



**Outcome Agreement with the
Scottish Funding Council
2017/18 – 2019/2020**

Foreword from the Principal

This Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council sets out the University of Aberdeen's commitment to delivering its strategic objectives over the period from 2017-2020 and how these will help to meet the Scottish Government's national priorities. The Outcome Agreement is consistent with the University's Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 and takes as its structure the three core themes of our Strategy: People, Teaching and Learning, and Research and Knowledge Exchange. Within each of these three areas we have identified the key priorities we share with the Scottish Funding Council and set challenging targets for their delivery over the next three years.

People are at the heart of the University's strategy. The Outcome Agreement details how we intend to support our staff to achieve their full potential, to embed the principles of equality and diversity, and of equality of opportunity in our community, and to facilitate the environment our staff need to deliver ever more inspirational teaching and ground-breaking research.

Providing a student experience which is of the highest quality and making that available to students regardless of their socio-economic background will always be at the core of our mission as a University. This Outcome Agreement, therefore, sets out how we will address a series of key supporting issues including student satisfaction, skills, employability and widening participation.

Excellence in research and innovation is integral to our culture as a University and to our international reputation. In the pages that follow we set out how we will continue to support and foster a vibrant research culture by increasing the quality of our research, by continuing to work with industry to meet their needs and to support knowledge transfer, and by nurturing our postgraduate research students and junior staff to be the next generation of world leading scholars.

All of these agendas are important. They are important if we are to realise the ambition and vision we have for the University of Aberdeen. They are just as important, however, to Scotland and the part we, together with other higher education institutions, must play in helping the nation achieve its educational and economic future.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Statement from the Student President

The Students' Association has been fully engaged with the development of the University's Outcome Agreement for 2017/18-2019/20.

The Outcome Agreement reflects many of the key priorities of the Students' Association, including working together for the advancement of teaching and learning and ensuring that our students are protected, supported and made to feel welcome.

As the Students' Association of a highly international University and, in light of the uncertainty brought about by the EU referendum vote, we are particularly supportive of the University's efforts to ensure that our EU students feel that they continue to have a place and a voice at Aberdeen.

Among our current priority areas are initiatives designed to improve relations with postgraduate students and extending representation to include the University's increasing numbers of distance and online learners. We aim to create a teaching and research community for all of these students to enable them to feel closer to our Aberdeen campus regardless of their physical location or how much time they spend on campus.

As the legal entity tasked with lobbying for, defending, campaigning for, and providing services to our students, we work closely with colleagues across the University to ensure that none of our students are left behind and student involvement in Senate and other senior committees across the University (as outlined in the Outcome Agreement) ensures a high level of student engagement within the decision making processes of the University.

We welcome the ambitions set by the University in the Outcome Agreement for 2017/18-2019/20 and look forward to working closely with colleagues across campus to ensure their delivery.

Chubbe Anucha

Student President, Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA)

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Introduction

1. This is the University of Aberdeen's three-year Outcome Agreement (OA), covering the period 2017-2020. This document addresses the requirements set out in the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) guidance for 2017/18 to 2019/20 (SFC/GD/22/2016) and reflects the commitments set out in the University's Strategic Plan for 2015-2020.
2. The University of Aberdeen's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council sets out the University's commitment to delivery of its strategic objectives in line with the Scottish Government priorities. The Agreement is intended to help the University demonstrate its contribution to the Scottish Government's priorities as set out in the Scottish Economic Strategy and the annual Programme for Government in return for public investment. The process is intended to complement and support the University's strategic ambitions.
3. The Agreement builds on commitments made in previous plans and addresses the key changes introduced by the SFC for 2017/18-2020 and has been developed through consultation with staff, students, the Students' Association and staff unions.
4. The University introduced a new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 which is supported by ambitious strategic and operational plans by all academic Schools. The ambitions set out in our new plan inform this Outcome Agreement.
5. The University's Outcome Agreement for 2017-20 is structured around the three key themes of the University Strategic Plan and refers to the Funding Council's priorities within each section. A summary of the University's milestones and targets for the period is available at the Annex.
6. The University remains concerned about the inequity of the arrangements that the SFC used as a basis for removing RUK funding and the way in which it plans to deal with PGT student funding, and has raised this several times with the Council in the past. It is our hope that the Funding Council will review these arrangements as a matter of urgency.
7. The University notes that the Outcome Agreement for 2017-2020 has been drafted at a time of great uncertainty in the UK Higher Education sector. Britain is due to leave the European Union during the period of the Outcome Agreement and it is, as yet, unknown what impact the exit will have on the Higher Education sector in the UK. In addition, Scottish Government funding is under severe pressure and national immigration targets present challenges to student recruitment. Should the political or financial framework change significantly in the next three years as a result of direct or indirect political changes, the University reserves the right to revise this Agreement to ensure that the targets and aspirations put forward remain realistic and achievable.

Executive Summary

Driven by the University's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 which is founded on the principles of equality, diversity and equal opportunities, the University is committed to embedding these principles into the foundations of the institution and the people who make us who we are. Over the Outcome Agreement period the University will continue to enhance our current widening participation and outreach projects, ensuring their relevance to the particular challenges facing North East Scotland, as well as introduce new initiatives ensuring that the University is accessible to all.

As people are the basis for our success, the University will continue to implement best practice procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff. A Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy will be embedded over the Outcome Agreement Period, along with additional policies to further support and enhance equality and diversity. The University will continue its engagement with gender equality initiatives including Athena Swan and to ensure full compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The University is committed across its capital programmes to the principles of sustainability, and in this Outcome Agreement we aspire to reach a target of 26,478 tonnes CO₂e per annum. The opening, in August 2015, of the new Rocking Horse Nursery, saw the University showcase the first fully-certified Passivhaus building at a Scottish University, demonstrating the University's commitment across its capital programmes to the principles of sustainable estate development.

Ensuring our graduates are equipped with the skills they need to thrive in the workplace or in further study, and can meet the needs of employers, is a core value of the University. Innovative curriculum development, with input and engagement from industry, will ensure programmes are developed and enhanced to meet employability needs, as well as being in line with SFC key priorities.

Continuing to grow the University of Aberdeen as an international hub, providing students with access to language skills and opportunities to study abroad will remain a priority. Simultaneously Aberdeen remains committed to ensuring that Gaelic language and culture has a sustainable future.

Ensuring our students are supported in completing their degree outcome is a top priority for the University, and various activities supporting retention and attainment are underway and will continue to be developed during the span of this Outcome Agreement.

Building on our achievements from REF2014, the University will work towards its REF2021 submission during the Outcome Agreement timeframe. We will work on ensuring we provide an environment and culture where our researchers thrive in order to ensure that they can produce the highest quality outputs. All levels of researchers, including our PhD students, will receive dedicated support and advice via a range of structures and policies, including Academic Line Managers, Schools and the Research Development Team.

Our impact will grow, both in terms of knowledge transfer and exchange, with projects such as the City Deal offering opportunities within Aberdeen and the region, and reaching out further to industry nationally and internationally.

The University of Aberdeen will share its knowledge and engage with the general public, providing unique insights, and will create impact beyond academia that has the power to change the world we live in today.

1 People

This section links to the following SFC priorities:

Priority 1: Widening Access; Priority 5: High-performing institutions:

- Address under-representation from protected characteristic and socio-economic groups, including students from areas of deprivation, carers and those with care experience
- Maximise opportunities for progression from college
- Support learners from disadvantaged and under-represented groups
- Promote access to high demand courses and professions
- Address gender imbalances in programmes, eliminate discrimination and promote equality and diversity in all our activities
- Continuous improvements in the quality of university governance
- Demonstrate enhanced sustainability

University of Aberdeen Strategic Goals

- To enhance further our caring culture of belonging and collegiality in the community of staff, students and alumni, focusing on excellence realising full potential.
- To attract and retain staff and students to a globally significant international institution strengthening capacity and excellence, in Aberdeen or another University location.
- To continue to foster a positive University culture in order that all are fully engaged and committed to our future and to be champions of Equality and Diversity.

The University's ambition is to be a globally significant international institution which is open and inclusive, embracing the ethos of equality and diversity, and working in close collaboration with the local community to enhance the economic and cultural development of our region.

1.1 Widening Participation

In seeking to attract applications from students with excellent academic potential, the University of Aberdeen has a long-standing commitment to widening participation and to promoting wider access to Higher Education. As an institution, we aim to create an outstanding and inclusive educational environment, to ensure every student has the opportunity to reach their potential. We try to raise aspirations and thus improve access to Higher Education, particularly for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. As part of this commitment, the University aims to increase the number and proportion of Scottish UG entrants from the 20%-40% most deprived postcodes over the period of the Outcome Agreement, with 17% of those entrants coming from the 40% most deprived postcodes by 2019/20. We also aim, over the period of the Outcome Agreement, to increase the proportion of our Scottish-domiciled entrants with declared disabilities to 15% and to maintain our current levels of Scottish-domiciled entrants who are over 21 and from BME backgrounds at 18% and 8.5% respectively.

We work with individuals, primary and secondary schools, and further education colleges to support learners at every stage of their journey. Our work is centred around a number of initiatives aimed at different audiences which we will continue throughout the lifetime of the Agreement. In particular, we work very closely with our local target schools which consistently have low rates of progression to Higher Education (including SHEP schools), building strong relationships with the schools' guidance staff to help them identify pupils who may show academic promise but may not have the academic grades to support this. These pupils are then given an alternative UCAS offer based on progression into undergraduate study through the Summer School, which ensures they are given the additional support throughout their studies. Over the next three years we will continue to strengthen these links with the aim of 6.5% of our Scotland-domiciled UG entrants coming from SHEP schools by 2019/20.

In addition, the Widening Participation (WP) Team, rather than the Home Recruitment Team, represents the University at events such as Target Schools Career Events and Parents Evenings.

This means that the team which has the most experience in dealing with disadvantaged applicants is available in person before the pupil has even applied and this support continues once they commence their degree programme. A WP representative also attends the new Parents' and Applicants Information Evenings which are being held across Scotland.

As part of our work with the Aberdeen City Virtual Headteacher, an evening Homework Club was formed staffed by a member of the WP Team but with a lot of support from student volunteers. This is about to be rolled out to all of our local target schools, and once again we will be utilising our Guidance contacts within the schools to identify pupils who they feel would benefit from this additional resource.

Through our work in the REACH/AHDP (Access to High Demand Professions) national project and our in-house Aim4Uni initiative, the WP Team has built up very strong relationships with all of our target schools, with the schools approaching us for advice and information regarding Higher Education for their pupils. Our local target schools are all 13 SHEP schools in the local area, plus one other school that has previously had SHEP rates of progression. We also work with 30 schools as part of the REACH initiative. Through the REACH programme, we work closely with target schools in the region to identify and raise aspirations of students with the potential to study high demand courses such as Medicine or Law. We run a range of activities with these schools in Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin to support these students, including mock interviews for potential medical students (using the same multiple mini interview or MMI process as used in our admissions procedures for Medicine), sheriff court visits for potential Law students and the opportunity to shadow a current student to give greater insight in to what it is like to study these subjects. Students from the REACH programme are guaranteed an interview for Medicine, and admissions selectors in our Law School work closely with the REACH programme.

We look forward to continuing to work with the REACH programme through the upcoming funding bid and potential expansion in to other subject areas, and we will continue to work with schools identified by the REACH programme in future.

The University's Widening Participation Team within the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service (SRAS) works very closely with AspireNorth, an information service for young people providing information about progression routes into Higher Education. For example, Aberdeen's Widening Participation Co-ordinator is currently working with AspireNorth on an on-campus S3 day, which will involve pupils from local SHEP schools coming to the University for taster sessions. We also cross-refer pupils to the most appropriate initiative, for example AspireNorth will refer pupils interested in Medicine and Law to the University's REACH Project Officer; and the University team will refer pupils to AspireNorth when appropriate. The Head of SRAS is the University of Aberdeen representative on the AspireNorth Programme Management Group

Aberdeen Children's University

Through our work with the Children's University, Aberdeenshire Council are working alongside the WP Team in three of our target schools in Aberdeenshire – Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Banff – to engage pupils from Primary 7 upwards in activities outside of school time. When looking at bringing in additional schools, the Council will continue working with us ensuring we are working with the most appropriate schools in the area.

In summer 2015, we held our second graduation ceremony for the Aberdeen Children's University and continue to offer a wide range of accredited activities as part of the scheme. The purpose of the Children's University is to encourage primary and secondary school children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to engage in educational and active extra-curricular activities in their local area as well as further afield.

Pupils are signed up to the scheme via their school and, once signed up, are issued with a Children's University Passport. This passport allows them to build up stamps for completing accredited extra-curricular activities which include sports, after school clubs, museum visits and trips to national parks

or other sites of interest. Once a student has accumulated enough credits, they will receive a certificate and the opportunity to graduate from the ceremony held at the University.

Graduation ceremonies for the Children's University happen as part of our normal summer graduations programme, to give the students participating, and their parents, as real an experience of graduation as possible. The graduation ceremony for summer 2017 has already been arranged and we look forward to continuing to work with the Children's University over the coming years.

Carers and Care-Experienced Students

As a University, we are fully committed to supporting care-experienced applicants and students and are working towards helping deliver on national ambitions in this area. The support that we offer to care-experienced students is highlighted on the Propel website (<http://propel.org.uk>) and on our own web pages (www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/care-experienced-students-and-corporate-parenting-2037.php).

In 2015/16, additional steps were introduced in to our student e-registration process to help us better identify and offer support to care-experienced students. As a result of this change, between 2014/15 and 2016/17 the number of students recognised on our systems as care-experienced went from 10 (of whom 7 were Scottish-domiciled, 6 were new entrants and 4 were new Scottish-domiciled entrants) to 49 (of whom 41 were Scottish-domiciled, 32 were new entrants and 26 were new Scottish-domiciled entrants). Over the next three years we aim to increase the number of Scottish-domiciled new UG entrants who are care experienced to 28.

