



ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

**OUTCOME AGREEMENT
2016/17**

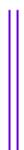
Foreword

Our Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council illustrates the close alignment of the university's strategy to the Scottish Government's five strategic objectives to create a more successful country with opportunities for all in Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth.

In particular, this Agreement demonstrates the alignment between the university's existing strengths and the Scottish Government's key priority areas in the following areas:

- **Widening access:** the university's commitment to widening access and access for protected characteristic groups (including by gender), despite the small catchment of MD20 and MD40 students, through our developing relationships with local councils, our comprehensive 'Access To' programme and engagement with Scottish Higher Education Partnership schools, the care experienced young people initiative and the SFC-funded ACES initiative.
- **Employability:** the university's commitment to the employability of its graduates through a portfolio of professional relevant courses, proactive engagement with business and industry in the design and delivery of the university's courses as well as a the significant number of placements and work-related projects embedded within courses. This has been enhanced by engagement with the regional SME sector (including the third sector) through the SFC-funded Talent Exchange project, which sources a greater number and wider range of work related experiences for students that benefit both the students and the businesses involved.
- **Skills for the regional economy:** the university's commitment to the educational and training needs of key economic sectors across its portfolio by ensuring that its courses are relevant to industry needs and that its graduates are prepared for work.
- **Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce:** the university is developing a pilot with the North East Scotland College (funded through Skills Development Scotland) to provide an advanced apprenticeship in Computing based upon the principles of the Commission's report.
- **Knowledge exchange:** the university has the second highest usage of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships of any Scottish university, a testament to the applied nature of the university's approach to working with businesses.
- **Development of focused research strategy:** the university's research strategy is focused around translational research in key areas of relevance to the regional economy and the Aberdeen City Region Deal, namely: Oil and Gas, Big Data, Remote Healthcare and the Creative Industries.

One significant characteristic of the North East Scotland region is the highly effective partnership between the college and the university. The level of '2+2' articulation arrangements that allow seamless transition from HND programmes at college to year 3 of degree programmes at



university is far higher in this region than in any other part of Scotland. This success is rooted in a shared approach to curriculum planning and development that has streamlined pathways and allowed wider participation in degree level study, as well as more efficient use of resources by avoiding duplication and unnecessary competition. The inter-institutional collaboration has also covered Developing the Young Workforce, the Regional Skills Assessment and Regional Skills Strategy and apprenticeship routes up to and including advanced apprenticeships. The same SFC Manager oversees the Outcome Agreements for both NESCOL and RGU. Both institutions have invested in the same Labour Market Intelligence software to facilitate this activity in the light of the Aberdeen City Region Deal and the volatility of the oil and gas sector.

The two institutions, alongside the University of Aberdeen, have recently commenced work together to explore the development of shared services.

The university played a leading role in developing the innovation section of the Aberdeen City Region Deal, and is also centrally involved in the implementation of the relevant parts. It is leading in the oil and gas and the big data elements, and is working in partnership with the University of Aberdeen in the biopharmaceuticals and the food/drink/nutrition elements. The university will have a stake in the Oil and Gas Technology Centre, which is being established as part of the implementation of the Deal, with two seats on the Board.

Finally, the university also has ambitions to complete its Masterplan re-development of the Garthdee campus which involves the creation of a new Gray's School of Art in the main academic area of the campus. This would be the last academic area of the university to move from a building that provides a sub-optimal environment for teaching, learning and research, is costly to maintain and service and is a significant distance away from all other teaching facilities on campus. The new building would link with the new, purpose designed Sir Ian Wood building at the East end of the campus and would provide bespoke, modern studios which would be co-located with the other design-based subjects within the university.

The university's strategy

RGU's mission is 'to transform people and communities'. It does this by ensuring that our discovery of knowledge and dissemination of scholarship have the greatest possible economic, social and cultural impact.

The university's vision to be recognised, in Scotland and beyond, as a distinctive university leading and shaping the debate on the future of higher education and placing students at the centre of the education it offers. The university will be known for the impact of its teaching, scholarship and translational research, the employability of its graduates, its influence in the region and nation, its growing global profile, and its strong interdisciplinary focus on a small number of key questions and issues of concern to the local and global community. The university will



achieve its goals in partnership with academic, voluntary, public and business organisations that share its ideals and aspirations.

The university's strategy, [A Clear Future for a leading university in a new era](#) reflects on the university's achievements and aspirations for the future. It articulates a significant growth in commercial income and research revenues whilst maintaining the quality and reputation for our relevant and professional portfolio of courses.

The strategy is being implemented through eight strategic aims:

1. Teaching and learning: to inspire all to achieve their maximum potential and excel in the world of tomorrow.
2. Extending access to learning: to enable individuals to achieve their ambitions throughout life whatever their circumstances.
3. Student experience: to support students and graduates to enjoy and prosper within a vibrant learning community.
4. Research: to be recognised for our contribution to the growth of innovation through advancing internationally excellent translational research in our areas of strategic focus.
5. Commercialisation: to harness our intellectual and physical assets so they generate value to the economy and are profitable to the university.
6. The regional community: to contribute to and be an active leader in the development of the regional community.
7. Partnerships: to secure strategic partnerships with a small number of globally recognised universities and companies that will support the university's key ambitions.
8. Our university: to empower staff and students to develop a strong and engaged community.

The strategy of the university is complemented and extended through six associated strategic statements. These statements provide significant stakeholder groups of the university with information that contextualises the university's strategy for their particular area. The [six current strategic statements](#) are:

- Oil and gas;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Big data;
- Arts and creative industries;
- Employability plus; and
- RGU and the region.

Threats arising from the 2016/17 funding settlement

The Outcome Agreement for academic year 2016/17 is the final iteration of the first three year cycle of Agreements. Despite the university's proven track record of delivery in relation to Scottish Government strategic objectives, as expressed by the SFC's National Performance Indicators, it has been hit by one of the worst funding settlements within the university sector for 2016/17. One immediate effect of the decline in revenue in



2016/17 is that the university has commenced a voluntary severance scheme.



| | | Strategic aims contained within <i>A Clear Future for a leading university in a new era</i> | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| | | Teaching and learning | Extending access to learning | Student experience | Research | Commercialisation | The regional community | Partnerships | Our university |
| SFC Outcome Agreement Aims | Improve access to higher education | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| | Learner journeys are short | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | |
| | Right learning in the right place | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | |
| | A developed workforce | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| | A research base that is internationally competitive | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| | Deliver a step change in the engagement of business and industry | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Sustainable institutions | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ |

Aim 1: Widening access to people from the widest possible range of backgrounds

Introduction

The university's strategy provides a commitment to:

- motivate and facilitate individuals from under-represented groups in the North East; and
- advance an inclusive environment for our staff and students in which to work and study.

The university's work in this area continues to be supported significantly by the wider access and retention funding that is provided by the SFC. This has enabled the focus and acceleration of a range of initiatives that enhance opportunities for under-represented groups.

A vital and integral part of the university's approach has been the development of partnerships at a strategic and operational levels with stakeholder organisations across the North East region, including local both authorities. These partnerships ensure that the university is not duplicating effort and that commitment to developments is secured at the highest level. These partnerships continue to grow as the university seeks to widen access to its degree programmes.

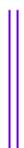
NPM 1: Articulation with advanced standing

The university has a longstanding commitment to articulation with advanced standing, and a proven, successful track record of delivering this seamless transition into higher education. This success is underpinned by the partnership work with colleges to develop and support individual articulation routes with guaranteed places for learners. The university has a longstanding formal relationship with North East Scotland College, which is designated as an Associate College of the university. This formal agreement secures a planned, shared approach to articulation within the North East of Scotland. A Memorandum of Agreement also exists between the university and Dundee and Angus College.

