded Knowledge Exchange and Impact grant represents a commitment to building and harnessing relationships with external organisations and engagement with the public.

3. COMMUNICATION Ambition: to identify, promote and increase the visibility of our research activities

Communication is vital for increasing the visibility of our research. By ensuring a strong presence in the media and raising the awareness of stakeholders we will be able to attract the most talented students and the most distinguished staff. Potential funders will see us as a preferred source of expertise and as credible applicants with a track record of excellence.

We need to **increase our profile with other academics**, both in the UK and overseas, so that we become a global partner of choice, able to work with the research collaborators and students with the most potential. Roles such as editorships of journals, curation of exhibitions and membership of professional societies as well as service on committees and advisory bodies, such as

funding agencies, research assessment panels and the academies, can contribute to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge within the College and beyond. Communication with external organisations and the public is central to generating knowledge exchange and impact. We can **increase our visibility with policy-makers, practitioners, industry and the public** by seizing opportunities for engagement with different interest groups, participating in festivals and cultural events, and responding to public consultations. We will do more to build this into research projects from their earliest stages by encouraging greater take-up of the support offered by the Knowledge Exchange Office.

We can do more to celebrate and publicise our research-related activities by **developing our media presence** through attractively designed websites, social media and more traditional means, producing high-profile publications and using notable conferences and events to disseminate our work. Our website at impact.cahss.ed.ac.uk showcases research that has made a difference to our world. It acts as a model for further communication of our research activities to engage with policy-makers, the third sector, business and the public. We will also enhance our internal communications so that we are more effective at informing others

within the College and the University of our research activities and successes. Ambitions to streamline internal communications with a view to improving the responsiveness of services and promoting opportunities for collaboration are outlined in the following section.

4. COORDINATION Ambition: to deliver responsive services and structures that support our research and knowledge exchange activities

Our work environment is underpinned by professional services that are designed to support our research and knowledge exchange activities. Strengthening this support requires **better integration of services** with clear allocation of responsibilities both centrally and locally and across organisational boundaries, the avoidance of duplicated effort and improvement in our internal communications. As the **digital dimensions of research** increase, whether this is designing apps and websites or developing digital techniques, there will be demand for technical support for projects and for more emphasis on digital skills in academic staff development. While academics need to engage with **new research management** requirements, such as use of PURE, support for compliance with logging outputs and evidence of impact, updating databases, and generating and storing open access data and documents can

Better integration
of services

Digital dimensions
of research

Research
management



Increase income from grants and consultancy

Professional development and training

free up researchers to focus on their core academic activities.

Targets for **increasing our income from grants and consultancy** will require personalised notification of sources of funding, effective horizon scanning, strengthened processes of internal peer review and seed funding to develop innovative projects that will attract external funding. Better management information on the actual cost of conducting research will enable us to make decisions about margins and how these can be maximised within a balanced portfolio.

The Dean and Associate Dean of Research, the College Research Committee and the College Knowledge Exchange and Impact Committee will provide strategic direction in conjunction with the College Research Office, the Knowledge Exchange Office, the Research Support Office and the School RKE Offices that are in the front line of providing support. This coordination between researchers and the College's established structures and professional services is at the core of our strategic vision. To ensure that we can realise this vision the College will invest in **professional development and training** for academic staff who take on leadership roles as Directors of Research or Knowledge Exchange and Impact as well as staff in School research

offices. This will increase confidence that researchers will receive professional and timely support from knowledgeable and efficient teams within Schools and the College.

Towards 2021

Investing in, and strengthening, the support infrastructure and services will underpin the objectives relating to culture, collaboration and communication and is fundamental to maintaining the College's global standing. This will ensure that we are well placed for the next Research Excellence Framework, with robust methods of data collection and ready access to management data to inform decisions and meet reporting requirements. Our strategy of further enhancing the research environment and maximising the number of world-leading research outputs and impact case studies is not contingent on details of the REF, but its outcomes are a powerful indicator of recognition from our peers. We will produce a separate delivery plan when details of the forthcoming exercise have been confirmed.

A thriving research culture buzzes with ideas, innovation and creativity and is founded on conditions that engender collaboration, communication and coordination. The College aims to maximise the opportunities for individuals and groups to contribute to

a culture in which excellence in research and knowledge exchange can flourish, recognising that active and engaged researchers are our main resource and acknowledging their research needs and aspirations.



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This strategy was developed by the
College Research Committee
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
July 2016

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