Our Corporate Parenting Plan was ratified in June 2016 and its development was informed by our work with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAF), the Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children in Scotland (CELSIS), the Who Cares Trust, Aberdeen University Students' Association and other partners.

The University is working closely with North East Scotland College, Robert Gordon University and the three local students' associations on developing ways of jointly supporting students and applicants who have care experience. This work has led to the creation of a joint FE & HE Regional Corporate Parenting Framework.

In March 2015, the University was awarded the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in recognition of its commitment to young people who are in or have experience of being in care. The University provides a range of support mechanisms and services which can be tailored to meet the needs of individual care experienced students, including year-round accommodation, financial assistance and additional advice and support on a range of issues.

As well as supporting care-experienced students, we are committed to supporting students who may themselves have caring responsibilities. We work in support of the Going Higher in Scotland Campaign undertaken by the Carers Trust, and have a range of additional support mechanisms in place for applicants and students with caring responsibilities, including:

- specific, tailored advice on entrance requirements
- the opportunity for additional campus visits
- tailored advice on financial support available and assistance with funding applications
- a named contact for applicants and students to turn to before and during their studies

A number of new initiatives have also been put in place to help care-experienced pupils in primary and secondary education with the long-term aim to enhance educational attainment and widen access and participation, including:

- **Homework Club**

A pilot project developed in conjunction with Aberdeen City Council, designed to increase and enhance the educational attainment of local care-experienced secondary school pupils.

- **Volunteer Classroom Assistants and Care Experienced Primary School Pupils**
The University of Aberdeen, working in conjunction with Aberdeen City Council, is developing a pilot project designed to increase and enhance the educational attainment of care-experienced primary school pupils. Trained students will go into local primary schools to directly support pupils in the classroom under the supervision of their teacher. This project will initially focus on supporting the literacy and numeracy skills of the pupils involved.

Homework Club

The **Homework Club** offers local care-experienced secondary school pupils a supportive learning environment to complete their homework and revise for exams. This pilot project, run in conjunction with Aberdeen City Council, aims to increase and enhance the educational attainment of disadvantaged secondary school pupils. Supported by a team of enthusiastic multidisciplinary students, the weekly club also provides attendees with an opportunity to learn more about Higher Education and to engage in social activities.

'I joined the homework club to help provide a stable space for care-experienced young people to receive extra help with their learning, ensuring they received the same opportunities I had. By helping these young people with their learning, their potentially difficult home environments become less of a barrier to their ambitions' - Second year student volunteer, Geography

Project SEARCH

The University actively participates in a number of initiatives which aim to strengthen partnerships to benefit the community and drive a culture of inclusion and accessibility. Examples of such initiatives include Project SEARCH, which offers young people with additional needs internships to gain skills and experience to go in to employment, and a new scheme offering work experience to young people in low participation areas in Aberdeen as part of the Social Impact Pledge which the University signed in October 2016.

Project Search

Project Search is an award-winning collaboration between the University, Inspire (Partnership Through Life) charity and North East Scotland College. Operated under licence from the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disabilities (SCLD), The project offers a one-year internship programme to young people with additional support needs, allowing them to gain skills and experience to go on to employment.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/project-search-2431.php>

1.2 Articulation and Progression from Further Education

We aim to offer articulation in to Higher Education to the widest possible range of students. The University has a large number of articulation and progression routes with Further Education colleges across Scotland. These routes exist where curriculums in the HNC/HND programmes match those of our degree programmes to allow students to transition from college into university with advanced standing. A number of additional routes are also in development and we are currently reviewing existing articulation agreements to refocus them around either a 1+3 articulation model or an enhanced 2+2 model. The University aims to increase the number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants articulating with advanced standing year-on-year within the period of the Agreement as set out in the Annex.

North East Scotland College (NESCOL)

- A pilot group of students from NESCOL's HND Legal Studies will join the University in September 2017 on the LLB degree, which will be the first such progression route in the country in the area of Law.

- Negotiations are also ongoing on an articulation route from HND Childhood Practice into BA Childhood Practice and then with onwards progression to PGDE Primary Education.
- A pilot is being initiated around HNC/HND Applied Science, investigating whether generalised mapping can be done from the SQA curriculum framework documents, giving us a list of essential and desired optional modules rather than having to map each HND at each institution separately. If this pilot is successful, the outline can then be used to create similar articulation routes with other FE partner colleges.
- The possibility of creating an articulation branding similar to that in place at Strathclyde Engineering Academy is being investigated. Once created, it is hoped to roll this out to other articulation partner colleges.

Fife College

- An articulation agreement with Fife College for Computing Science and Engineering has been signed, and we are currently in discussions over additional articulation routes in Applied Sciences and Social Sciences. We are also hopeful of being able to offer progression in to our LLB (as with NESCOL) to Fife College students.

Dundee and Angus College

- We have already committed to an articulation agreement with Dundee and Angus College, and we have just finished negotiations on a new route from HNC Mechanical Engineering to the BEng Mechanical and Civil Engineering degrees, with the first students starting at the University in September 2017. The next steps will be reviewing the other routes we have and looking at areas where new agreements are possible.

We continue to actively work with our partner colleges to smooth the transition between FE and HE for those students on these routes as well as identifying additional potential partner colleges and articulation routes. In response to feedback from students on our existing articulation routes, we are planning a pilot Summer School to see if this will ease transition between HNDs in Engineering disciplines into Year 3 of our Engineering degrees; if successful, this model could be rolled out in other subjects.

All articulating students are offered opportunities to spend time on campus in each year of their study at our partner colleges, and all articulating students are offered Associate Student status with us, giving them access to a range of facilities, including our cutting-edge library and sporting facilities. Associate Students also have access to a range of online facilities, including self-study units which are designed to give them a taste of HE-level study, to build their confidence in their learning abilities and to smooth their transition from FE to HE.

In November 2016, around 130 students from FE colleges across Scotland attended the University's first Articulation Day. The event was open to final year HNC/HND students from our partner Further Education Colleges and aimed at giving them a taste of what we can offer for students following an articulation route into the University.

As well as being offered information on specific disciplines, the day offered participants the chance to learn more about the support on offer to our students and an opportunity to attend a networking lunch with University staff and students. The feedback from this event was overwhelmingly positive and we will be looking at running it as an annual event.

1.3 Access and Outreach

Recruitment to the University's on-campus part-time courses has been decreasing in recent years. In response to this trend and in an effort to widen participation further through flexible delivery, the University will be increasing the number of fully online and blended learning opportunities over the Outcome Agreement period. We aim to deliver 12 new online education programmes at both UG and

PG level in 2017, including two Access Courses in English and Maths aimed at those interested in Teacher Training programmes, an MSc in Decommissioning, an MSc in Public Health, and an MBA programme. Further programmes will be introduced in 2018 and 2019. The Access courses – delivered in full online and allowing students to complete the curriculum at their own pace – are aimed at addressing the teacher shortage in the region and, in the current economic downturn, may appeal to oil and gas workers seeking to transition into teaching.

The University is leading negotiations with North East Scotland College and the SWAP programme on the creation of a North East Scotland Access Programme. The aim is to replace/repurpose existing provision to offer students a personalised access pathway, taking account of existing qualifications and experience, offering them the most efficient access route in to their desired further qualification. On completion of this access programme, students would be able to choose between progression into a further qualification at NESCOL (e.g. an HNC or HND) or progression directly in to a degree programme at the University of Aberdeen. Discussions are also ongoing about the inclusion of Robert Gordon University in this programme to offer additional choice to students. Negotiations on the creation of this programme are already fairly advanced, and it is hoped to be able to offer the programme from summer 2017.

Contextualised Admissions

Our well-established contextualised admissions process seeks to ensure that admission to the University of Aberdeen is entirely on merit and on the basis of the ability to achieve, as well as to ensure equality of opportunity to all applicants. Applications are welcomed from students with excellent academic potential and the University recognises the importance of admitting applicants to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. The selection process therefore takes account of all aspects of an application and not just an applicant's academic profile.

As recognised in the Commission on Widening Access Final Report (March 2016), the North East of Scotland has particular challenges in capturing and monitoring educational deprivation:

“We recognise, however, the particular challenge that the use of SIMD as a marker for deprivation presents to institutions in the north east of Scotland. SFC should therefore consider additional measure(s) to SIMD when monitoring the progress of Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen towards the above targets, which better reflects the link between deprivation and access in the local population.”¹

Nonetheless, and in line with Scottish government priorities, we retain a focus on recruitment of students from the most deprived postcodes (as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, SIMD) and we have consistently achieved a higher percentage of our student population from these postcodes than is represented in our background catchment area population.

While we recognise that our targets around recruitment of students from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes appear conservative when compared to our previous performance against this metric, we are mindful of the impact of the reduction, in the latest iteration of the SIMD index, in the number of deprived postcodes in the local area on the potential for growth. We do see developments in articulation and growth in entrants from low progression schools as a more appropriate metric. We are also in discussion with regional partners (including local authorities) about other metrics that might be relevant to the region; these discussions are at a very early stage and will be reported on more fully once more developed.

¹ *Commission on Widening Access Final Report*, March 2016. http://bit.ly/1ppuz3p_p67

Summer School for Access

Our Summer School for Access provides a route into Higher Education for those whose current qualifications do not reflect their true potential for degree-level study. It is aimed at young adults and mature students who may have experienced setbacks in their previous education, as well as those wishing to change direction within their careers or subject area.

Following a review in 2015/16 of our Summer School for Access, we recognised that some students were finding the maths component for science courses too challenging. The science programme was reformulated in light of this for the 2016 Summer School and maths was integrated into the science subject areas rather than being delivered as a standalone subject. It was hoped that this change would help with the progression of Summer School students into the University of Aberdeen and Higher Education in general.

The reformulated Summer School has been overwhelmingly successful. In 2016, 48 students were accepted on to the Summer School for Access and 45 successfully completed the programme. However, all 48 (including three who did not complete the programme) have successfully achieved progression in to Higher Education, giving the summer school a 100% conversion rate into HE.

Of the 48 Summer School students, 40 were from either an MD40 postcode, a target school, or both, as follows:

- SIMD1-20: 13, of whom 9 were also from target schools
- SIMD21-40: 9, of whom 6 were also from target schools
- Target schools (not MD40): 18

To increase take-up of places on the Summer School, we work closely with partner schools in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Angus, and with the guidance staff within those schools, to identify students who would benefit from attendance at the Summer School. Partner schools are also offered priority places on the Summer School for their students.

1.4 Cultural Outreach

The University is committed to being a leading contributor to the cultural life of Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland. Staff across the University – including within academic Schools, in the Library services and in the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) – host a diverse range of events, exhibitions and activities which engage the public. Our events, held at various venues throughout the region, engage over 35,000 people per annum.

Social Impact – University Museums

At least 24,000 people attended University Museums' exhibitions, including two co-curated by Museum Studies students in King's Museum and others co-curated with members of the University academic staff. Outreach activities were particularly successful with 25 events, including both public lectures (some of which were organised in conjunction with local societies) and major evening events such as 'Night at the Museum' and 'Museum Late' which attracted over 3500 people. A particular focus this year was on increasing student engagement, which included a licensed 'Museum Late' event, a series of collections-focused visits by student societies and an increasingly active volunteering programme. This involved over 40 students as volunteers, with work including collections care, documentation and front-of-house activities. Museum students were particularly active in developing and delivering activities for public events as well as curating the exhibition 'The Land Endures: Bringing *Sunset Song* to Life'. The University's Museums will continue to engage with students and academic and non-academic colleagues across the institution to enhance the profile of the museum collections, and widen access and interest in the collection nationally and internationally, through strong engagement with the University's digital strategy.

Society and Culture: Public Engagement with Research

The University of Aberdeen has an award winning and prolific track record in societal engagement. Hosting one of only eight RCUK Catalyst awards, the institution has established a dedicated Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) and embedded societal engagement across its research and wider academic activities. This includes hundreds of opportunities for staff and students to engage with thousands of school children and general public every year. Some highlights from the past 24 months include:-

- Leading Scotland's largest Public Engagement with Research initiative (EXPLORATHON) with a grant from the European Commission
- Creating and delivering a University Festival, unique in Scotland's HE calendar
- Hosting one of the UK's largest programmes for British Science Week
- Regional hub for the ESRC Festival of Social Science
- Official Pecha Kucha Nights organiser for Aberdeen City
- Delivering one of the UK's largest café Scientifique programmes

Through these and other initiatives, the University as a whole engaged with 193,725 public attendances from August 2015 – July 2016, and the initiatives directly delivered by our dedicated public engagement with research strategy accounted for 35,000 of these. In 2016, the University won the national Association for Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) awards for 'Outstanding Collaboration' and 'Public Engagement Advocacy'. Beyond the engagement channels described above, the University has developed deep roots into communities in Aberdeen and beyond. Working with Station House Media Unit (SHMU), the community charity tackling youth aspirations in the city's priority regeneration areas, we have placed researchers into community galas and deliver a weekly 'Talking Science' radio show at the charity's community radio project.

Explorathon

Led by Aberdeen as part of the European Researchers' Night Scotland, **Explorathon**, now approaching its fourth year, is a large-scale celebration of research across Scotland. The event offers training and support in public engagement and dissemination to researchers. In 2016, over 2,000 people attended Explorathon events in Aberdeen, and more than 70 University of Aberdeen staff and students were involved. The night also saw impressive levels of engagement across social media and the formation of new partnerships with venues and organisations across the city.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/engage/public/explorathon-348.php>

1.5 Gender and Athena SWAN

The University is engaged in a variety of initiatives which, it is hoped, will enhance gender equality and ensure full compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Through our Athena Swan process, institutional and School action plans have been developed to address gender imbalances in both the student and staff population.