During 15/16 the Hub Management Group is undertaking a number of strategic projects to enhance articulation links and partnership between the university and the college. This includes work in the following areas:

- Advanced, Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships (see below);
- The sharing of approaches and materials which support the development of entrepreneurship skills within students (see Aim 4);
- Participation in the STV Aberdeen project; and
- Mechanisms to celebrate the longstanding articulation partnership between the College and University.

This work is in addition to the curriculum planning and student transition support activity, which is the mainstay of the Hub's work.



The Hub is also undertaking careful consideration of the legacy of the longstanding relationships and the approach to joint working in light of the planned cessation of SFC Hub funding.

The number of students who have entered the university with advanced standing has, due to the Associate College arrangement with the North East of Scotland College, increased year on year. Most notably, the university is pleased to report a 45% increase in full-time articulation with partners over the period 2011-2014. These partnerships have been enriched through the work of the North East Articulation Hub and the provision of 75 additional student places in successive years taught jointly by the university and college. The university has indicated its willingness, subject to continued funding, for this model to continue into 2017/18.

As the number of articulating entrants has increased, this has led to an increase in the overall number of HN entrants. Most positively, through the University's work in articulation, higher proportions of these entrants now benefit from full articulation, ensuring no loss of time for the learner and efficiency in the learner journey.

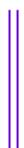
Bearing in mind the university's desire to continue its work in articulation and to manage numbers in the context of consolidation, there was a focus in 2014/15 to examine within some subject areas admissions criteria for non-partner colleges, as well as non-advanced HN entrants for entry in 2015/16. This policy will continue for entry in 2016/17.

NPM 1: Articulation with advanced standing

Performance 2011/12 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 – 2016/17

| | Academic session | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|
| | Performance | | | | Targets | | |
| | 11/12 ¹ | 12/13 ¹ | 13/14 ¹ | 14/15 ² | 15/16 | | 16/17 |
| | | | | Target | Actual as at 3.12.15 | | |
| Scottish - domiciled Undergraduate Entrants (SDUE) articulating with advanced standing | 292 | 347 | 427 + 75 | 459 + 75 | 400 + 75 | 428 + 75 | 400 + 75 |
| Number of SDUE HN entrants | 496 | 573 | 681 | 695 + 75 | 549 + 75 | 657 + 75 | 549 + 75 |
| Proportion | 58.9% | 60.6% | 62.7% | 66.0% | 76.1% | 65.1% | 76.1% |

1. The source for data 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 is the SFC's National Articulation Database report. Numbers are full time and part time headcount
2. The source data for 2014/15 is based on the university's performance as of 3rd December 2015 and is drawn from the university's student records system. This figure may reduce marginally by final reporting to HESA due to in-year student withdrawal.
3. The source data for the actual figure for 2015/16 is based on the university's performance as at 3rd December 2015 and is drawn from the university's student records system. This figure may reduce marginally by final reporting to HESA due to in-year student withdrawal.



NPM 2: Engagement and recruitment of MD20 and MD40 students

Strategic relationships

The university is proud to have met its MD20 and MD40 targets in 2013/14 and 2014/15. This performance has been achieved through the strategic commitment of the university, the ongoing development of the wider access team and, crucially, the development and enhancement of strategic relationships with partners such as Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, which are underpinned by operational relationships with each of the university's partner schools.

Joint work with these partners and with ASPIRENorth (the project that delivers the Scottish Higher Education Programme – SHEP) in the north of Scotland has led to the development of a range of activities with partner schools that reach right through the senior phase, from S1 to S6. The purpose of these activities is to build a positive relationship with partner schools and directly with pupils and parents/carers that lasts throughout their school career and allows the university to build positive perceptions of the nature of and possibilities unlocked by participation in tertiary education.

The university's work with schools aims to:

- build ambition: raise aspirations and develop ambition to progress
- enable access: mitigate barriers and create student-centred access pathways, and
- support achievement: support the development of skills-enriched graduates with the confidence and capacity to achieve their ambitions, whatever their circumstances

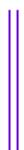
The list of partner schools as agreed between the Councils and the university is:

| Local Council | Partner School | SHEP school |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Aberdeen City | Northfield Academy | Y |
| | Torry Academy | Y |
| | Kincorth Academy | Y |
| | St Machar Academy | Y |
| | Hazlehead Academy | N |
| Aberdeenshire | Fraserburgh Academy | N |
| | Mintlaw Academy | N |
| | Peterhead Academy | N |

S1 and S2

The Northern Lights project was piloted with Northfield Academy in 2014/15. It was started at the request of the school, which valued the work done in the S5/S6 phase, but considered that even greater impact could be made at the start of secondary school. Critically, the school and the university also wished to involve parents/carers in the project.

The pilot involved 24 S1 pupils and their parents/carers. The pupils were identified by the school as having potential. The response from the school (which has provided a dedicated teacher to the scheme), pupils and parents/carers has been extremely positive.



It is worth noting that the school reports an unprecedented involvement of parents/carers, who have expressed a strong desire and commitment to be engaged in the process in order that they can best support their child.

2015/16 sees the first cohort moving into the S2 phase of the programme and the new S1 phase is underway. In 2016/17 it is planned to broaden the programme to other selected partner schools.

S3 and S4

This phase is served by ASPIRENorth, with the full support of the university in relevant activities. ASPIRENorth was involved in the planning of Northern Lights from the outset, so that there is a clear progression for those pupils from that programme to ASPIRENorth's suite of activities. In addition to this, the university has started school outreach workshops with these year groups in response to requests from specific partner schools. These are provided as part of the schools' PSE curriculum and are designed to enhance, not replicate, the ASPIRENorth activities.

S5 and S6

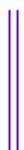
The activities with S5 and S6 pupils are based on two programmes; the delivery of in-school workshops; and the Access to RGU programme. The workshops build on those provided in the S3/S4 phase and are aligned more closely to subject choices at university level, factors in deciding on an institution, the Degreelink programme with NESCOL and on methods to aid pupils in their preparation for their Highers and Advanced Higher examinations. The Access team also attends Careers Fairs, presenting a coherent 'face' of the university.

The Access to RGU programme has grown from the original Access to Creative Education Scotland (ACES) initiative, funded by the SFC. The programme has developed and now involves eight subject areas in 2015/16 – art, design and architecture; engineering, computing, life sciences, health professions, management, law/law with management and communications and media. The model for delivering these courses differs slightly between subject areas, but each provides young people from partner schools with the opportunity to study at RGU whilst completing their senior phase education. The university is proud to have developed a joint relationship with Ledingham Chalmers that has resulted in the joint design and provision of the Access to Law course at RGU. The potential for reaching a similar arrangement in other subject areas is being explored at present.

The number of participants in these programmes has grown steadily as more subject areas have been added. A key element of this work has been the expansion of the university's associate student scheme to young people within the Senior Phase. From an initial cohort of 25 in 2012/13, 215 young people will participate in 2015/16.

Contextualised Admissions

The introduction of contextualised admissions in 2013/14 is another strand of the university's approach to implementing its commitment to improve access to higher education. This work has provided increased opportunities for applicants from partner schools and those from MD20 and care experienced backgrounds. The University's approach to engaging colleagues across the institution in the development has been highlighted as a model of good practice by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions.



For entry in 2015/16, contextualised admissions were applied to all applicants from an MD20 postcode; an MD40 postcode; who were care experienced; who were from a partner school; who were 'Access To RGU' participants.

Very positively, early indications show that the number of applicants and applications for entry in 2015/16 from partner schools was the highest ever recorded. Within this total was the highest level of MD20 applicants and applications for the last four recruitment cycles and the highest number of MD40 applicants and applications for the last six cycles. This demonstrates the value and impact of the range of activities that take place with partner schools and the significance of the positive relationships with the Councils.

At the same time, however, there was a drop in MD20 and MD40 applicants from outside the region for entry in 2015/16. Historically, the university has been dependent upon out of region applicants to meet its MD20 and MD40 recruitment targets. This trend is being explored, however, the decline can be attributed in part to the increased efforts across Scotland to provide local opportunities for young people from this demographic group.

NPM 2: Engagement and recruitment of MD20 and MD40 students

Performance 2011/12 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 – 2016/17 (full time and part time headcount)

| | Academic session | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| | Performance | | | | Targets | | |
| | 11/12 ¹ | 12/13 ¹ | 13/14 ¹ | 14/15 ² | 15/16 | 16/17 | |
| | | | | Target | Actual as at 3.12.15 | | |
| Number of MD20 | 142 | 154 | 149 | 163 | 166 | 165 | 169 |
| Number of MD20 to MD40 | 216 | 258 | 238 | 231 | 242 | 239 | 258 |
| Number of MD40 | 358 | 412 | 387 | 394 | 408 | 404 | 427 |
| Total SDUE | 2192 | 2332 | 2317 | 2238 | 2245 | 2211 | 2245 |
| Proportion MD20 | 6.5% | 6.6% | 6.4% | 7.3% | 7.4% | 7.5% | 7.5% |
| Proportion MD20 to MD40 | 9.9% | 11.1% | 10.3% | 10.3% | 10.8% | 10.8% | 11.5% |
| Proportion MD40 | 16.3% | 17.7% | 16.7% | 17.6% | 18.2% | 18.3% | 19.0% |

- 1 The source data for this table for the years 2011/12 to 2014/15 are from the HESA student return, which is then mapped by the SFC to their interpretation of the deprivation quintiles from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).
- 2 The source data for 2015/16 are based on the university's performance as of 3rd December 2015, drawn from the university's student records system. The final outturn for the year is likely to be marginally lower due to withdrawal of some students.

In this table, the SDUE is lower than in other tables due to the fact that a very small number of students without a recorded quintile are removed from the total figure.

NPM 3: Engagement with the Scottish Higher Education Programme (SHEP)

The university's work with the SHEP schools in the North East is outlined above. As noted in the previous Outcome Agreement, the university does not work to a target for this measure. It does, however, track entrants from these schools, including those students who enter university having first studied at college.



**NPM 3: Engagement with the Scottish Higher Education Programme (SHEP)
Performance 2011/12 – 2015/16 (full time and part time headcount)**

| | Academic session | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Performance | | | | |
| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 as at Dec 2015 |
| Number of direct entrants from SHEP schools | 106 ¹ | 106 ¹ | 111 ¹ | 109 ² | |
| Number of SHEP entrants arriving via college | 161 ³ | 150 ³ | 158 ³ | 149 ³ | |
| Total SHEP | 267 | 256 | 269 | 258 | |
| Total SDUE | 2197 | 2338 | 2333 | 2222 | |
| Proportion of direct entrants from SHEP schools | 4.8% | 4.5% | 4.8% | 4.9% | |
| Proportion of SHEP entrants arriving via college | 7.3% | 6.4% | 6.8% | 6.7% | |
| Overall proportion of SHEP entrants | 12.2% | 10.9% | 11.5% | 11.6% | |

- The source data for direct entrants for the years 2011/12 to 2013/14 are from the HESA student return, which counts entrants whose last institution was a SHEP school, as specified in Annex C of SFC's Outcome Agreement Guidance 2014-15.*
- The source data for direct entrants in 2014/15 are based on the university's performance as of 12th February 2015, drawn from the university's student records system. The final outturn for the year is likely to be marginally lower due to withdrawal of some students.*
- All source data for entrants from SHEP schools arriving via college are based on the university's performance as of 12th February 2015, drawn from the university's student records system. The final outturn for the year is likely to be marginally lower due to withdrawal of some students.*

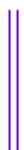
In this table, the SDUE number may differ from that in other tables since only records that include the entrant's school can be used.

NPM 4: Entrants from protected characteristic groups and care leavers

Protected characteristic groups

As part of the university's annual monitoring of equalities data, the university examines the composition of its student body by the different protected characteristic groups. The figures regarding the proportion of Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants by different protected characteristic groups suggest that the:

- proportions of entrants aged under 21 and 21 and over has broadly followed the Scottish HEI sector trend
- university's proportion of BME entrants has remained broadly static at 5.5%, which is considerably higher than the proportion of the BME population within the region
- proportion of disabled entrants has increased significantly from 6.3% in 2009/10 to 13.5% in 2013/14; this is significantly above the Scottish HEI sector average of 9.3% in 2012/13
- proportion of male and female entrants has remained broadly similar over a 5 year period, at around 36% and 64% female. As part of the university's Equality Outcomes, action at a School level is being taken to address some of the systemic gender imbalances that exist within the student population



The university has monitored annually the recruitment of students from other protected characteristic groups (e.g. sexual orientation and gender identity). This has been done since 2013/14 for Home entrants and since 2014/15 for all entrants. It is difficult to ascertain whether any group is under-represented without comparative data for the wider population, since this information is not included within the most recent Census (2011).

Individuals with care experience

The University remains committed to providing support for care experienced young people and welcomes the development of a national ambition for participation of this group.

Care leaver enrolment data shows this work is having an impact, with the number of care leaver entrants rising to 17 in 2015/16 (as at 3rd December 2015). As a result of this and the work outlined above, the university was delighted to have its Buttle UK Quality Mark confirmed for a further two years, for the period 2015-2017.

Early work in this area focused on the development and definition of a package of support which offers advice, guidance and financial assistance to this group from the point of application through to study on-course.

While the scope of the support evolved in light of delivery experience and student feedback, key elements include:

- 1-1 engagement and support, throughout the application process and on-course study, provided by the university's care leaver adviser
- travel support to attend the university's programme of open days, applicants days and selection visits
- inclusion within the university's widening access programme of activities, including eligibility to apply for wider access scholarships
- inclusion within contextualised admissions processes
- guaranteed 365 days university halls accommodation, with a discount in the first year
- an enrolment support pack, including support for travel and study materials
- a discretionary fund, working in tandem with other financial support schemes offered by the university and external organisations, enabling individuals to seek financial support for one-off and unforeseen issues

Key areas of focus during the period of the Outcome Agreement will be to:

- collate student feedback to inform the further development of student support
- continue to raise awareness of the support available through widening participation outreach activities and via the university's strategic partnership links with local authorities and the North East Scotland College
- develop pathway information to support prospective students to plan for higher education study

The university will also build upon its current work with this group by developing its first Corporate Parenting Plan. This Plan will be informed by the views of care experienced young people, regional stakeholders and best practice from organisations such as CELCIS and Who Cares Scotland.



NPM4: Care leaver enrolment performance 2011/12-2015/16

| | Academic session | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2011/12 ² | 2012/13 ² | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
| Number of care leaver entrants ¹ | 9 | 6 | 12 | 18 | 17 |

- 1 Source data concerning the enrolment of care leavers in 2015/16 are based on the university's performance as of 3rd December 2015, drawn from the university's student records system.
- 2 Source data are based on positive responses to the UCAS form's question "Have you ever been in care?"

Gender imbalances in relation to SDUE

The university welcomes the recent publication of the SFC's Gender Action Plan: interim report (Feb 2016). Instances of gender imbalance within the undergraduate course portfolio have been identified. A significant number of undergraduate courses have a gender imbalance, i.e. are made up of 75% or more of one gender. For example, the engineering subject area is dominated by males, while the nursing and midwifery subject areas are dominated by females. As an immediate response, the university's work in wider access will now include consideration of gender imbalances via outreach and support programmes, for example the new S5/S6 Access To programme in engineering was launched in September 2015 and has included a focus on the under-representation of females in this subject area.

Importantly, the university is delighted to have received funding from the SFC to consider future ways to work with the Councils and the College to address gender imbalances.

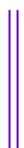
The 'Tackling Gender Imbalances' project is a partnership between RGU, North East Scotland College, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and local schools, to investigate the reasons behind gender imbalances in courses at university and college and to agree appropriate action to actively address gender disparities in the region and beyond.