In 2016/17, 57.6% of our total UG population was female, with 56.6% of our Scottish-domiciled population being female. The proportion is almost identical at PGT level (57.7%) but with a higher proportion of our Scottish-domiciled PGT population being female (67.2%). At PGR level, 48.4% of our total population and 57.3% of our Scottish domiciled population are female. At UG level, the gender imbalance is particularly pronounced in our STEMM subjects, with 83.1% of UG Engineering students and 82.6% of Physics students being male. Conversely, 90.5% of UG Education students, 80.9% of Sociology students, 79.2% of Psychology students, and 79.3% of Anthropology students are female. There are also significant imbalances in many of our modern languages programmes, Law, and Computing Science. Work is ongoing to understand what the barriers are at subject level and what the University can do to address them, with particular focus on outreach work at primary and secondary school level (see section 2.1 below). The University aims to reach a balance of 45%/55% male/female Scottish-domiciled students by 2019/2020 and aims to improve the gender balance in all subjects with an imbalance of 75%/25% or more by 1% year-on-year through our work with schools and outreach programmes across the lifetime of the Agreement.

There is a strong commitment to the ethos of Athena Swan within the University with clear evidence of widespread engagement with the process. We were delighted to see our first two Schools, Psychology and Natural and Computing Science, receive Athena SWAN bronze awards in academic year 2015/16 and they have both now started working towards silver awards. Another six applications for bronze will be submitted by Schools in 2016/17. All Schools are actively working on submissions at either bronze or silver level, and we have recently applied for a renewal of our institutional bronze award. We recognise that although progress has been made in enhancing gender equality at academic staff level, there is further work to be done to ensure the equal advance of women. There has been an upward trend in the past few years across all pay grades when looking at the institutional career tracks (Teaching and Scholarship, Research, and Teaching and Research), but further work is required to increase equality within the research and teaching track across the institution, and within the research track in some of our STEMM subjects.

Positive actions taken to minimise gender inequality include: the elimination of short-term contracts, the introduction of a Family Friendly Policy, mandatory equality and diversity training, unconscious bias training, gender balance in selection committees, one-to-one coaching for internal candidates, revision of the promotions and annual review processes, leadership development, mentoring, internal networks, increased female representation on committees, and regular review of equal pay data. Our Athena SWAN action plan going forward also includes a number of additional positive actions, including: assessing all job adverts within the institution to ensure that any opportunities for job share and/or part-time working have been identified; clearly signposting flexible working arrangements; providing unconscious bias training for all staff involved in recruitment and selection panels.

The Remuneration Committee have actively been working to eliminate the gender pay gap over the last 4 years. A review of promotion procedures and recruitment processes have supported a reduction in the gender pay gap. In addition, the criteria for a salary award under the Senior Staff Pay Policy are restricted to retention; exceptional performance and equal pay considerations. There is no gender pay gap within Grades 1-8 and the Remuneration Committee have worked to actively eliminate any gender pay gap at Grade 9.

Planned future actions include: further support through the promotions process, research mentoring, new leadership programmes, full roll out of unconscious bias training, a maternity cover fund, and review of staff retention rates.

With regard to gender equality at board and senior management level, the Court recognises the importance of ensuring there is an appropriate mix of skills, experience and diversity amongst its members. In 2014, Court adopted a Statement of Intent on Diversity ² within its membership. This includes a goal of achieving and maintaining female representation of a minimum of 25%, with aspirations to achieve 40% over the longer term. Recently this longer-term aspiration has been raised to 50%.

This commitment informs the work of the Governance and Nominations Committee when considering new appointments to Court. More than half of the current composition of Court are positions which are either elected or appointed by bodies/individuals other than the Court itself. The University has, therefore, implemented steps to ensure that the electoral processes and appointing bodies for other members of Court also take diversity considerations into account insofar as such appointment processes can allow. This includes bringing the Court's Statement of Intent on Diversity to their attention.

Notwithstanding these steps, the high proportion of positions that are not appointed by Court does inhibit the extent to which it can control diversity and gender balance. In recognition of this, and following the passing of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act in 2016 which requires governing bodies to include specific categories of members who are either elected or appointed by bodies other than the Court, the Court is considering amendments to its composition. A key principle of these changes is to enable it to better reflect the diversity of the University community and to target a 50:50 gender balance. The proposed changes to the composition aim, therefore, to increase the proportion of members that Court appoints.

The University is committed to continued attention to gender equality both through continued effort through our Athena Swan process, various activities being implemented across the University, and through the development of an institutional gender action plan in line with SFC guidance.

1.6 Equality and Diversity

Our Strategic Plan has been designed around 'People' as the basis of our success. We have set ambitious targets for enhancing equality and diversity across the institution which will be championed by our staff, including targets for Athena Swan Awards, equality and diversity training amongst staff and relevant students, participation in the ECU Race Equality Mark, and other initiatives which support our diverse staff and student population.

As mentioned in previous Outcome Agreements, all staff (across all staff categories) are required to undertake training in Equality and Diversity in the Workplace. To supplement this, all staff with teaching responsibilities are also required to undertake an additional training module in Diversity in Teaching and Learning which allows colleagues to reflect on their teaching practice and provides guidance regarding developing an inclusive learning environment. In addition to using a blind review process for promotions exercises, to further ensure that equality and diversity are embedded in our recruitment processes, all staff involved in selection and promotion are required to undertake unconscious bias training.

Our HR department will be introducing a number of new processes in the near future to ensure equality of opportunity. All vacancies to be advertised will be assessed for the potential to be made available for job sharing and/or part-time working before being advertised, and links between advertised vacancies and the University's existing family friendly policies will be improved. Our website will be reviewed to ensure that it reflects the diverse community of the University's staff and students.

Our promotions exercise will use blind review of applications, and guidance will be produced for applicants on keeping their applications gender neutral. A Teaching Track Champion will be

² <http://bit.ly/2n2Mn7c>

appointed, and perceived barriers to career progression within the teaching track will be investigated and assessed. A revised Framework of Academic Expectations (FAE) will be developed to better support academic and research colleagues to understand the expectations of them when considering career progression. Our Reward Strategy will be reviewed to ensure that our staff are being rewarded and recognised throughout their careers, and we will develop a pilot Research Futures Leadership programme. Our new staff mentoring scheme will be evaluated for both uptake and effectiveness.

A maternity cover fund will be established to ensure that appropriate cover arrangements can be put in place when staff are on maternity or adoption leave in order to avoid staff feeling inhibited in the length of maternity or adoption leave they can take.

We were awarded, and have since maintained, the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2010. In addition to our commitment to the Research Concordat, we offer a range of specific support to academic and research staff including coaching, leadership, management and core skills.

A number of staff networking groups now operate across the University to support equality, diversity, tolerance and understanding and have matured to the point of becoming strategic informers as well as a source of support for staff. This includes network groups around mental health, LBGT, disability and senior women. The Senior Women's Network was established in 2012 to provide opportunities for senior female colleagues to network informally. The group has grown to 80 members and a steering group is currently being established to lead the network.

The University jumped up 48 places in the annual Stonewall Workplace equality Index in January 2016. All advertised vacancies display the Athena SWAN logo and Stonewall diversity information as well as clear links to the University's Equality and Diversity and Athena SWAN web pages. Wherever possible, flexible working opportunities, including job share and/or part-time, are offered and clear links are provided to the University's flexible working policy and to support available for childcare. When advertising new vacancies, consideration is also given to how best to encourage applications from under-represented groups.

1.7 Governance

The University of Aberdeen is committed to high standards of corporate governance and the Court routinely undertakes a wide-ranging review of its effectiveness against sector guidance. Following the publication in 2013 of the *Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance*, the Court reviewed its governance arrangements in depth and agreed a number of revisions to comply with the principles of the *Code*. At that time, the Court identified the need to reduce its size from 28 members and to ensure a majority of independent members. In June 2015, however, the Scottish Government published a Bill on Higher Education Governance which included proposals that would change the composition of university governing bodies. The Court therefore agreed not to pursue changes to its composition until such time as any future legislative requirements were confirmed. Following the passing by Parliament of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act in March 2016, the Court has undertaken a review of its composition to ensure it is compliant with both the Act's requirements and those of the *Code* and has recently approved proposals for a new composition subject to Privy Council approval.

The Court recruits independent members under processes that are consistent with the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and which takes into account a role description and skills matrix. Accordingly, the current independent membership of Court includes individuals with a variety of skills and experience drawn from across the public and private sector.

During 2015/16 the Court approved the scope of an externally facilitated review of effectiveness which commenced in December 2016. In addition, the Governance and Nominations Committee has a standing role to advise Court on matters of governance and to conduct, on its behalf, reviews of the University's governance. The Committee undertakes a review of effectiveness annually through

benchmarking against the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and through an annual appraisal questionnaire of governors.

A similar effectiveness review of Senate was also undertaken. This review has resulted in changes to Senate's operational processes with the intention of improving transparency and communication with the wider community. In addition, the Senate Business Committee now includes elected Senate members.

The Court and Senate are supported in their work by a number of other key committees and staff and student members of Court are represented on many of these formal committees. In addition, the Partnership, Negotiating and Consultative Committee (PNCC) is part of the formal governance committee structure and provides recognised trade unions with a forum for engagement on key policy developments. Briefing meetings for trade union representatives are also held prior to each meeting of Court to discuss the agenda and papers.

The Audit Committee oversees and reports to Court its view of the effectiveness of the University's risk management arrangements, the operation of which is overseen by the University Management Group but with Risk being a regular item on the Audit Committee agenda. The Court sets and approves annually the University's risk appetite, and routinely reviews the Corporate Register of Strategic Risks. The Court and University Management Group regularly review the institutional Key Performance Indicators.

The Audit Committee also considers detailed reports from the internal and external auditors, along with recommendations for improvement of the University's systems of internal control and risk management, together with University management's responses and implementation plans. The Audit Committee's role is one of high level review of the arrangements for internal control, risk management and value for money.

1.8 Staff Wellbeing

The University takes part in the Scottish Government's Healthy Working Lives Awards initiative and actively encourages and supports staff wellbeing. We retained our Healthy Working Lives Silver Accreditation in 2015 and have established working groups to ensure successful submission for Gold Accreditation in 2017.

Our HR team has introduced a number of new initiatives to support staff in maintaining a healthy work-life balance across the institution, including the introduction of a 'nine-day fortnight' scheme across the Professional Services Directorates in 2016, and the opportunity for staff to purchase additional annual leave twice a year to support individuals who require more leave to balance home and work needs.

The University introduced its 'Because We Care' campaign in academic year 2015/16. The campaign aims at improving health and wellbeing within the University through various new initiatives and events. As part of this initiative, our first Health and Wellbeing Day was held in January 2016 to raise awareness of the services offered by the University and to encourage healthy living and this event has now become a regular feature of university life, with the second annual event run in January 2017.

The University has in place free off-peak membership for staff at Aberdeen Sports Village. Over 50% of our staff have taken up the offer of membership and more than 55,000 trips to use the facilities at the sports village are recorded every year.

As part of our sustainability programme and to promote wellbeing, the University also encourages cycling and offers well supported facilities such as a bike purchase scheme, bike lockers, secure bike stands, showers and changing facilities as well as free bike maintenance sessions. The University has been awarded Cycling Friendly Employer status by Cycling Scotland.

A University Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy was launched on 9 November 2016, as part of the Healthy University Framework. The Strategy has been developed to promote the University's commitment to supporting staff and students to safeguard their own mental health and to providing excellent support services for colleagues and students who have mental health and wellbeing concerns. As part of this strategy, the University has partnered with PAM (People Asset Management) to provide a new 24-hour confidential helpline for staff launched in November 2016. We are introducing Wellbeing Champions across the University with associated training, and Mental Health First Aid Training has been delivered to 44 members of staff to date in support of the initiative.

Other wellbeing events introduced in 2016 and which will be continued over the period of the Agreement include:

- Walk a Mile: a signposted mile-long walking route on campus was launched to encourage staff to take a step away from their workplace during the day.
- Walking Meetings: staff are encouraged to organise 'walking meetings' outside of meeting rooms to encourage exercise.
- Mindfulness Training: training courses open to staff.
- Britain's Healthiest Workplace Survey: the University took part in this survey for the first time in 2016.
- Employee Engagement Group.

1.9 Sustainability

In our Strategic Planning period 2015-2020, we aim to reduce carbon emissions by 20%, and to achieve a 4% reduction in energy consumption per m² per annum, reflecting both international and Scottish Government targets.

In the Outcome Agreement for 2017-2020, we aspire to reach a target of 26,478 tonnes CO₂e. To support this ambition, the University developed a new Carbon Management Plan in 2015/16, spelling out our institutional ambition for mitigation and a detailed project portfolio through to 2020 with details of planned and potential projects and activities intended to deliver significant energy efficiencies and associated carbon savings. These include a series of sustainability focussed upgrades, for example the instalment of LED lighting in some of our buildings, improved roof insulation, and the optimisation of our Combined Heat and Power (CHP) engine.

In 2016/17 and beyond, we intend to further develop our understanding of adaptation issues, including developing appropriate risk assessments and working collaboratively with educational and public sector agencies to share best practice.

We are also working to improve our understanding of our extended carbon footprint. In 2015 we were able, for the first time, to detail our emissions derived from business travel. This allowed us to produce a genuinely comprehensive institutional carbon footprint that covers all scopes of emissions.