The project seeks to engage pupils through their broad general education to senior phase study and subsequent entry to college/university education, encouraging greater gender balance in the identified subject areas.

The project targets S2-3 pupils prior to subject choice, challenging gender stereotypes and encouraging young people of both genders to explore college and university courses that would not traditionally be considered. In particular the project will focus on the most affected subject areas – Engineering and Computing & Digital Media courses (large overrepresentations of male students), and Social Work and Health Professions (overrepresentation of female students).

The key elements of the project are:

- establishing the partnership in the North East region to tackle the issue of gender imbalances at subject level within RGU and the North East Scotland College
- initial research to identify and articulate the challenges around gender segregation in the most affected subject areas
- developing projects to respond to the challenges identified, with a focus on early engagement in schools and pathway provision to encourage and support diverse participation across gender in higher education



- providing support mechanisms for current students enrolled on male/female dominated programmes

The project concludes in July 2016. Its recommendations will inform developments within the university to continue to tackle gender imbalances and will be available to the Scottish sector to inform their approaches to this area of strategic importance. In addition, the outcome will inform the Equality Challenge Unit's three year 'Attracting student diversity' project.

NPM 5: Success rates amongst protected characteristic groups

The retention data for SDUE published by the SFC includes the success rates for protected characteristic groups, as follows (most recent data available is for 2013/14), along with the Scottish sector average:

| Protected characteristic group | Retention of SDUE 2013/14 | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| | RGU | Scottish sector average |
| MD20/40 | 91.6% | 87.8% |
| Gender: | | |
| Male | 92.4% | 90.1% |
| Female | 94.3% | 92.2% |
| Age: | | |
| Under 21 | 94.4% | 92.7% |
| 21 and over | 89.7% | 87.2% |
| Disability | 92.5% | 89.6% |

Source: SFC March 2015

These data demonstrate that the university performs very well in relation to retention across the board in comparison to the Scottish sector average. There are PCGs that have a retention rate above the RGU total SDUE of 93.5%. Specific work has been undertaken to address the lower retention rate of MD20/40 students. The variation in the retention rate by gender has been fed into the work relating to gender imbalances and the support being offered to students whose gender places them in a minority.

There are no data available to track the retention rate of care experienced students.

Further detail relating to performance against this measure is provided in the following section.

Equalities Outcomes

The university has developed six equality outcomes which are based upon the outcomes already included within our strategy. Annually in April the university develops a report which provides an account of actions and activities the university has undertaken to support the achievement of these outcomes. As the outcomes are aligned to the university's strategy they are measured through performance indicators which reflect our national performance indicators and other measures used by the Scottish Funding Council. The university's equality and diversity advisory group consists of student and staff equality champions for each of the protected characteristics and has a role in developing policy and practice and monitoring its implementation.



Aim 2: Learner journeys are as short, efficient and effective as possible and learners experience the highest quality of learning and teaching and achieve successful outcomes

Introduction

The university's strategy provides a commitment to:

- challenge the design of our teaching, learning and assessment to enable best use of learners' abilities and time.

The university endeavours to ensure that its provision is as efficient as possible through a variety of means:

- supporting and facilitating articulation of students from college directly into university courses (see Aim 1 above)
- designing course content with PSRB where appropriate to ensure that the course content allows students the most efficient route to professional body membership
- offering, where possible given professional body accreditation requirements accelerated degree courses, e.g. the integrated Masters courses in both Engineering, Architecture and Pharmacy
- mechanisms to accredit prior experiential learning and qualifications from outside the UK, and
- a range of continuing professional development and bespoke courses

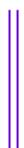
In the last Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR), which was undertaken in 2012, the university received confidence in the current and likely future management of academic standards and quality of the student learning experience. The university's annual monitoring of quality involves detailed analysis of learner feedback and performance.

NPM 6: Retention of students: the number and proportion of full-time, first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants returning to study in year two

The university participates in the SFC funded 'Back on Course' retention programme and has adapted its management information reporting to meet the needs of this programme.

The university monitors achievement rates of students returning to study through the annual course appraisal process and at the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, a standing committee of Academic Council. The university has a record of high of retention rates, and in the last published data the university's retention rate was higher than both the Scottish sector average and the HESA benchmark for the university. The Board of Governors has approved a change of its KPI in this area to match the national measure.

The target set for the university is to meet or exceed its benchmark. The university accepts that with an increase in the entry grades of students this benchmark figure is likely to increase in the near future and the university will aim to increase retention rates for Scottish-domiciled undergraduates to 92% over the period of the Outcome Agreement.



The university recognises that the retention of MD40 learners is lower than the average for SDUE. Additional support has, therefore, been introduced for this group. Management information – reviewed through the annual course appraisal process – has also been updated to allow specific consideration of the achievement of this group at School/Department and institutional level.

The university monitors a wide range of information relating to the quality of the student learning experience. This are monitored through the Annual Appraisal Process, which operates successively at the levels of the course, the School/Department, the Faculty and, finally, the university as a whole.

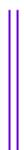
At each level, the process identifies areas of strength and weakness and develops actions to address any shortcomings. The outcome of the process forms the basis of an annual report that the Board of Governors receive in December, which assures them of the steps being taken to enhance the student learning experience.

The university also uses a student achievement rate (SAR) to monitor year on year progress, repeats and withdrawals.

In addition, the university has a formal system of Institution Led Reviews, which covers all academic disciplines on a cyclical basis. The outcome of these reviews is reported by the Board to the SFC annually, as part of the Quality Enhancement Report.

The university's engagement in the Enhancement Theme on student transition has included a focus on early leavers, with specific emphasis on identifying at risk groups and providing these with targeted support. This work has resulted in new support being made available during the first 10 weeks of the academic year, which will tackle early withdrawal in particular.

The previous section of the Outcome Agreement (Aim 1) referred to the retention of students from particular backgrounds. The university monitors a range of equalities and diversity data annually at an institutional level through the Equalities and Diversity Advisory Group. The student profile is monitored through the characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation. In addition student achievement (measured through the university's Student Achievement Rate), student satisfaction and employment destinations are monitored through the characteristics of age, disability, gender and race. These data are compared where relevant and appropriate with local census data and ECU comparative data. At a School/Department level, equality data is made available and through the annual appraisal process. Schools are invited to comment on any matters that they identify locally. Both the course-based appraisal and the institutional-level analysis are considered by the university's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.



NPM 6: Retention of students

Performance 2011/12 – 2013/14 and targets 2014/15 – 2016/17

| First year SDUE returning in year two | Academic session | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Performance | | | Targets | | |
| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| Number returned | 1716 | 1770 | 1837 | 1773 | 1773 | 1773 |
| Number in previous year | 1874 | 1927 | 1964 | 1927 | 1927 | 1927 |
| Proportion | 91.6% | 91.9% | 93.5% | 92% | 92% | 92% |

Data for 2011/12 – 2013/14 are sourced from the SFC. These are calculated from HESA student returns using the number returned into the following year from those who started their course in August of the previous year (note – these numbers include students who enter with advanced standing who enter in year 3 and will return into year 4). The university's proxy for this calculation will always be marginally lower than the SFC's total because the SFC can track students who leave RGU and take up study in another institution. Data for 2014/15 will be released by the SFC in Spring 2016.

NPM 7: Student satisfaction – the difference from the individual institution's UK benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study

The monitoring and enhancement of the quality of the student experience is embedded within the university's quality assurance system. The university's quality assurance systems ensure a system of monitoring based upon the individual course which involves analysing the results of the National Student Survey (NSS), the university's internal Student Experience Questionnaire and participation in various other national surveys (for example, the International Student Barometer).

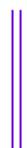
The university's performance over the last 4 years in the overall satisfaction question within the NSS has been consistently high and has exceeded both its NSS benchmark and the Scottish average.

Given the importance of the student experience to the university's strategy, the Board of Governors has included the NSS overall satisfaction rating as one of the university's KPIs. The target set for the university to achieve is at least 90% by the 2018/19 academic session.

It was anticipated that the disruption of the co-location of all academic subjects on the Garthdee campus might have led to a decrease in satisfaction in 2013/14. This did not occur and so the targets for future years were increased for 2014/15 onwards.

The outcome of the NSS 2015 (covering the year 2014/15) was published in August 2015. The university's benchmark has risen from 84% to 85%. In addition, the publication threshold was lowered from 23 respondents to 10.

The overall outcome of the NSS 2015 was 86%, a drop of 1% in comparison to NSS 2014. The university remains above its benchmark of 85%.



The overall satisfaction rate for full time students remained at 87%, but the rate for part-time students fell 6% from 81% in 2014 to 75% in 2015. Analysis shows that this fall related to one course, which has since been ceased. Based on 'All' respondents RGU is now ranked 7th amongst Scottish institutions, however, when results are disaggregated by mode of study; RGU remains joint 5th for full-time respondents.

It should be noted that from 2013 to 2014 Overall Satisfaction remained static for nearly half of the Scottish institutions, however in 2015 all but one have fluctuated (The majority by +/- 1-2%). It is likely that this is due to the lowered response threshold for publication.

Detailed analysis of the results have shown that one third of the respondents were from the five worst performing subject areas and a targeted range of enhancement activities will be focussed on these courses.

In the light of the rise in the university's benchmark to 85% and the reduction in the publication threshold from 23 respondents to 10, the targets for 2015/16 and 2016/17 have been revised downwards, although the university remains committed to meeting its target of at least 90% by 2018/19.

NPM 7: Student satisfaction

Performance 2011/12 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 and 2016/17

| Student Satisfaction | Academic session | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------|-------|------------|---------------------------|-------|
| | Performance against benchmark | | | | Targets against benchmark | |
| | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 |
| | 84% | 84% | 84% | 85% | TBC | TBC |
| The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey | +3% | +3% | +3% | +1% | +2% | +3% |
| Satisfaction score | 87% | 87% | 87% | 86% | 87% | 88% |

Source: NSS question 22 (released in August of the year following the survey i.e. 2015/16 survey outcome will be released in August 2016)

AIM 3: RIGHT LEARNING IN THE RIGHT PLACE**Secure coherent provision of higher education in Scotland in line with the SFC's statutory obligation****Introduction**

The university's strategy contains specific objectives to:

- develop students' capabilities to thrive in an increasingly multi-disciplinary and fast changing world of work
- lead thinking in the development of professional practice and emerging professions and roles; and
- engage with employers and professions to develop workforce skills and capabilities to meet the needs of the economy and society

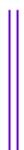
Responding to current and future skills requirements

The university is committed to providing the appropriate portfolio of courses for the region and to ensuring the currency and validity of those courses, the achievement of this is evidenced through, for example:

- high demand of the university's courses both by school-leavers and those articulating from college courses (see Aim 1)
- accreditation of such courses through professional and statutory bodies
- close involvement of industry representatives in developing new courses and shaping current course changes
- involvement of visiting lecturers from relevant sectors in the teaching of courses
- active policy of recruiting academic staff from industry to ensure course relevance
- extensive range and depth of staff networks within their sector/s
- incorporation of work related experiences within the majority of the university's courses, which will be developed further through the funding the university has received for the *Talent Exchange* project (see Aim 4)
- cognisance of the Skills Investment Plans produced by Skills Development Scotland
- working actively with SDS and NESCOL to develop an integrated apprenticeship framework (see Aim 4)
- the model used for the Access to Law programme, which was designed and is provided jointly with Ledingham Chalmers

A significant feature of the university's course portfolio is the high demand for the university's graduates by employers. This is due to a number of features of the university's provision, including the:

- close engagement with employers in the design and approval of all courses;
- high priority given to the provision of work-related experiences (including formal placements)
- involvement of industry practitioners, including professional bodies, in course delivery and assessment
- provision of state-of-the-art teaching and training facilities
- development of key transferable skills through the teaching and assessment practices involved in course delivery, and
- provision of effective careers education and support



Skills Investment Plans

The university welcomes the initiative taken by SDS and various industry sectors to produce the Skills Investment Plans (SIPs). Many of these relate directly to subject areas within the university's course portfolio. Each SIP is considered by the Academic Development Committee and then feeds into the course appraisal and curriculum development processes within the relevant School or Department. The SIPs have proved to provide a very helpful strategic supplement to the input that the university has on all courses from industry and, where applicable, professional bodies.

In addition to this, the SIPs have been a very useful resource in relation to the development of the approach to individual businesses to promote Talent Exchange and to secure additional work related experiences.

The university recognises the recurrent commitment through the SIPs (particularly in those for sectors that require STEM skills) to the increased recruitment and retention of female staff. This meshes with the university's commitment to address gender imbalances in the student population.

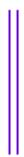
Plans to respond to the strategic aims set out in '*Setting the Direction for Nursing and Midwifery Education in Scotland*'

The School of Nursing and Midwifery is cognisant of the six strategic aims contained within '*Setting the Direction for Nursing and Midwifery Education in Scotland*' and the associated delivery plan developed over 2014/15. School staff are committed fully to all the work streams in areas such as values, research, practice learning, pre-registration nursing and midwifery as well as postgraduate provision and CPD. It has led on a collaborative agreement with Abertay University to develop collaborative research and education programmes in partnership with NHS Boards. The school is actively involved in discussions with UHI on opportunities for collaboration in the delivery of education and research in relation to remote and rural healthcare. The school works closely with all of its NHS partners to ensure programmes are fit for purpose and that they address the core NHS Scotland values both in selection of students and within the education programmes. It also works closely with those partners in supporting and developing clinical academic careers through CPD. Senior staff from the school are involved in a number of workstreams that have emerged from the Setting the Direction Delivery Plan in areas such as Health Visiting and School Nursing which is linked to the strategic aim of developing a sustainable national approach to postgraduate education. The school has a major commitment to review its practice learning support which fits with the strategic aim to enhance the quality of the practice learning experience for all students. The pre-registration nursing programme was revalidation in 2015 addressing the relevant key aims of Setting the Direction in the process.

National Gaelic Language Plan and modern language provision

The university is currently not required to produce a Gaelic language plan but acknowledges its role in supporting current Gaelic speakers. The university has enhanced the 'My Career Toolkit' tool (see Aim 4) to provide a link to the BBC's modern language learning materials. This resource provides tuition in 40 modern languages, including Gaelic, for learners at all levels and is an important resource for encouraging language learning and development.

Doric is the dialect of Scots spoken in the North East and it underpins the culture of the region. The university has recognised this in several ways, for example:



- Staff participated in the university's Doric Dictionary project in 2014. The project created Doric Voices – an audio collection of favourite words and phrases (with translations), all of which are spoken by RGU staff. Volunteers hailed from a range of locations in the North East, including Fraserburgh, New Pitsligo, Inch and Aberdeen city. A printed Doric Dictionary 'Fit Like' was published and was handed to visitors to Offshore Europe 2014. Copies were sold to raise money for the National Literacy Trust (raising around £2,000). Extracts add colour and local character to the university's undergraduate prospectus and the local branch of Waterstones is selling the dictionary this Christmas, with all proceeds going to the National Literacy Trust.
- The Open House project, led by Natalie Kerr, Cultural Animator-in-Residence, held an event in December 2014 to celebrate the Doric dialect, *Nae Futrets Here*, held in partnership with Fitlike Records. The purpose of the event was to highlight the fact that Doric is alive and well in the region and regarded with great affection.
- Professor Peter Reid delivered his professorial lecture in Doric in May 2015 on the distinctive culture of the North East of Scotland, touching upon the contribution of Doric to that culture.

Major changes to provision

There are no current plans to make any major changes to the course portfolio, although the outcome of the public spending review regarding the funding available for publicly funded courses may inevitably result in changes to the portfolio.