The University continues to be committed to the redevelopment of our estate in order to support an outstanding student and staff experience. In recent years, significant investment has seen the University open new medical research, teaching, library, sporting, and child-care facilities. In all cases, these facilities have supported enhancement of the student experience. The University is in the process of finalising a capital programme for the coming ten years that will emphasise the development of new and refurbished teaching facilities on our Old Aberdeen campus. This programme will place the student experience at the heart of our campus development programme while also enhancing the condition and functionality of our older estate. In all cases the aim is to support our emerging needs in both teaching and research.

The University is committed across its capital programmes to the principles of sustainable estate development. The opening, in August 2015, of the new Rocking Horse Nursery, saw the University showcase the first fully certified Passivhaus building at a Scottish university, and the first pre-school

facility in Scotland to adopt this demanding energy-efficient design concept. The project won a prestigious EAUC Green Gown Award in 2016 and extensive efforts have been made to share institutional knowledge of this project, with written and video case studies available, as well as numerous site visits for stakeholders and interested parties, such as the local authority's planning, environment, education and housing teams.

Rocking Horse Nursery

The award winning **Rocking Horse Nursery** is the first nursery in Scotland, and the first building at a Scottish university, to be awarded PassivHaus certification. PassivHaus buildings use very little energy for heating and cooling and are designed to provide a healthier and more comfortable environments.

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/10164/>

The new Rowett building, opened in early 2016, remains on course to achieve the challenging BREEAM 'Outstanding' standard, and will be one of only a handful in Scotland to have achieved this accolade.

We continue to be an active participant in sector and regional initiatives to support sustainability. Our membership of the EAUC sees us participate in function-specific support networks in areas such as waste, travel and energy, and we take advantage of the sector-specific training and support they provide, for example on the Public Sector Duties reporting regime, the development of adaptation action plans, and sector-wide discussion of the RICS-Ska sustainability assessment for refurbishment projects.

We are also engaged in regional networks that support collaborative efforts to address the local impacts of climate change. These include the North East Scotland Climate Change Partnership (NESCCP), Powering Aberdeen (the vehicle for the city's Sustainable Energy Action Plan), and the recently established Aberdeen Adapts (a forum for sharing best practice on adaptation issues).

Our plans for a collaborative renewable energy project with Robert Gordon University and a major Scottish landowner were dealt a blow in 2016 by the outcome of the Westminster Government's review of feed-in-tariffs, which undermined the business case for the project. Should the support regime become more favourable this project will, however, be revisited.

We will report on progress through the now mandatory Public Sector Duties sustainability reporting regime, piloted by the Scottish Government in autumn 2015 and compulsory from 2016 onwards.

Our target for annual capital and maintenance spend on estates and buildings will continue to be set at 4.5% of insured asset value.

2 Teaching and Learning

This section links to the following SFC priorities:

Priority 2: High quality learning and teaching:

- Meet current and future skills needs of employers and the economy
- Provision of work-related learning opportunities
- Address barriers to retention
- Internationalise the student experience and increase student mobility
- Grow the number of students developing foreign language skills
- Support implementation of the *National Gaelic Language Plan*
- Promote credit rating of university provision on the SCQF

University of Aberdeen Strategic Goals

- “To provide an outstanding educational environment reflecting the quality of an international institution, fostering a sense of community supporting all students in achieving their ambitions.”
- “Working in partnership, to offer an exceptional, flexible and individualised educational experience that is demand-driven for students in Aberdeen, at a distance, and full or part-time”.
- “To ensure every student has the opportunity to realise their potential by providing excellent research-led teaching, assessment and feedback.”
- “To equip our students with skills and experience which will allow them to maximise their opportunities as responsible global citizens upon graduation”.

We are proud of the support the institution and all of our staff offer our students to ensure that they are truly prepared for their future career and life, and we will continue to provide the best possible study experience for all of our students. The University seeks to provide an excellent international educational experience which is shaped through a partnership with students, industry, international partners, business and employers. Our graduates will be outstanding, active global citizens with the skills to make a valuable contribution to society.

As a research-focused institution ³, we are able to offer research-led teaching and have a strong commitment to providing students with a world class education delivered by staff at the forefront of their disciplines. Parity of esteem between research and teaching is a core philosophy, and changes made in 2015 to our Teaching and Scholarship promotions route sought to better facilitate the promotion of individuals focused on delivering excellence in teaching to the level of personal chair. Since 2012, in all 106 teaching-based promotions applications have been received, of which 55 have been successful including 24 promotions to Senior Lecturer and 11 to personal chair, with more staff promoted to Senior Lecturer or personal chair via our Teaching and Scholarship route than the equivalent roles under our Research track and with staff having the same statistical probability of promotion under both routes (ranging between 52 and 57%).

As a University committed to providing our students with a top quality educational experience, we are active participants in the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) and believe that this offers an extremely robust and rigorous method not only of ensuring the highest quality of current practices but also of encouraging a process of continuous enhancement.

The University has always performed consistently highly in the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) that forms a key part of the QEF. Many of the innovations that the University has undertaken in order to provide students with an excellent education and the processes we have in place to improve even further have been praised by ELIR panel members.

³ 38.38% of our academic and teaching staff are on research-only contracts, compared to a sector average of 27.82 (17th in the UK); 88.73% of our academic and teaching staff are on contracts with at least some research element, compared to a sector average of 82.63%; 26.4% of our income comes from research grants and contracts (14th), HESA data 2014/15

Online Education

The University is making a step-change in its delivery of online education. Building on an existing base of online delivery primarily in the Schools of Education and Engineering, a further suite of 14 new online degree programmes are being developed for delivery in 2017. These will be further supplemented by further programmes in a rolling programme over the next few years. Alongside development of these new programmes, infrastructure is being put in place to support the needs of online learners and ensure that their experience is equivalent to that of those studying on campus. This enhancement of online provision will enable the University to reach out to new markets wishing to study in a more flexible way and will also enable access by international students without the immigration barriers which can impede recruitment.

e-Learning

All staff and PGR students are actively supported to use e-Learning in their teaching through workshops and one-to-one advice. This includes support to use the University's virtual learning environment, MyAberdeen, online assessment tools and personal voting systems. In 2016, two digital learning spaces were created, one in Old Aberdeen and one at Foresterhill. These technology-enabled rooms support collaborative and distance learning and align with the University's strategy to support an outstanding educational environment.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

All degrees awarded by the University of Aberdeen comply with, at least, the minimum credit point requirements set out in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). All Aberdeen levels are mapped to appropriate SCQF levels, information is included on the Infohub website for current students (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/>) and documentation provided at graduation includes information on the SCQF.

2.1 Access to, and Provision in, STEMM Subjects

The University of Aberdeen is a broad-based university which offers programmes across the educational spectrum. Our provision in STEMM subjects remains very strong and we pride ourselves on our strong partnerships with industry partners in offering a science curriculum which ensures that our graduates are ready to embark on a career in their chosen professions. In 2014/15 the proportion of our Scottish-domiciled UG entrants enrolling to STEMM subjects was 43.8% and we aim to reach 45% by the end of the Outcome Agreement period.

The University is involved in a variety of activities aimed at maintaining the number of Scottish-domiciled students enrolling on to STEMM courses. As an example of such activities, the School of Engineering organised an inaugural 'Girls in Engineering' conference in 2016/17 with a local school to widen interest in, and access to, Engineering. Over 100 school children participated in the event from as far afield as Glasgow and Edinburgh, and the plan is to make this a regular event in future. The School also has a dedicated outreach coordinator who has been named a 'Community Star' by the Lord Provost of Aberdeen for his contributions to the city. Archaeology have introduced a part-time two-year certificate in Archaeology aimed at distance learners.

As noted in section 1.3, we are developing a fully-accredited Initial Teacher Education programme to be delivered exclusively online to widen access to initial teacher training for those who do not meet the entrance requirements for existing programmes and who are unable to attend the Summer School. Going forward, we hope to expand this new provision to assist with the widening of access and transition into STEMM subjects.

2.2 Skills Development and Meeting the Needs of Employers

One of our core values is innovation and relevance in our education, research and engagement. The University already engages extensively with industry around the skills development of our students but this agenda will be taken further over the Outcome Agreement period to ensure that placements are offered to as many students as possible. To this end, for example, the School of Engineering is appointing an administrative officer with specific responsibility for industrial placements, and the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture will be expanding opportunities to allow modern languages students to undertake placements in primary schools within the STAR Award scheme.

The University is continuously reviewing its curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of both employers and students. A number of our disciplines, such as Engineering and Geology, have advisory boards in place at both UG and PG level to assist with curriculum development with representatives from industry and local schools, and offer a wide variety of industry placements. Students also have the opportunity to participate in industry-relevant initiatives. The advisory boards play an important part in helping the University to stay tuned to the needs of employers. The School of Engineering has, for example, at the advice of their advisory board, recently introduced new PGT programmes, developed distance learning options of programmes, and introduced studentships for oil and gas sector unemployed workers, to help the local oil and gas sector. Other Schools, such as the Schools of Law and Biology, are currently introducing new programmes to respond to the needs of industry.

The University will continue to engage with and promote the SFC's UG Skills for Growth and PG Skills schemes and will regularly review the University's offering to ensure that it is supporting the most appropriate industry sectors.

2.3 Employability

In the last two years the local economy in Aberdeen has seen a significant downturn in the region's key industries (oil and gas) and the opportunities for graduates. The impact of this downturn is not restricted to jobs in those specific industries, but permeates the whole of the North East where most commerce and industry is in some way linked to, or impacted by, the oil and gas supply chain.

Against this extremely difficult local environment, the employability of our graduates, as measured by the DLHE, continues to be among the best in the UK. Among HEIs with meaningful DLHE populations (classified as >500 in the Times Higher Education Supplement), we rank 5th in the UK with 96.6% of our graduates in employment and/or further study⁴, a figure generally accepted as being over the threshold for 'full employment'.

The continued upward trend in graduates in employment and further study is also accompanied by a high proportion of graduates in graduate level employment or further study, which has been consistently at or over 80% over the last three years. Our high levels of graduates going on to further study (around 30% over the last three years) is further evidence of the quality of our graduates, although this is not currently reflected in the data used against Outcome Agreement measure 9b (number and proportion of graduates entering professional occupations). We are also seeing a year-on-year increase in student engagement with the co-curriculum, and have received several external employability award nominations.

The University will continue to be forward thinking, ambitious and competitive in order to build on this success. The employability agenda is supported through a range of activities and delivered through a partnership with alumni, and partners in business, industry, the public sector and the third sector. Targets have been set in our Strategic Plan around degree classifications and around positive destinations. We aim to maintain our high proportions of Scottish-domiciled graduates entering

⁴ *Universities' graduate employment data released ahead of TEF, THES 7 July 2016*

professional and positive destinations, in the face of the challenging local circumstances, at 48% and over 96% respectively through to 2020.

Leadership Academy

The University's new **Leadership Academy** aims to develop the leadership skills that employers seek from our graduates. Hosted by inspirational leaders and external organisations, these themed leadership sessions bring students in direct contact with a range of employers. The Academy also gives students tailored sessions to support their individual learning and employability needs.

'I would definitely recommend the Leadership Academy. Many students are scared of being leaders. I think it is because they lack knowledge and confidence, however, the workshops I attended gave me both of these things', Emilia Saario, MA (Hons) Geography and International Relations

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/skills-attributes/leadership-academy-502.php>

The Careers Service works in partnership with academic Schools and a wide range of employers to provide information and guidance to students regarding career planning, recruitment and employability, offering a provision that aligns with the University's Employability Development Framework and the University's Strategic Plan 2015-2020. To complement our career guidance provision the Service also delivers a range of distinctive co-curricular initiatives, which include: career mentoring; work placements; work-based projects; the STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award, the Leadership Academy; and enterprise & entrepreneurship opportunities. Our services are available to all current students, whether full, part-time or distance-based, and we also support alumni.

Careers Service activities aligned with SFC key priorities include:

- Expertise in relation to employability, work-based projects, work placements, labour market information and graduate opportunities. In particular, the Careers Service plays an active role in the pan-Scotland, SFC-funded *Making the Most of Masters* scheme which provides Masters-level students the opportunity to complete their dissertation in an industry environment.
- 'Working Together', a credit-bearing course for students in Arts and Social Sciences, offers opportunities for students to act as consultants for local businesses. For PhD students, the new Enterprising Researchers programme (*see also page 31*) gives students the chance to use their transferrable skills to help local businesses.
- Providing resources to support our students in developing Aberdeen Graduate Attributes, for example our Achieve package of resources.

Achieve

Located within the University's virtual learning environment, **Achieve** is a set of bespoke online development resources for undergraduates to access at any stage of their studies or co-curricular activities. Devised by the University's Careers Service and the Student Learning Service, the resources offer students ways to reflect upon, develop and enhance their skills and Aberdeen Graduate Attributes in preparation for further study or employment.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/graduate-attributes-and-achieve-805.php>

- Developing links with organisations and employers for membership of the network of academic School-level, Programme Advisory Boards (or industrial liaison groups) and the central Careers Service Employer Board. These fora ensure the University establishes relationships with a wide range of external representatives from different employment sectors and organisational sizes. These networks provide channels to build durable employer-University relationships that bring clear employability benefits to both parties. Our distinctive approach also helps ensure we adapt our curriculum in response to evidence of current and future skills needs of employers.
- Guidance provided to students and graduates, either in person, online via our "virtual adviser" or through our innovative Level 1 Professional Skills course. This prescribed, zero-credit course

for all students is studied entirely online and covers topics relating to Aberdeen Graduate Attribute Development, Equality & Diversity and Health, Safety & Wellbeing.