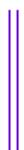
Additional funded numbers for undergraduate and postgraduate skills

It is noted that 2015/16 is the final year of the additional funded places for undergraduate skills (Engineering). The additional funded places for taught postgraduate courses are due to come to an end and 2016/17 will be the last year of entry for these places. These places have been filled consistently throughout the funding period and that the university has allowed the taught postgraduate places to be open to part-time applicants in order that they can be accessed by people in work or with other commitments. The continuation of the funding for courses linked with identified regional skills shortages would be welcomed.

NPM 8: STEM courses – the number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants to STEM courses

The university has a wide range of STEM courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Alongside engineering, architecture and computing and digital media subjects, it provides a full range of health and social care pre- and post-registration courses. These graduates are in high demand from employers. The definition of STEM courses used by the SFC is much more restricted than is usual. For example, the list does not include architecture, pharmacy, life sciences or nursing. When all of the university's STEM provision is taken into account the proportion of SDUE on STEM courses in 2015/16 is 49.9%, compared with the 19.5% entering the SFC's definition of courses. A review of the definition would be welcomed.

Given the fact that the university's portfolio is in strong demand, the university has no strategic plans to significantly alter the balance of its current provision, although recent guidance indicates that the number of nursing places might increase. The university therefore sees the number of entrants to STEM subjects remaining broadly stable over the period of the Outcome Agreement.



NPM 8 – STEM courses

Performance 2009/10 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 to 2016/17 (FT and PT headcount) *NB. the SFC uses a narrow definition of STEM subjects*

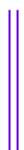
| | Academic session | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| | Performance | | | | | | | Target |
| | 09/10 ¹ | 10/11 ¹ | 11/12 ¹ | 12/13 ¹ | 13/14 ¹ | 14/15 ¹ | 15/16 ² | 16/17 |
| Number of SDUE on STEM courses | 427 | 421 | 414 | 506 | 526 | 418 | 432 | 456 |
| Total SDUE | 2390 | 2110 | 2197 | 2342 | 2,337 | 2255 | 2214 | 2245 |
| Proportion | 17.9% | 20% | 18.8% | 21.6% | 22.5% | 18.5% | 19.5% | 20.3% |

1. The source of these data for the years 2011/12 – 2014/15 is the HESA student record.
2. The source of these data for 2015/16 is the university's student records system as at 3rd December 2015. There will be a marginal increase due to Semester 2 intake, minus student withdrawals.

The university did not meet its target for SDUE to STEM courses in 2014/15 as per the SFC definition. Analysis has shown that there are two main reasons for this:

- Engineering courses – there has been a planned reduction in the number of entrants to these courses from 2014/15 due to over-recruitment in previous years. The targets for the STEM measure should have been reduced as a consequence of this strategy. SFC funded student number targets for engineering were met in 2014/15.
- Pharmacy and Life Sciences – analysis showed that 2014/15 saw uncharacteristically low recruitment into one course. Remedial action has been taken and the number of enrolled students has risen in 2015/16.

Equally, it should be noted that many of the university's non-STEM graduates start employment within industries that have a strong STEM element, for example the oil and gas industry. In 2013/14 (the most recent data available), 27% of graduates from the business and administrative category gained employment in the oil and gas sector, along with 19% of those from architecture, building and planning and 28% from law.



AIM 4: A DEVELOPED WORKFORCE

Learners who have the skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial spirit to get a job and progress their career; and institutions that respond to the skills needs of the economy locally and nationally

Introduction

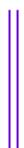
The university's strategy contains specific objectives to:

- develop students' capabilities to thrive in an increasingly multi-disciplinary and fast changing world of work
- motivate students to see themselves as contributors to changing global societies both while students and alumni
- help students to become well-rounded individuals capable of contributing to society, and
- enable students to enrich their personal and professional development through the provision of extensive extra- and co-curricular opportunities

One of the key strengths of the university over the past decade is its enviable record for graduate employability. This has been a significant factor in the increasing recognition and status of the university, both nationally and internationally. As a direct consequence, there has been an increased demand from candidates seeking to study at the university and from employers targeting the university to recruit students.

The university recognises, however, that maintaining this record requires significant ongoing strategic vision and operational activity. The university's vision for employability as expressed in 'Employability Plus' is 'for its graduates to be recognised as the most fit-for-work, innovative, creative and engaged participants in the labour force and the economy and for the university to be recognised for its close engagement with employers'. It aims to achieve this through a range of actions, including:

- maintaining the features of its curriculum which have contributed to a high employability ranking (as specified in the previous section)
- implementing and delivering the SFC-funded Talent Exchange project to deliver a greater number of work related experiences for students within regional SMEs and third sector organisations
- expanding formal and optional study abroad opportunities
- provision for all students, at the early stage of their courses, with the opportunity to assess their personal values, attributes and motivators, through the provision of a tailored online programme called 'My Career Toolkit' – this online programme went live to all students at the beginning of 2014/15 and is updated and enhanced regularly. Of particular value is the support from employers, which has allowed the information about employment practices and the practical exercises to prepare for these to be validated and has also allowed the university to increase the number of employer case studies within the tool. The Toolkit also provides students with access to free modern language courses, including Gaelic. During 2015/16 the use of the Toolkit will be promoted to course leaders so that it can be used as an integral part of teaching and learning
- continuing to facilitate students to engage in enterprise, leadership, volunteering, cultural and/or sporting engagements and to reflect on and record the associated personal development through an 'employability passport/profile', and
- continuing to expand the range and provision of careers education and support to include international employment opportunities



Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (DYSF)

The university has considered the outcomes of the Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce in conjunction with North East Scotland College.

Arising from this, the university has led work in the North East focussed on the development of a graduate apprenticeship in engineering. Funded by SDS as a national pathfinder project, this work is providing an important opportunity for the university to shape the development of graduate apprenticeships whilst in turn supporting better skill acquisition across the region. A key element of the project has been partnership working with the other national pathfinder projects to maximise impact and learning across Scotland.

Building on this, the university is working with the College and SDS to set up an integrated apprenticeship framework. The model offered by the two institutions was based on an approach where the apprentice would be largely engaged in work based learning activity so would spend the lesser proportion of their time in traditional class based delivery. SDS has been very supportive of this approach, where NESCol would deliver the foundation element in the senior phase and RGU would deliver the graduate apprenticeship element. SDS has recently provided funding to facilitate a pilot in the subject area of Computing.

Entrepreneurship and innovation

Alongside continuous enhancement of work relating to entrepreneurship, the university has taken positive steps to enhance its role in encouraging and facilitating innovation within the region. Aberdeen has the largest number of business start ups outside London and Cambridge and the university is playing its part in supporting students, staff and alumni to achieve their business ambitions.

The university's digital incubator was launched in April 2015 as a part of Aberdeen City Council's Accelerate Aberdeen programme, alongside the hubs run by the University of Aberdeen (ABVenture Zone) and Elevator (previously ENET), using £1.5m of funding from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Super Connected Cities programme. The university provides tenants with access to physical space equipped with cutting edge digital technology and a network of mentors. A growing list of tenants, a mix of established SMEs and pre-incorporation student ventures, are using the incubator to develop business ventures in areas such as the optimisation of the scheduling of offshore supply vessels, development of apps, and the development of a VoIP technology venture. The incubator also has a central role in university teaching and forms an integral part of a module on Entrepreneurialism in the Digital economy with a view to supporting the university's graduate employability metrics and building industry links.

Make, the digital fabrication hub, was established by Aberdeen City Council at the request of the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport to deliver such a centre within the City. The MAKE Digital fabrication Hub is an open access centre that offers high-end, digital manufacturing processes and expertise. The model supports hi-tech SMEs in advanced manufacturing, digital production, software and hardware development and designer/makers.