- Raising awareness and promoting the usage of the Gaelic Language as part of the Careers Service provision. For example, Gaelic-focused roles continue to feature within the co-curricular STAR Award. Promotion of Gaelic careers schemes in bilingual information is also available on the Careers Service website.

Enhancements 2017-2020 include:

- We will strengthen the links between the Careers Service and academic Schools through the identification of academic employability champions to develop and promote employability plans tailored to their disciplines.
- A cross-University, 15-credit work-related learning course is currently under development, which aims to develop students' experiential learning through placements, internships or professional development projects in a professional environment of their choice, and will be rolled out in 2017/18 in four academic Schools and will be supported by a series of employability seminars to support students' experiential learning. Students secure their own placement which is approved by their academic School. The course encourages students to reflect on their personal and professional development and to make connections between their degree programme and the world of work.
- Progressing our involvement with the Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme led by Skills Development Scotland (SDS). Graduate-level Apprenticeships provide work-based learning opportunities up to Master's degree level for employees, and were created in partnership with industry and the Further and Higher Education sectors. We are working towards offering apprenticeships from 2017.
- Development of a Gaelic Language Ambassador Scheme, a partnership between the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, the Careers Service and Aberdeen City Council. The initiative will help support the University's widening participation plans through promoting the value of Higher Education and raising the aspirations of local school pupils. It is anticipated that student participation in the scheme will be recognised via the STAR Award.
- Growth of opportunities with different forms of external engagement and for students across the University to have access to work-related learning opportunities during their studies, including the innovative 15-credit, work-related learning course mentioned above.

Working Together

Working Together: Employability for Arts and Social Sciences: this level 3, 15-credit course offers groups of students from arts and humanities disciplines the opportunity to come together to act as consultants for a local business or charity. The students are provided with a defined project by employers, and these have recently included projects for the National Trust for Scotland, the Gordon Highlanders Museum and the Aberdeen Science Centre.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/business-info/working-with-students/undergraduate-workbased-projects-647.php>

2.4 Retention

The University of Aberdeen is actively investing in ways of identifying students with known characteristics that might place them at greater risk of non-continuation. This data is being made known to those best placed to support such students.

More generally, to increase continuation rates across of all categories of students, we have:

- established an institution wide Induction Group including representation from the Students' Association, Professional Services and Schools and developed a much more integrated induction strategy. Guidance was provided and support offered to all Schools on possible induction activities and the development and management of social media sites.
- revised our 'withdrawal from studies' process for students, to make the process more transparent, encourage greater student feedback, and provide greater support for students considering readmission. A protocol for Schools to use to follow up on withdrawing students who wish to have continued interaction with their Schools has also been developed.
- developed a protocol for students who enter via clearing. Clearing students have been identified as a key group of incoming students who face significant challenges to their transition into university on account of many factors that may contribute to uncertainties about continuing study e.g. last minute decision making, lack of direct communication with the institution, difficulties forming peer groups due to late arrival, and difficulties developing a sense of belonging. As a means of establishing a more effective management of this transition, a protocol was established for adoption by Schools with the overarching aim of establishing dialogue with these students as soon as they accept the offer of a place on a University of Aberdeen programme and then following up communications through personal tutors to promote a sense of welcome and belonging that will create a more positive experience for these incoming students.
- collaborated with other rural HEIs – Robert Gordon University, University of the Highlands and Islands and University of the West of Scotland – looking at pressures associated with students having to commute over significant distances. To date we have analysed our data and been involved in sharing some previous work and information with the other HEIs involved.
- devolved authority to Schools to decide how they wish to allocate Personal Tutors to students as deemed most appropriate for their home disciplines, with additional flexibility in terms of the remit of the Personal Tutor (subject to a minimum expectation/role descriptor). It is hoped this will increase the sense of belonging of students to the School, inculcate a closer relationship between student and tutor, and help the issues that students are struggling with to be identified, and supported, at an earlier juncture. Personal Tutors are now also routinely informed whenever students miss compulsory classes on two or more occasions, or fail to submit coursework so that, again, any underlying problems might be addressed as early as possible.

We are currently reviewing our monitoring and progress communications to make them more effective at encouraging students to take action or seek help, and are also contributing to a JISC project examining the use of data to support retention activities in HEIs.

As noted in our Outcome Agreement for 2016/17, in recognition of retention as a key priority for the University, we use a more stringent measure than that reflected in HESA statistics, counting all students who withdraw early, including those given exit awards, as having not completed or continued. Against this definition, all academic Schools within the University have been set a target to reach a maximum of 6% non-continuation from Level 1 by the end of the current Strategic Plan in 2020: this would give the University an overall non-continuation rate from year 1 against HESA definitions of no more than 4%. Non-continuation from Level 1 (using our internal definition) has reduced significantly, from 11.4% in 2013 to 10.5% in 2014, and early indications suggest that this trend is continuing in line with targets. All Schools have developed detailed action plans to address

problem areas in relation to retention which focus around two key areas: earlier identification of students at risk of withdrawing, and more effective mechanisms of intervention.

During the lifetime of the Outcome Agreement we will continue our efforts to increase retention of our UG entrants from different characteristic groups (including deprivation, gender, age, ethnicity, disability and care-experienced) as set out in the Appendix.

Among the activities being planned by Schools are:

- earlier (pre-arrival) engagement with new students
- comprehensive curriculum and degree regulation reviews to ensure that, in particular at Level 1, students have a balance of curriculum breadth and sufficient subject specialism to engender a greater sense of belonging to their home disciplines
- reviews of assessment methodology and introduction of innovative, digital methods of assessment to increase student engagement (see section below)
- provision of more detailed learner analytics to Personal Tutors and Senior Personal Tutors to help them in spotting early signs of a student who may be at risk of dropping out
- allocation of specialist Personal Tutors and provision of additional mentoring to students in at-risk groups
- earlier initial course evaluation at level 1 to spot any issues as soon as possible
- sharing of best practice between Schools with high levels of retention and those seeking to improve

2.5 Student Satisfaction and Engagement

A key strategic goal for the University is to maintain consistently high levels of student satisfaction, with particular focus on satisfaction with teaching quality, feedback, and assessment.

During the course of our participation in the National Student Survey the University has demonstrated very consistent overall satisfaction (10th lowest variation of any institution taking part), with an average ranking for overall satisfaction of 18th. Research has demonstrated that a range of factors including subjects taught show consistent differences in responses to the NSS questions and consequently comparisons at the institutional level are best made against benchmarks to allow for differences in subject mix. In 2016 our overall satisfaction score of 88% was above our HEFCE institutional benchmark of 87%. By 2020, we aim to have increased our overall satisfaction score to 89%

To maintain high levels of student satisfaction we undertake a range of core student surveys designed to monitor student satisfaction and engagement at all levels. These include the National Student Survey (NSS), the suite of Higher Education Academy (HEA) Surveys (UK Engagement Survey (UKES), Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)), and in 2016/17 we are also piloting the JISC Digital Student Tracker.

To streamline the delivery of these core surveys the University has initiated a Student Survey Working Group with representation from all academic schools and relevant professional services. Data collected are analysed collectively in the Centre for Academic Development, and the insight gained widely disseminated within the institution to share good practice and develop initiatives to enhance the student experience.

To this end, we will be introducing a new curriculum management process to ensure better mapping between learning outcomes and teaching, implement electronic marking and feedback, and decrease the number of programmes and courses to simplify course choice.

A key component of our strategy around student satisfaction is digital enhancement. Our investment in digital technology aims to support our goal of delivering an exceptional and personalised student experience and to allow greater engagement with our audiences and partners. Examples of recent activity include our new online prospectus, two highly successful MOOCs, and the appointment of six

learning technologists to support online education. Over the lifetime of the Agreement we aim to expand our online education offering, continue work to enhance our website, implement technologies to help monitor student engagement and support student retention strategies, and increase use of our two digitally-enhanced teaching spaces.

Along with core surveys the University also supports academic staff to undertake pedagogic research to further our understanding of student engagement and to evaluate their own academic practice. Recent examples include studies into the use of MOOCs in credit bearing courses, the impact of paid employment on student engagement, and the use of lecture recording technology on academic attainment.

2.6 Language Skills

Opportunities for language study for all students have been embedded in the University's curriculum since the Curriculum Reform programme introduced in 2010. Through the Sustained Study route, students are able to begin or maintain the study of seven languages (Arabic, French, Gaelic, German, Mandarin, Spanish and Swedish) through the first two years of their degree. Demand is high for all seven languages through Sustained Study and other enrolment options, particularly at Level 1 (e.g. 80-90 enrolments in Arabic and Mandarin, 130-140 in French, German and Spanish, 40 in Gaelic and Swedish in AY2016/17). We also offer degree programmes in four Modern Languages which maintain healthy cohorts of students and combine with a range of other subjects for Joint Honours degrees. The University is one of four institutions in Scotland to offer Honours degrees in Gaelic, and makes available Gaelic language courses for beginners as part of its commitments to the Gaelic National Plan. An MSc programme in Translation Studies was introduced in 2015/16, and an undergraduate Translation Studies programme is planned for introduction in 2018/19. Our ambition is to incorporate Honours-level language pathways for Arabic, Mandarin and Swedish (currently taught up to Level 2 only) as part of this programme. The University's commitment to ESOL is reflected in a new MSc in TESOL, recruiting 14 students this year, its second year of operation.

The Sustained Studies language courses are advertised to potential students and new arrivals as a distinctive feature of the Aberdeen degree and, as part of a broader programme review, we are looking at a range of ways to enhance and promote this provision. This will include practical steps such as reviewing the teaching timetable to free up more space for language learning, as well as a review of marketing and promotion of Sustained Studies language learning. Alongside credit-bearing courses, the University also promotes language learning through the Language Centre, which offers language courses for external learners via evening classes, as well as providing in-sessional and pre-sessional English language training for non-native speakers. Classes in Mandarin Chinese are also available via the Confucius Institute.

Modern Languages staff in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture work closely with SCILT (Scotland's national centre for languages) and Aberdeen City Council to promote the take-up of languages at all levels of education. In collaboration with Aberdeen City Council, we set up a Language Ambassadors scheme in 2015/16, which sends Honours-level Modern Languages students into secondary schools to promote the benefits of language learning, and allowing ML students to develop a range of skills linked to communication, presentation and advocacy. As a result of being Language Ambassadors, some students have gone on to do mini-placements in primary schools in order to support the Scottish government's 1+2 language strategy (see also paragraph 2.2). Partnerships have also been established between local primary schools and ML students on their year abroad, who maintain regular contact with pupils through the year via blogs, Skype, postcards etc. The Language Ambassador scheme gained Bronze accreditation from the institutional STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) programme for 2016/17, and will continue to run for the foreseeable future.

2.7 Gaelic

The University has a Gaelic Language Plan (2013-2018) in place which sets out the University's commitment to the national effort to ensure that Gaelic has a sustainable future. Evidence of Gaelic use and demand for Gaelic services was gathered as part of the launching of the University's plan in 2013 and the institutional implementation strategy is monitored by a working group with representation from both staff and students across the University. In addition to our Gaelic degree programmes, the University organises a variety of Gaelic awareness-raising events, and provides support for Gaelic language speakers and those interested in learning Gaelic. We offer dedicated student accommodation for Gaelic-speaking students, a Gaelic Common Room where students and staff can practice their Gaelic in a social setting, Conversation and Singing Circles, language tuition opportunities for non-Gaelic speakers, bilingual material where appropriate, and promote Gaelic at public events such as our May Festival and student recruitment events. We have, and will continue to, share information about Gaelic events with local authorities and will assist in promoting their events as required.

2.8 British Sign Language

The University will make reasonable adjustments to processes to support access to services for the deaf and deafblind student population, and sign language interpretation is offered at all of our graduation ceremonies. The University looks forward to working with the SFC to advance this work further.

2.9 Internationalisation

Internationalisation is central to the University's strategy. We work in a competitive international context and strive to ensure that our staff and students are equipped to meet the challenges that competitive environment demands. Our internationalisation strategy is multifaceted: we want to encourage international collaboration for staff and students, attract the best staff and students from across the world, and encourage Scottish students to expand their horizons through language study and travel abroad.

The University is an international institution, ranked 37th in the world for international outlook according to the Times Higher Education Supplement (*The world's most international universities 2016*, THES 14 January 2016). We offer our students a very diverse and international learning environment, with 26.21% of our undergraduate students, 43.19% of our taught postgraduate students and 53.01% of our research postgraduate students coming from non-UK domiciles (as against 14.39%, 47.63% and 45.8% respectively across the sector).

Our staff also come from a more diverse range of backgrounds than the sector average, further enriching the learning environment, with 31.43% of all staff with teaching responsibilities having non-UK nationalities (sector average 24.1%), 22.5% of our teaching-only staff (sector average 20.18%) and 33.43% of staff on teaching and research contracts (sector average 25.32%). The diversity of both our students and staff brings a significant additional benefit in terms of global citizenship, understanding different perspectives on knowledge and multicultural awareness to all who study and work here. It also brings challenges in relation to integrating different experience and expectations of studying in a University environment.

Study Abroad

The University remains committed to encouraging outward as well as inward mobility and now offers all Level 3 UG students the opportunity to go abroad. Opportunities for study abroad are promoted through increased use of social media, promotional events and visits to Schools, as well as formal

information sessions delivered by the Go Abroad team. Meetings are held with returning students to review and improve our processes.