The university won the contract to run the hub and it aligns very well to other funded initiatives aimed at supporting the development of a wider eco-system in the area. It also links directly to the enhancement of the university's outreach programme with schools that underpins our commitment to achieve the Outcome Agreement targets related to widening participation. The hub also provides exciting opportunities for staff to engage in wider scholarship and public engagement associated with their work.

The North East Articulation Hub has brought staff from both institutions together to share experiences of approaches and activities which support the development of students' entrepreneurship skills. A number of specific actions have been agreed to augment existing, separate activity.

Placements and work-related experiences

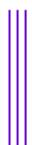
The university prides itself on the high number of formal placements that exist within its Faculties – 90% of undergraduate courses include at least one formal placement. The placements provide students with a means of gaining real-life work experience and contacts, which they contribute their learning to a relevant public sector organisation, business or third sector organisation. They vary in duration and many courses have more than one placement. The majority of courses within the Faculty of Health and Social Care have a statutory requirement for placements with health or social care providers. In addition to the placements, the university is active in increasing students' exposure to work related experiences and the SFC funded project Talent Exchange (see below), has been invaluable for developing this route with SMEs.

Given that the university starts from a high base in the provision of placements, any increase to these opportunities is likely to be marginal. In fact, the current downturn in the oil and gas industry has had a negative impact on a wide variety of regional businesses and the number of placements available is reducing. Alongside this, the university recognises that the formal placement model can be intimidating to business, particularly to small and micro enterprises. This is the reason that the Employability Plus strategic statement includes the Talent Exchange project (funded by the SFC),

Talent Exchange

The Talent Exchange project is now firmly in its implementation stage and continues to link SMEs with the skills and knowledge of students for mutual benefit. Talent Exchange promotes opportunities for work related experiences, rather than formal placements, although it has been successful in generating a number of placements, enhancing the university's track record for the provision of formal placements. The Steering Group includes representation from the university's project partners; Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce; Federation of Small Businesses; and the Scottish Council for Development and Industry. The project is working towards the target of providing 500 additional work related experiences by the end of December 2016.

As at December 2015 the project had generated 322 work related experience opportunities and had engaged with 223 individual local small to medium sized enterprises from a wide range of sectors including cultural and creative, food and drink and hospitality, leisure and tourism and the third sector. Of these, 76% were new to working with the university 125 student work related experiences were delivered in 2014/15 and 175 are either completed or are underway in Semester 1 of 2015/16.



This is a significant achievement, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the economic downturn in the oil and gas industry and its far reaching effects on the regional economy.

The feedback from businesses has been very positive and case studies from businesses and the students who worked with them are available at <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/talent-exchange/case-studies>.

The university continues to drive forward its commitment to ensuring that all courses contain work related experience opportunities and Aberdeen Business School has worked closely with Talent Exchange this year to pilot the 'Connect to Business' initiative. This operates across the undergraduate management courses and offers an employer engagement route to all students in their third year. All participants are matched with a business for a specific piece of work (identified through Talent Exchange) in Semester 1 and then a second with a different perspective in Semester 2. The feedback from the students and businesses involved has been very positive. A formal evaluation of this model will be undertaken and the Business School aims to roll this out to other subject areas, particularly those that traditionally find it hard to secure formal placements for students.

Internationalisation of the student experience through study abroad opportunities

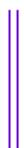
As noted above, the university is committed to extending the number of opportunities available to students to study abroad. The current level of opportunities that have been taken up reached 212 in 2015/16, including Erasmus (study and work) and international exchanges. A promotional campaign has been undertaken to raise the profile of these opportunities. Furthermore, the Erasmus Administrator has given talks on the benefits of international mobility in local secondary schools. The School of Computing Science and Digital Media has recently made it possible for their students to study abroad in Stage 3, and discussions are ongoing with the School of Engineering to develop relevant partnerships and overcome barriers with the professional bodies.

NPM 9: Student employability

Given the strategic and reputational importance of graduate employability to the university, the university uses the HESA performance indicator of the percentage of all full-time, first degree UK domiciled students in full-time employment or further study six months after graduation as its KPI. The target that has been set is that by 2018/19 the university will maintain its current high performance in both the Scottish and UK rankings of universities as reported on heidi. The university stands at top of the Scottish and UK institutions (excluding private and some specialist institutions within the UK). It is estimated that this equates to a figure of at least 97% over the period of the Outcome Agreement.

The published results of the 2013/14 DLHE return confirmed that 97.2% of RGU graduates in 2013/14 are in employment and/or further study. This figure represents a small downward fluctuation of 0.5% from the 2012/13 figure of 97.7%, which equates to 6 more individuals being out of further study or work.

The university has retained its position of being top in Scotland for this measure and it also continues to be the top performing non-specialist publicly funded institution in the UK.



It is recognised that the change in the regional economy and the long term challenges that face the oil and gas sector in the UK Continental Shelf may result in significant challenges for graduates from many courses to achieve employment, since the local oil and gas sector has been a major source of employment for our graduates (see Aim 3, NPM 9 above).

Early warning mechanisms used during 2014/15 such as cancelled placements and reported job losses within the oil and gas sector indicated that the availability of local employment in that sector is already reducing. This is reflected in the inclusion of Employability in the High Level Risk Register for 2015/16 and may mean that future targets are ambitious, though no changes will be made until the outcome of DLHE for academic year 2014/15 is known (August 2016).

NPM 9: Student employability

Performance 2011/12 – 2013/14 and targets 2014/15 – 2017/18

| | Academic session | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Performance | | | Targets | | | |
| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
| HESA Employability PI | 97.1% | 97.7% | 97.2% | 97% | 97% | 97% | 97% |
| Position in Scotland | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Position in UK | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Source: *heidi (Destination of Leavers in Higher Education survey 2013/14)*

The proportion of graduates entering non-professional ('non-graduate') occupations

Positively, the university's employability rate for graduates entering graduate level jobs (i.e. the percentage of all full-time, first degree UK domiciled students in full-time graduate-level employment or study at an HE or professional level six months after graduation), as used in league tables such as The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2016 (published in September 2015), has risen from 80.5% in 2012/13 to 83.1%. This is the highest figure for all universities in Scotland.



Aim 5: A research base that is internationally competitive and improving its reputation and standing in the world

Introduction

The university's strategy aim is to be recognised for our contribution to the growth of innovation through advancing internationally excellent translational research in our areas of strategic focus.

NPM 10: Submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

In building for the next REF, the university is investing in priority areas, including Oil and Gas, Smart Data and Health & Wellbeing, all of which feature within the recently announced Aberdeen City Region Deal, in which the university plays a major role along with the University of Aberdeen and other key stakeholders. The demand-led topics that feature as part of the Deal support the continuation of the university's focus on innovation and impactful research to generate economic, health and wider societal benefits. Current examples of this include the involvement of the Centre for Northern Culture and Design through its contribution of the wealth of expertise and research capability (for example, using 3D visualisation models to develop design proposals for the Oban transport hub). The university has also renewed its investment as part of the SFC/AHRC funded Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities and given support to the Scottish Graduate School for the Social Sciences Doctoral Training Partnership bid.

NPM 11: Number of research students

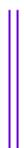
A key part of the university's enhancement of research quality has focused on increasing the university's PhD completion rates. This will remain a priority area. Alongside this, the university is moving combine the three separate graduate schools with the aim of enhancing the postgraduate research student experience, with the aim of completing this reorganisation in time for October 2016 entry.

NPM 11 – Number of research students

Performance 2011/12 to 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 – 2016/17

| | Academic session | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------|---------|
| | Performance | | | | Target | |
| | 2011/12 ¹ | 2012/13 ¹ | 2013/14 ¹ | 2014/15 ² | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| Research students (FTE) | 161 | 189 | 182 | 182.2 | 180 | 200 |

1. Source of these data is the HESA Student/HE Students/Full-time equivalent/Level of Study (6 detailed)/Higher degree (research) table from heidi. Data for 2013/14 was published on heidi in April 2015.
2. Source of these data for 2014/15 is the university's HESA check documentation (Item 14 - cost centre breakdown by level and fundcode)



NPM 12: Research income – research councils, charities and EU

As indicated above, the university's strategy is to develop research links with industry in targeted areas. As part of this, work continues to increase research income from Research Councils, Innovate UK, the major research charities and the European Commission.