We have joined all our student exchange activities under the umbrella of “Go Abroad”. Some of our new initiatives include:

- Appointment of a team of Go Abroad ambassadors to develop social media to promote Go Abroad activity, run photo competitions, and participate in the Go Abroad Fair and promote the countries they have studied in.
- Introduction of ‘periscope’ tours as part of the Go Abroad fair.
- Themed drop-in sessions in the International Centre run by Go Abroad Ambassadors – e.g. Go Abroad Australia, Go Abroad Germany

In 2016/17, 105 students will be going abroad on the institutional International Exchange Programme, and a further 189 students will be going abroad on the Erasmus scheme. These figures do not include students participating in School-specific exchanges run within academic areas. In total, during the first few months of the 2016/17 academic year, 905 students have engaged with one or more activities run by the International Centre, including cultural events, foreign language conversation evenings and visits to places of international interest.

Support to International Students

The University’s International Centre provides support to international students, from support to international students before and on their arrival in Aberdeen, various events throughout the year designed to enrich their experience in Scotland, support and advice, and job hunting. A wide variety of events are held throughout the year, including ‘International Orientation’, ‘International Peer Groups’ which match people on their social interests, ‘Global Families’ which offers an opportunity for international students with families to meet up, ‘Warm to Winter’ which includes events to celebrate winter activities in Scotland, weekly ‘Language Groups’ to practice conversational language skills, ‘Leadership Scheme’ which allows international students to volunteer through the International Centre within the STAR award scheme, and ‘January Jumpstart’, a series of events to cater to the needs of students who are in Aberdeen over the holidays. A new initiative, first run in 2016/17, was the one-to-one English Language Support Project, where students in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture offered personalised English language support to all PGT offer holders where English was not their first language. Another project, ‘Insight’ paired prospective students with an alumni from their home country to get insight into life in Aberdeen.

1-2-1 English Language Support

For September 2016 entry, the University’s **1-2-1 English Language Support** was opened to all PGT offer holders in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture for whom English is not their first language. The initiative, which had 234 participants from 66 countries, paired prospective students with an existing student for personalised English support via Skype. Participants of the 1-2-1 English Language Support had a 10% higher conversion rate than those who did not.

“It’s fantastic and a really very creative idea. I applied to many universities and all accepted me but I’d love to enrol at Aberdeen because I loved this idea and it made me love Aberdeen.” **Participant of 1-2-1 English Language Support**

“What I found most exciting and surprising, but totally understandable, was that they [prospective students] are not primarily seeking for the information about the city, school or the activities, but they mainly want to make a contact with people from the environment in which they will be living for the upcoming few years. They are not primarily worried about the difference in the education techniques or the language, but in the personal approach of the individuals.” – **Student volunteer in 1-2-1 English Support programme**

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/international/english-language-support-project.php>

The Go Abroad team will continue to expand their services and activities in 2017 and beyond, to include the following:

- International Speakers Series & collaboration with PERU
Dedicating some of the University's external events (see paragraph 1.4) to international topics that will be targeted towards current PGT students as well as the public
- International Centre Move
A move to allow for larger events to take place, including: holding information sessions for Go Abroad, larger and more popular movie nights, as well as hosting events that are streamed live around the world
- Workshop Series
Working with local and national charities to host workshops to assist with the transition to Aberdeen and Scotland, including budgeting workshops through money charities, Shelter and finding private accommodation, and dealing with culture shock
- Lifestyle Video Series
Videos to address questions which international students may be too nervous to ask about
- Encouraging British and Scottish students get involved in the International Centre by targeting students who have participated in Go Abroad, or reaching out to sports teams.

Insight

The **Insight programme** pairs non-UK prospective students with an alumni from their home country in order for the prospective student to gain a better understanding of what it is like to study and live in Aberdeen.

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/international/insight.php>

Transnational Education

The University is presently involved in a number of transnational education projects relating to the establishment of overseas campuses which, it is hoped, will lead to the establishment of overseas campus operations in Africa and the Middle East both of which, should they come to fruition, will offer scope for students at the main Aberdeen campus to travel and experience life and study at the remote campus whilst also potentially giving students at the remote campus the opportunity to spend time in Aberdeen itself. This two-way internationalisation of the student experience is expected to begin in practice at our forthcoming South Korean Campus in 2017/18 with the exact date of opening and programme offering still under discussion with partners in Korea so as to ensure best fit with the current economic situation in the country. We are also in discussion with a partner University in England which already has an overseas campus in Africa with regards to partnering on that campus in teaching and to make available its existing summer school opportunities to Aberdeen students.

In Africa in particular, these transnational projects are partnership opportunities where we are working with delivery partners so as to offer an Aberdeen education in a remote location and at a substantially reduced cost to the student compared to their coming to Aberdeen itself to study. They therefore demonstrate our willingness to share our learning resources and commercial prospects with such partners so as to open up opportunities to students who would otherwise be unable to afford them and, at the same time, to contribute to the economic and social progress of developing nations.

We have an alliance with Curtin University which is situated in Perth, Western Australia and which offers a number of opportunities for international student mobility in both directions. The alliance has a scheme for the joint supervision and award of doctoral degrees with students normally spending one of the 3 years of study at the other institution from which they started at. A joint MSc in Subsea Engineering is an advanced stage of negotiation with Curtin and will see students starting at one university and spending a semester in the other before returning to complete their research project. This MSc is likely to set a template for additional offerings in other subject areas with a Masters of Fine Art already in development with respect to creative writing.

The University is also a very active participant in international collaboration to further academic research, educational partnerships and strategic development. Aurora, a new community of European universities united by a shared commitment to advancing social good and helping solve global challenges, was launched in October 2016. The network links the University in a partnership with eight other universities: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, (Netherlands), Université Grenoble-Alpes (France), University of Aberdeen, University of Antwerp (Belgium), University of Bergen (Norway), University of Duisberg-Essen (Germany), University of East Anglia (England), University of Gothenburg (Sweden) and the University of Iceland. The member universities hope to add real value to society by working together on important societal challenges such as sustainability, climate and energy, digital technology and society, student experience and innovation in teaching and learning, human life and death, and transformations in globalising society, bringing together both students and staff. The University has taken a lead in 'Inclusion and Diversity' activity within the group.

3 Research and Knowledge Exchange

This section links to the following SFC priorities:

Priority 3: World-leading research; Priority 4: Greater innovation in the economy:

- Enhance development and diversity of researchers
- Enhance research collaboration
- Enhance public and cultural engagement and contribute to public policy and public sector delivery
- Engage with the innovation landscape in Scotland
- Embed enterprise and entrepreneurship training in our programmes
- Enhance performance in a future REF exercise
- Grow research income from the UK research councils and other sources
- Sustain a high quality environment for research training and development

University of Aberdeen Strategic Goals

- "To strengthen our position as a world class, research intensive university, focusing on areas of excellence"

The Strategic Plan 2015-2020 aims to increase research quality and levels of activity, to increase postgraduate research student numbers to our high quality programmes, and to increase engagement with industry and other research users.

3.1 Research Performance

The University continues to build on its achievements in REF2014, in which 76% of our research was rated 3* (internationally excellent) or 4* (world leading). In terms of research power (quality x volume) the University of Aberdeen was ranked 29th in the UK. Since then, the University of Aberdeen has undergone significant restructuring and refocusing of research areas and priorities. We will be building research capacity and ensuring we provide an environment and culture where our researchers thrive.

The delivery of a strong submission to the second REF will be dependent on enabling academic staff to develop and progress their research careers. Our focus over the period of this outcome agreement is therefore on building a supportive research community and peer environment which will allow talented researchers to reach their full potential.

Strategic Initiatives

- **Curtin Partnership:** The University of Aberdeen recently announced a strategic partnership with Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia to deliver high impact research and innovative teaching programme. The research will be delivered through a new Global Energy Institute which will offer Masters programmes and research programmes led by the needs of industry. Research strands in medicine will explore the challenges of delivering health care in remote and rural areas, and in creative arts, where such international alliances are rare, academics are already collaborating on creative writing courses. The research activities are accompanied by 12 PhD studentships, due to start in 2017, to carry out research in both Australia and Scotland.
- **Nutrition Research:** January 2017 saw the opening of the new research facilities for the University of Aberdeen's Rowett Institute for Nutrition Research by the Chancellor, HRH The Duchess of Rothesay. The new building includes a state of the art, purpose built Human Nutrition Unit which ranks among the best facilities in Europe. The new facilities will ensure the continuation of cutting edge nutrition research in the North East of Scotland, and enhancing the close links Rowett researchers already have with clinical and academic colleagues across the Medical School and the Institute of Medical Sciences at the Foresterhill campus.

- **The Centre for Medical Mycology** was set up earlier this year based on the ground-breaking research of the University's Aberdeen Fungal Group (AFG). One of only 22 MRC Centres in the UK, it represents an investment of £6.5m by the MRC and the University of Aberdeen. Researchers will spearhead innovative research and training to generate knowledge that will improve the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of fungal diseases which contribute towards 1.3 million deaths every year. The official opening comes just a month after the University announced a new £600k research centre at the University of Cape Town (The AFGrica Unit), specifically for targeting the fungal infections that kill up to one million people a year in the continent. The AFGrica Unit complements an existing Wellcome Trust-funded Strategic Award, led by the AFG, where PhD students from low and middle income nations, including Africa, are trained in Aberdeen and other medical mycology Centres in the rest of the UK.
- **Centre for Civil Society and Rule of Law (CISRUL):** CISRUL studies the application of ideas globally, drawing on expertise from Modern Languages, History, Law, Politics, Sociology, Divinity and Education to examine how political principles function within and beyond the contemporary West. Concepts such as 'citizenship', 'civil society', and the 'rule of law' are used as often by policy makers as by scholars. Core to CISRUL's mission is informing academic and public debate on how they are used, and to what effect. Currently supported by £300k funding from the ESRC, CISRUL represents a strategic focus for interdisciplinary research across the arts and humanities and the social sciences.
- **Soil science and climate change research** at the University of Aberdeen was recognised as world leading and best in the UK by REF 2014. Research in this area remains a priority and has attracted major international funding. N-Circle is a major Centre which brings together researchers from the UK and China. Led by the University of Aberdeen, it involves UK partners from the University of Cambridge, Scotland's Rural College, ADAS and the University of East Anglia. The Centre will focus on the recycling nitrogen resources and closing the nitrogen cycle, supported by just under £3m from the BBSRC and the Newton Fund and over £4m from Chinese funders. The Red Soil project, funded by NERC, examines the management of red soils, infertile and unstable soils leached excessively by rainwater. Working with partners in China, the research adopts a red soil critical zone approach, reaching beyond soil processes to encompass the atmosphere above, geology and groundwater below. The insights gained and modelling outputs will provide valuable data for policy decisions in China about their management.
- **Research capacity building in Tanzania:** The University of Aberdeen and the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) have been awarded €2m by the European Union to help develop higher education and research capacity in Tanzania and create a sustainable oil and gas sector in the East African country. The three year project will promote learning, research and knowledge sharing between the University in conjunction with the Aberdeen Institute of Energy (AIE) and the UDSM.
- Interdisciplinary research to explore the **Aberdeen Burgh Records:** the historical importance of the Aberdeen Burgh records have been recognised by UNESCO by placing them on the Memory of the World Register. Historians and lawyers are now collaborating on a £310k Leverhulme project to analyse legal practice and the development of the law in the city between 1398 and 1511. The continuity of the council registers allows questions of legal change to be addressed meaningfully, and not just relying on 'snapshots' of evidence from different points of time. The team intends to enlarge and sharpen perspectives on law and legal change over time, seeking to foster European comparison and, in a Scottish context, prompt a deep reconsideration of the geography of law and politics in the Kingdom.

3.2 Competitive Research and Research Income

The University generated a research income of £63,999k in 2015/16. As part of our Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 we aim to increase research, consultancy and other knowledge exchange income from this baseline to at least £65m by 2020. Income from research councils is expected to increase from £13,326,000 to £16,246 by 2020.

Research income from grants and contracts showed an increase of 4% in 2015/16 compared to the previous year. This is against a background of restructuring and refocusing our research agenda. The income per FTE academic staff has grown by 16%, from £47.8k per FTE in 2014/15 to £55.4k in 2015/16. The institutional Strategic Plan 2015-20 sets out ambitious growth targets for research income, and we have put in place strategies and processes that will enable us to achieve them.

The main opportunities for growth of quality activity and income for research and knowledge exchange arise from changes in the external funding landscape and development of external partnerships.

The City Deal will offer opportunities within Aberdeen and the region, and reaching out further to industry nationally and internationally. The Government's White Paper, 'Higher Education: Success as a Knowledge Economy', announced the creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) which will bring together all the research funding councils, research support currently located within HEFCE and Innovate UK. This, together with the stronger emphasis on interdisciplinary research recommended by Sir Nicholas Stern in his review of the Research Excellence Framework, will create funding opportunities for institutions whose research strengths and knowledge exchange activities are well aligned with government priorities.

The way in which the University enables and encourages interdisciplinary research is currently under review. A working group will report to management early in 2017, having taken evidence from the academic community and considered good practice elsewhere in the sector. The review will also consider the role that major research facilities play in the development and delivery of interdisciplinary and challenge-led research.

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), administered by RCUK, is a £1.5bn fund (2016/17 to 2020/21) to support research projects that answer the Government's research priorities and that support development in ODA countries. Research strengths identified in the REF, and investment in facilities in the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health help to ensure that researchers at the University of Aberdeen are well placed to access the fund.

BBSRC has recognised the potential within the institution through an award to pump prime activities and applications to the GCRF. The University has attracted further enabling awards to support research excellence from the Wellcome Trust (Institutional Strategic Support Fund, £1.5m over 5 years) and the MRC (MRC Discovery Award which provides development funding for research areas that have the potential to be recognised as MRC Centres of Excellence in the near future).

The main challenges for the University of Aberdeen include an increasingly competitive funding environment, and uncertainty over Brexit in terms of access to EU funding and retention of key staff, including those from EU countries and those who wish to continue their careers within the EU.

Early in 2017 we will launch the Grants Academy which will be the underpinning infrastructure to support the development and nurturing of the University's future leaders in research. The Grants Academy will support all stages of the research life cycle from ideas conception, identification of a funding opportunity, through development of a funding application, research delivery, award management and onward implementation of research findings for impact. It will promote a community of researchers providing constructive peer support, complemented by networking events, interdisciplinary sandpits and staff development. It is based on best practice in the sector and on our own experience with quality assurance and internal peer review of some RCUK grant applications, which has seen an increase in our NERC and BBSRC success rates. These activities will be

supported by core funds and will be supplemented by enabling funds from external funders (see above).

REF Preparations

We will be participating in the consultation process on the next Research Excellence Framework and have begun the identification of excellent research outputs and impacts that may be submitted in 2020. Over the duration of this Outcome Agreement, we will focus on enabling and supporting excellent research, knowledge exchange and researcher development. Much of this activity is supported from our institutional core grants, supplemented by external enabling grants.

Academic Impact

Researchers at the University of Aberdeen published 2,546 outputs during 2015. The category normalised citation impact (citations per paper, normalised for subject, year and document type) has increased to 1.76 from 1.48 in 2015 (2016 metrics not available yet). In 2015/16, 87% of outputs funded by either RCUK or medical charities were made available publicly, in line with funders' open access mandates. Overall, 61% of the journal articles published by University of Aberdeen researchers in 2015/16 were open access compliant. Compliance with the funders' open access mandate has increased from an estimated 58% in 2014/15 to 87% in 2015/16.

We will continue to monitor academic impact, and the international reach of our publications. Effective dissemination and open access will remain a priority for the duration of this outcome agreement. In 2017, we will deliver a new public research portal which will feature prominently on our research web pages and which will enable the public to access our OA research publications.

Enhanced Research Collaboration

The University has renewed its commitment to membership of the Research Pools and we continue to play a major role in pooling initiatives and national research partnerships:

Northern Research Partnership in Engineering (NRPe), Scottish Institute for Research in Economics (SIRE), Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA), Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance (SICSA), Marine Alliance for Science and Technology (MASTS), Soillse (Gaelic Research Capacity); Scottish Universities Physics Alliance II (SUPA, ScotCHEM, Energy Technology Partnership (ETP).

Additionally, we value our existing collaborations with the Research institutes, Scottish Government and NHS Scotland, particularly through the James Hutton Research institute, the Marine Laboratory and Health Science Scotland. Together with the University of Dundee and the Robert Gordon's University and through our joint research institute (Offshore Renewal Institute), we continue to see the Renewables Industry as an opportunity for collaborative, interdisciplinary research.

Linked to our internationalisation strategy, new networks are being created to enhance the collaborative opportunities for our researchers. A few examples include our status as a founding member of the new European Network, AURORA, our renewed commitment to the Confucius Centre, a global Alliance with Curtin University and the multiple partnerships supported by the Newton Fund and Global Challenge Research Fund. The AURORA Network in particular will provide a platform for enhanced collaboration and to seek new opportunities for research and knowledge exchange across Europe.

Enhanced Public and Cultural Engagement

As outlined in Section 1.4, public engagement remains a priority – the University of Aberdeen’s Public Engagement with Research Unit maintains a calendar of popular events which include Explorathon, British Science Week and the successful lecture series Café Scientifique. We will continue to build on this success.

Between 2012 and 2015 PERU delivered the University’s Catalyst project. The Catalyst project, one in only seven awarded by the EPSRC across the UK, focused on the interplay between skills development and practical experience. Our model is to tightly align the two in pan-Scotland training programmes, with residential courses in public engagement, featuring a 'live' public event. Among those taking part in the training are SFC pooling initiatives such as SUPA and EastBio, the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities and the Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences. Working with the University’s Researcher Development Unit, the Catalyst award has enabled us to consolidate a strategy for interconnected skills-through-practice which has been referenced and echoed by Universities across the UK, including Southampton and Oxford. Since completing the project, we have continued to apply and expand this model.

We will deliver a new public research portal in 2017. It will provide continued access to the institutional repository of publications and, in addition, will deliver researcher fingerprinting technology which will enable identification of expertise. The portal will allow researchers, research users and members of the public to explore expertise and publications across all research areas within the University of Aberdeen.

3.3 Knowledge Exchange

Delivering excellent non-academic impact of our research is one of the two specific goals articulated in our institutional Strategic Plan 2015-2020. The REF recognised 85% of our impact as either 4* (world-leading) or 3* (internationally excellent).

One of the first initiatives to be launched under the City Deal is a new MSc programme, which was developed to address industry needs. The MSc Oil and Gas Innovation is a collaboration between the Oil and Gas Innovation Centre and Scottish universities that aims to develop new technologies in exploration, production and decommissioning. The University of Aberdeen is co-ordinating this new MSc programme which is research-led and aimed at individuals with industry experience or companies with innovative ideas that they wish to develop. The first students will enrol in September 2017.

Over the last year, knowledge exchange activities have continued to perform well, and our spin-out companies and KE team have been recognised externally for the quality of their work. Knowledge exchange and innovation will remain important factors in our ability to attract external funding, as most funding streams expect non-academic impact and knowledge exchange activities among the outcomes to be delivered from grant income.

The University has continued to play a major role in the City Deal, a regional initiative with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, the Robert Gordon University, Scottish Enterprise and Opportunity North East (ONE). The City Deal provides opportunities for industrial engagement through projects that address industry needs and seeks to contribute to the economic development of the region through new job and company creation, through the Innovation Theme of the Deal. The four strands of Innovation include Oil and Gas, BioPharma, Food and Drink and Tourism, with “Big Data” playing a role in each of the strands. The leading strand, the Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) has been incorporated and has identified some initial priorities for the oil and gas sector. The University and RGU are working together to work towards those priorities. The first initiative in response to the changing industry landscape in oil and gas, was launched in 16/17 through a new MSc in Decommissioning, with significant industrial engagement. Further postgraduate training is expected in response to the industrially defined needs within the City Deal framework. The development of

BioPharma and food and drink themes are seen as key contributors to the growth of these sectors in the region and areas for economic diversification.

The University has achieved two spin-outs in 15/16 with our additional membership of the new company, Opportunity NorthEast, out of 11 required over the planning period, with a further two achieved in 16/17 to date. Our new companies continue to attract venture funding. The number of start-ups from students has been significantly enhanced by the Enterprise Campus and ABVenture Zone, which provides business incubator space for students. Our involvement in Enterprise Campus has resulted in development and sharing of best practice in student entrepreneurship across the sector. Providing accelerator programmes and access to business plan competitions remains a key objective, in particular with our collaborators within ONE, Elevator and as contributor to Converge Challenge. We have renewed our partnership with Santander Universities to provide our students with access to business plan competitions, finance, mentors and internships with SMEs.

ABVenture Zone

In partnership with Robert Gordon University and Elevator, **ABVenture Zone** provides an incubation space to support growing businesses and entrepreneurs to develop new products and services. Part of the Accelerate Aberdeen programme, which is funded through Aberdeen City Council under the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport Superconnected Cities initiative, the incubation space is particularly suitable for digital and IT idea development but is equally open to entrepreneurs targeting other sectors.

<http://www.abventurezone.com/>

We have embedded knowledge exchange outcomes and non-academic impact in the activities offered through the Grant Academy; enabling funds to support KE activities are available through our UIF allocation and the BBSRC GCRF impact accelerator award and we are also providing bespoke training to embed culture change in our interactions with industry. An MRC Proximity to Discovery award will support KE and people exchange in 2017/18 to support our engagement with the life science industrial sector and cluster development as part of ACRD. We are recording and monitoring non-academic impact to provide a portfolio of case studies from which to learn and improve.

We continue to seek opportunities to secure matched funding from industry, whether that is for KTP projects, Innovate UK, studentships, or for SFC funded Innovation Centre projects. Our industry and overseas supported research income remains strong at over £12m for 15/16, at 19% of our total research grant income.

ABVenture Zone is an incubation space for new start up and spin-out companies, encouraging entrepreneurs to develop new products and services. It is part of the Accelerate Aberdeen programme, funded through Aberdeen City Council under the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport Superconnected Cities Initiative. It offers flexible space and state of the art facilities. ABVenture Zone opened in May 2015 and, in less than 2 years, has hosted 20 entrepreneurs; eight start-up companies have been formed by University of Aberdeen postgraduate students.

Jumpstart: In the summer of 2015 the University of Aberdeen Business School teamed up with Elevator, a social enterprise dedicated to supporting entrepreneurship and business development across Scotland. The aim of the partnership was to bring together the talented participants on the University's MBA programme with start-up teams supported by Elevator. Students and start-up companies were matched up and the students worked alongside the start-up companies to provide advice and support. This activity was linked to the compulsory courses the students were taking in Finance, Strategy and Supply Chain Management. Supporting the real needs of start-up companies proved an exciting challenge to the students, some of whom have subsequently joined the starts ups they supported.

3.4 Innovate UK Engagement

We aim to increase the number of Innovation Vouchers (or similar) to 10 by 2020 from a baseline of 4 in 2014/15, and increase Follow-on IVs (or similar) with a 30% conversion activity by 2020. We also aim to have one Horizon 2020 IV over the span of the Outcome Agreement. We will continue to promote IVs and H2020 IVs to our SME partners as a first step for innovation and collaboration.

We will be refreshing our strategy for industry engagement, to reflect the changing opportunities addressed within the UK Government's Industry, the proposed Industrial Strategies Challenges Fund (ISCF), Innovate UK's Thematic based support structure and Scotland's Innovation landscape. Our engagement in the City Deal, along with our existing knowledge exchange activities, provide a robust platform from which to engage in the ISCF and Innovate UK. The new Manager for Scotland (Innovate UK) provides an additional communication route for Universities to increase the level of stakeholder engagement, but also to promote the new structure to both researchers and companies. We are working in partnership across Scotland and locally to deliver workshops to promote the new thematic calls for Innovate UK, and particularly to ensure SMEs continue to access the KTP scheme to increase their level of R&D capability. Innovate UK funding will be a key target for converted IVs (or similar) and the recent restructuring of funding opportunities available through Innovate UK will aid this objective.

We remain a committed member of the North East KTP centre, with the new membership provided by Abertay University and UHI broadening the offering of the Centre and contributing to its sustainability.

Interface and the SFC Vouchers have complemented the landscape for academic and industry funding. Our engagement with Interface remains strong and we have created a few areas of excellence with a strong record of meeting the industry demands provided by Interface (e.g. Food & Drink, ICT and App development, engineering services). In 2015/16, four Innovation Voucher projects were approved, and we anticipate increasing this number through access to our research expertise via our Expert Unit portal (to be launched in 2017). Our strategic leadership in Interface Food and Drink has provided the wider sector with an alternative model to Innovation centres, whilst still addressing industry demand lead collaborative needs, through the use of Industry Special Interest Groups.

Whilst we recognise the opportunity through the Innovation Centres to enhance industry collaboration, our engagement and successes have not been universal across the Innovation Centres, resulting in particularly good examples of collaboration with Stratified Medicine, IBioIC, and OGIC. In our engagement with industry through Innovation Vouchers and Innovation Centres, we use standard non-transactional template agreements. We have capitalised on areas of strength to engage with the UK Catapults, particularly in Transport and Cell and Gene Therapy.

We will be working with our partners to ensure we support the priorities in the Scottish innovation and skills agenda, to be published later this year. Our University Innovation Fund submission outlines in detail how we will address the individual UIF Outcomes and the Priority Actions.

3.5 Support for Researchers

Research active staff across all career stages and disciplines are supported strategically by a suite of strategies, policies and associated action plan which positively impact the career and professional development support and opportunities for our researchers. The wider context for researchers is drawn from our institutional Strategic Plan 2015-2020 and companion strategies for People, Research and Knowledge Exchange, Athena SWAN and Teaching and Learning. The remit of the Strategic Plan includes creating an environment and culture where there is an expectation of research excellence and where researchers can thrive. The institution holds an Athena SWAN Bronze Award which recognises our ongoing commitment to the advancement and promotion of careers and personal development of women in STEMM and the HR Excellence in Research Award (achieved in

2010, successfully retained 2012 and 2014, renewal submitted 2016), awarded by the European Commission recognises our commitment to the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and alignment with the European Charter and Code for the Recruitment and Management of Researchers.

The University has introduced a system of Academic Line Management to ensure the effective general management of staff within a defined group within the University and the provision of academic leadership. The new system allows for bringing line management closer to individual researchers (ALMs manage no more than 14 other members of staff).

The University's new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (see paragraph 1.8) promotes the University's commitment to supporting staff and students to safeguard their own mental health and to providing excellent support services for colleagues and students who have mental health and wellbeing concerns.

3.6 Researcher Development

Institutional support for researchers is provided within Schools and disciplines and across Professional Services. A dedicated Researcher Development Team is located within the Centre for Academic Development and supports the provision of training and professional development activities for research students, research-only (postdocs) and academic staff. Working collaboratively with Professional Services colleagues, Schools add disciplines the Centre supports strategic priorities in teaching, learning and researcher development and provides a sustainable and integrated environment for staff and students seeking to develop their teaching, learning and research practice.

The Centre supports early career researchers and academic staff to maximise their research and teaching capacity and career development through training and development opportunities in the following areas:

Academic Leadership

Bespoke Principal Investigators (PI) development programmes promote excellence in leadership and management for PIs. These programmes are designed to support new and aspiring and also experienced PIs to ensure that they are equipped to reach their full potential by enhancing their understanding of the University environment. The programme outlines their roles and responsibilities, raising awareness of the support available within the University and developing their people management, leadership and project management skills. Programmes are targeted towards junior and senior PIs within Colleges. Since their introduction in 2007, we have delivered over 16 programmes to 296 PIs across the University.

Researcher Skills and Career Development

The Researcher Development programme provides a University-wide programme of development opportunities, designed to enhance personal and professional development of postgraduate researchers and research staff through a variety of open and bespoke courses, workshops and individual interventions. Training programmes and courses are designed for all our postgraduate researchers and/or research staff and recognise that not all of our researchers will remain in an academic role. To this end, the Centre coordinates a comprehensive programme of activities to support researchers to deliver societal and economic impact in a global environment - for example in enterprise, entrepreneurship, creativity and commercialisation, teaching and self-management. The Centre promotes the importance of engaging in skills development in a variety of ways and the importance of building a portfolio of evidence of skills and learning.

Working in collaboration with the Careers Service and the Public Engagement with Research teams, the centre provides opportunities for researchers to practically develop skills including leadership development (Enterprising Researchers; Leadership Academy, Explorathon), engagement and knowledge exchange and writing and intrapreneurship.

Research Governance and Ethics training, in accordance with the Concordat for Research Integrity, is provided through an online module for all PGR students and research active staff. A companion module for Research Integrity is under development and will be launched in 2017.

Teaching Enhancement

The CAD supports teaching development across all levels of researcher (including postgraduate research students) through workshops and development programmes accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). A teaching continuing professional development (CPD) framework has been developed which recognises excellence in teaching and learning activities.

Our CPD framework includes an accredited CPD programme in the Principles of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, four PG Cert programmes and support to achieve fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (at Associate Fellowship, Fellowship, Senior Fellowship and Principal Fellowship level). Since the introduction of the new framework the number of individuals obtaining a fellowship annually has been accelerating and is currently double the 2014 figure (39 to 82). As of January 2017, 34.1% of individuals with teaching responsibilities at the University hold HEA fellowships at one level or another. In calculating this percentage we have included doctoral students who are engaged in teaching. In line with the support we give to early career researchers such as doctoral students, and our commitment to ensuring the highest standards of teaching, many of the doctoral students engaged in teaching gain HEA Associate Fellow status. The equivalent figure considering academic staff alone increases to 35.3%. In both cases, our percentage of staff with Fellowships is above the sector average which according to the HEA is around 30%. In addition we have a number of staff who hold other recognised teaching qualifications or accreditations such as a PGCHE, GTCS registration, Academy of Medical Educators' accreditation etc. The current strategic plan commits the University to ensuring that 100% of staff involved in teaching hold a recognised teaching qualification or accreditation by 2020

3.7 Support for Postgraduate Research Students

In 2017, the University will deliver a single Graduate School for postgraduate research students (PGR students) that will support their recruitment, development and management across the entire PhD journey. The Graduate School (or Doctoral College) will deliver a high level of pastoral care and support professional and personal development, with a strong emphasis on generic skills, employability, practitioner engagement and entrepreneurship. It will also support supervisors through clearly signposted support services and clearly articulated expectations, complemented by a programme of supervisor training. Research methods and research specific skills are provided within schools and disciplines.

It continues to be challenging for the University to grow the postgraduate research (PGR) population although the University has successfully increased the number of international students studying at PGR level. Britain's exit from the European Union will make this target even more challenging. In 2014/15 the University had 860 PGR students. Our aim is to have reached a total of 1,100 students by 2020. The structured, supportive environment that will be provided through the Graduate School relating to support for researchers around academic leadership, career development/employability, innovation and creativity skills and evidence of institutional investment in training and development and of how our academic leaders (PIs and supervisors) are supported are essential to be embedded within funding applications and within the new Graduate School. Clear messages around this vibrant, supportive community can also be exploited when engaging with prospective postgraduate students.

Researcher Development

Centrally, academic writing and generic skills development for PGR students is provided by the Researcher Development team and the Student Learning Service, based in the Centre for Academic Development (see below for specific detail on researcher development). PGR students have access to skills development through workshops, individual writing advice sessions and online materials. All

new PGR students are provided with the opportunity, via their School or College working in partnership with the Centre, to undertake an introductory development session on demonstrating and/or tutoring. In tandem with this, Schools frequently offer discipline-specific support and development around marking and feedback provision.

PGR researcher development is supported through the dedicated Researcher Development team within the Centre for Academic development. The Centre supports early career researchers and academic staff to maximise their research and teaching capacity and career development through training and development opportunities.

The Enterprising Researchers Project, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), provides unique opportunities to collaborate with business and industry. Businesses from all sectors can host a doctoral researcher, or small team of researchers, to leverage the skills of postgraduate researchers to address specific business needs. Taking part provides researchers with valuable insight into the private sector and provides specific examples of both leadership and enterprise skills. Successful partnerships have been made with employers including Deeside Water and Mitchells of Inverurie

Enterprising Researchers

Enterprising Researchers is an initiative which pairs uniquely qualified University of Aberdeen researchers with local businesses to address complex business needs. Our expertly trained researchers provide strategic insight and advice to overcome specific challenges. To date, we have placed ten researchers in successful collaborations with a range of businesses across retail, oil and gas and food and drink industries. These projects highlight the capacity of postgraduate researchers to make impactful contributions towards business growth and innovation.

www.abdn.ac.uk/enterprising-researchers

Supervisor training is coordinated jointly between the Colleges and the Centre. Each of the Colleges have agreed to implement a more structured approach to supervisor training by delivering a three-part training programme focusing on (i) monitoring & progression, (ii) supporting PhD writers and (iii) examining research projects. As the new Graduate School develops, supervisor training provision will be reviewed and refined in particular to embed PGR wellbeing and research integrity.

Annex: University of Aberdeen summary of baselines, milestones and targets

(* denotes priority measure)

	2014-15 baseline	2017-18 milestone	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 aspiration	
Priority 1: Widening access – learning that is accessible and diverse, attracting and providing more equal opportunities for people of all ages, and from all communities and backgrounds					
Measure 1: Articulation - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing					
Scotland-domiciled HN entrants from college to UG programmes	186	120	125	130	*
Scotland-domiciled HN entrants from college to UG programmes with advanced standing	25	36	44	52	*
Proportion of Scotland-domiciled HN entrants articulating with Advanced Standing	13.4%	30%	35%	40%	*
Measure 2: Deprivation - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes					
Total number of SDUEs with known postcode	1521	1,018.48	1,064.78	1,101.19	*
2a: SDUEs from 20% most deprived postcodes	84	34.65	48.3	62.44	*
2b: SDUEs from 40% most deprived postcodes	239	173.25	193.2	212.3	
2a: Proportion of SDUEs from 20% most deprived postcodes	5.5%	3%	4%	5%	*
2b: Proportion of SDUEs from 40% most deprived postcodes	15.7%	15%	16%	17%	
Measure 3: SHEP Schools - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the SHEP schools (i.e. schools with consistently low rates of progression to higher education)					
Total SDUEs	1523	1,155	1,208	1,249	
Number of SDUEs from SHEP schools	75	63.53	72.45	81.17	
Proportion of SDUE from SHEP Schools	4.9%	5.5%	6%	6.50%	
Measure 4: Protected Characteristics - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants by different protected characteristic groups and care leavers					
Gender					
Number of Male SDUEs	672	519.75	543.38	561.96	
Number of Female SDUEs	851	635.25	664.13	686.84	
Number of Other SDUEs	0				
Male Proportion	44.1%	45	45	45	
Female Proportion	55.9%	55	55	55	
Other Proportion	0.0%				
Age					
Number of Under 21 SDUEs	1257				
Number of 21 and over SDUEs	266	207.9	217.35	224.78	
Under 21 Proportion	82.5%				
21 and over Proportion	17.5%	18	18	18	
Ethnicity					
Number of White SDUEs	1411	1,057	1,105	1,143	
Number of BME SDUEs	94	98.18	102.64	106.15	
Number of SDUEs with unknown Ethnicity	18				
Proportion - White	92.6%	91.5%	91.5%	91.5%	
Proportion - BME	6.2%	8.5	8.5	8.5	
Proportion - Other	1.2%				
Disability					
Number - No Known Disability	1335				
Number - Disability	188	150.15	169.05	187.32	
Number - Not known/refused	0				
Proportion - No Known Disability	87.7%				
Proportion - Disability	12.3%	13	14	15	
Proportion - Not known/refused	0.0%				
Care Leavers					
Number - Care Leaver	4	26	27	28	*
Number - Not a Care Leaver	1519				
Proportion - Care Leaver	0.3%	2.25%	2.24%	2.24%	*
Measure 5: Retention by Protected Characteristics - The number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled entrants from different characteristic groups returning to study in year two					
Deprivation					
MD20 full-time first year SDUE	47	34.65	48.3	62.44	*

MD20 full-time first year SDUE Retained	42	31.60	44.44	58.07	*
Proportion MD20 retained	89.4%	91.20%	92%	93%	*
MD20/40 full-time first year SDUE	151	173.25	193.2	212.3	
MD20/40 full-time first year SDUE Retained	135	159.56	179.68	199.56	
Proportion MD20/40 retained	89.4%	92.10%	93%	94%	
Gender					
Male entrants	448	519.75	543.38	561.96	
Males Retained	409	489.08	518.93	545.10	
Proportion of Males retained	91.3%	94.10%	95.50%	97%	
Female entrants	607	635.25	664.13	686.84	
Females Retained	572	609.84	640.89	666.23	
Proportion of Females retained	94.2%	96%	96.50%	97%	
Age					
Under 21 Entrants	921	947	990	1,024	
Under 21s Retained	862	907.32	950.54	988.18	
Proportion of Under 21s retained	93.6%	95.80%	96%	96.50%	
21 and over Entrants	134	207.9	217.35	224.78	
21 and over Retained	119	189.60	203.22	216.91	
Proportion of 21 and over retained	88.8%	91.20%	93.50%	96.50%	
Ethnicity					
Entrants - White	965	1,057	1,105	1,143	
White - Retained	898	1,009.26	1,060.67	1,102.66	
Proportion retained - white	93.1%	95.50%	96%	96.50%	
Entrants - BME	81	98.18	102.64	106.15	
BME - Retained	75	94.15	98.53	102.43	
Proportion retained - BME	92.6%	95.90%	96%	96.50%	
Entrants - Ethnicity not known	9				
Not known/refused - Retained	0				
Proportion retained - Ethnicity not known	88.9%	100	100	100	
Disability					
Entrants - No Known Disability	945				
No Known Disability - Retained	881				
Proportion retained - No Known Disability	93.2%	95.3	96.4	97	
Entrants - Disability	110	150.15	169.05	187.32	
Disability - Retained	100	141.44	162.12	181.70	
Proportion retained - Disability	90.9%	94.20%	95.90%	97%	
Entrants - Not known/refused	0				
Not known/refused - Retained	0				
Proportion retained - not known/refused					
Care Leavers					
Entrants - Care Leavers	4	26	27	28	*
Care Leavers Retained	3	24	25	26	*
Proportion retained - Care Leavers	75.0%	92%	93%	93%	*
Priority 2: High quality learning and teaching – an outstanding system of learning that is accessible and diverse where students progress successfully with the ability, ideas and ambition to make a difference					
Measure 6: Retention - The number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants returning to study in year two					
Total number of full-time first year SDUE	1055	1,155	1,208	1,249	
Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	981	1,085.70	1,147.13	1,198.85	
Proportion retained	93.0%	94%	95%	96%	
Measure 7: Satisfaction - The difference (+/-) from the individual institution's benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey					
% Satisfaction	87	88	88.5	89	*
Measure 8: STEM - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants to STEM courses					
Proportion of SDUE to STEM courses	43.8%	45%	45%	45%	
Number of SDUEs to STEM courses	667.00	519.75	543.38	561.96	

Measure 9a: Graduate Destinations - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled graduates entering positive destinations				
Eligible population	1025	914.99	913.63	1075.11
Proportion of graduates in positive destinations	96.8%	96%	96%	96%
Number of graduates in positive destinations	992	878.39	877.08	1032.11
Measure 9b: Graduate Destinations - The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled graduates entering professional occupations				
Eligible population	tbc	914.99	913.63	1075.11
Proportion of graduates in professional occupations	tbc	48%	48%	48%
Number of graduates in professional occupations	tbc	439.20	438.54	516.05
Priority 3: World-leading research – world-leading universities, nationally and internationally connected with a global reputation for their research				
Measure 10: The number of research postgraduate students				
RPG students	860	910	960	1,100
Measure 11: Total income from the UK Research Councils				
RCUK income	£13,326k	£14,867k	£15,518k	£16,246k
Measure 12: Total research income from all sources				
Research income	£63,316k	£59,471k	£62,073k	£65,000k
Priority 4: Greater innovation in the economy – a national culture of enterprise and innovation leading to a more productive and sustainable economy				
Measure 13: IVs - The number of SFC innovation Vouchers (IVs), Follow-on IVs and H2020 IVs				
Innovation Vouchers (IVs)	4	6	8	10
Follow-on IVs	1	1	2	3
H2020	0	1	0	0
Measure 14: UIF - Individual HEI UIF progress measures and sector wide reporting				
For 2017-18 institutions are asked to provide a narrative on progress with their contribution to University Innovation Fund priority outcomes (these will be identified during consultation with the sector during the latter part of 2016 and signed off by the SFC's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee by January 2017)				
Priority 5: High-performing institutions – a coherent system of high-performing, sustainable institutions with modern, transparent and accountable governance arrangements				
Measure 15: Carbon - Gross carbon footprint (3-year period)				
Tonnes CO2e	tbc	29,000	27,739	26,478

*