New opportunity alerts will be put in place and targeted to specific researchers. Systematic internal peer-review processes will be introduced for all grant applications. The same rigorous processes will be applied to manuscripts intended for publication. Grant-writing workshops will be available to all postgraduate students and early career researchers. By the beginning of 2017 all researchers at RGU, including postgraduate students, will have been registered with an Open Research and Contributor ID (ORCID). The aim of these developments is to increase the quality of research, which in turn will lead to greater opportunities to secure research income.

Early successes in securing Horizon 2020 income (for example involvement in the selfBACK project, award value: £394,784) will be reinforced with a refined approach to identifying opportunities and selecting internal teams and external partners to submit bids to secure funding.

NPM 12: Research income – European Commission

Performance 2011/12 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 – 2016/17

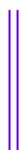
| Sources of research income | Academic session | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Performance | | | | Target | |
| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| European Commission | £296k | £187k | £292 | £238k | £350k | £500k |

Performance data are drawn from internal monitoring.

The university's translational research ambitions are more likely to be driven by industry sponsored research rather than speculative generation of IP. For this reason, whilst licensing or spinout company activity is not precluded, it will not feature in the step change targets. The university will seek to grow the number of knowledge transfer programmes in collaboration with key SME partners. A wider focus on KTPs and on Innovation Vouchers (see targets related to Aim 6, below) is seen as a significant area of growth. This will enhance the university's position as one of Scotland's most successful institutions in securing funding in this key collaborative translational research programme.

The REF 2014 EDAP report

Following the publication of the equality and diversity report arising from the REF 2014 process, the university is developing actions associated with a number of the recommendations. Submissions were made to two Units of Assessment in Main Panel B UoA 11, Computer Science and Informatics with 18.75FTE (10% of the staff submitted individual circumstances) and UoA 15 General Engineering, with 14FTE (40% of these submitted individual circumstances). These are comparable to submissions to the other Panels. An examination of the adjustments that can be made for individuals to enable an appropriate work-life balance is being undertaken; along with an assessment of the areas where there may be inequalities in the submission between those submitted and



the characteristics of university staff. The EDAP report indicates that Main Panel B showed lower rates of circumstances relating to part time working or maternity leave. Internal data show there was an imbalance in the gender of staff in our School of Computing who were eligible for submission to REF2014 and this may in part explain our low percentage of circumstances submitted to UoA 11.



Aim 6: University-Industry Collaboration

Deliver a step change in the engagement of business and industry with universities, removing any barriers to the exploitation of research for economic and wider societal benefit

Introduction

The university's alignment with industry will be realised through two distinct strands of activity:

- the commitment to graduate employability and student experience, focusing on collaboration in course design and delivery as well as student projects and placements. There will be a strong focus of engagement with SMEs in this strand which will be taken forward through KTP projects and Talent Exchange, and
- through the Commercialisation Strategy, which the university has defined as 'harnessing all our intellectual and physical assets so that they generate value for the economy and are profitable to the university'.

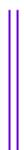
The university is on a journey towards realising intent of the aim and recognises the scale of challenge and change required to contribute to the step-change anticipated by the Cabinet Secretary and Funding Council. The university's strategic priorities indicate the areas aligned to the needs of the region and its economy that the university will focus on. This has led to initiatives in Oil & Gas, Smart Data, Remote Healthcare and Culture & Design. The university's engagement with Innovation Centres reflects these priorities, as a partner in a number of innovation centres including Innovation Centre for Sensor and Imaging Systems, the Oil & Gas Innovation Centre, Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and SICSA and it hosts the Aberdeen hub for the Data Lab. The university engages actively with all of the Innovation Centres where their calls align with our research expertise.

Engaging in sustained dialogue with Scotland's priority economic sectors

RGU's research activities will focus on the delivery of industry –relevant research in several of Scotland's key economic sectors notably Oil & Gas, Smart Data, Health & Wellbeing and the Creative Industries. Our aim is to deliver on a national agenda by being a partner of choice in our region. In addition to our own internal reorganisation designed to better service industry demand e.g. the establishment of the Oil and Gas Technology Institute, we have worked with a variety of stakeholders in bidding for a 'City and Region Deal' which shares the same priority areas and has innovation as a key driver. RGU's sustained success in securing and delivering successful Knowledge Transfer Partnerships has allowed us to build mature relationships with a number of companies. These activities are coupled with success in delivering on employability developing graduates that are in high-demand across a number of industry sectors.

Harmonising and simplifying contract negotiations

RGU has already adopted the standard contracts and guidance for Scottish Funding Council's Innovation Vouchers Programme. We are contributing to the review of enhanced template contracts and guidance for other business/university interactions and will implement these arrangements for all SMEs. RGU has already adopted the 'Glasgow' model for Easy Access IP and will work with the Research and Commercialisation Directors to further simplify the contracting arrangements.



Simplifying business access to university knowledge

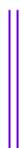
RGU is engaged with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to ensure that our own internal processes contribute to streamlining and enhancing business referrals to *Interface*. We will use this experience to contribute to the national ambitions. RGU is assisting with the development of an enhanced "FAQ" resource base to assist Scottish companies in their interactions with universities. RGU is working to provide staff within the national Enquiry Fulfilment and Research Service [EFRS] call centre a script that would help enhance the direct referrals to *Interface* or to academic institutions. RGU is operating a "post-project referral protocol" to ensure businesses are referred on seamlessly to the next appropriate part of the innovation support ecosystem (including Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise) following interventions such as Innovation Vouchers and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.

Raising awareness of the opportunities for business arising from university knowledge

The university is contributing to the development of the exemplar case studies based on successful REF 2014 impact submissions. RGU shares the view that the ut.com website has had limited success in the promotion and matching of technologies to individual Scottish businesses and that much more needs to be done to raise awareness of opportunities. We will offer support to *Interface* in their efforts to develop and promote a central website page on university facilities / assets that are available on a "commercial style" basis to help raise awareness of opportunities to businesses and business advisors. The above efforts are part of our overall strategy to ensure that wherever appropriate RGU's research is relevant to the demands of business and industry. As an example of the regular engagement with business and industry RGU hosted a highly successful 'Economic Summit'

Expanding company formation

RGU has had limited engagement with Converge Challenge but will be participating in the Converge Challenge Roadshow on 9th February in Aberdeen. The aim of this roadshow will be to inspire, inform and encourage staff, students and recent graduates of Scottish Universities and Research Institutes to develop their practical commercial skills enabling them to bring to market novel products and services, thus creating sustainable and profitable companies and helping Scotland grow as a CAN Do competitive economy. By raising awareness of the opportunity provided by Converge Challenge, RGU aims to secure greater participation and to contribute to the delivery of the 30% plus incorporation rate within Converge Challenge top 30 based on this increased outreach into staff and student populations. Any success secured by RGU should help with the goal of doubling the size of cohorts receiving bespoke training through Converge Challenge. The university is reviewing its own scope for increased and enhanced start-up and spin out activity and will contribute to the recommendations being brought forward by RCDG. We will adopt a standard approach to the interaction between universities and Scottish Enterprise / RSE Enterprise Fellows once this has been developed.



NPM 13: Performance against Knowledge Transfer Grant indicators
 Performance 2011/12 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 – 2016/17

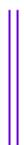
| Selected Knowledge Transfer metrics | Academic session | | | | | |
|---|------------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|-------|
| | Performance | | | | Targets | |
| | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 |
| Revenue from external research grants from industry, commerce and public corporations | £787k | £778k | £660k | £768k | £780k | £850k |
| Income in CPD from organisations | £2.2M | £2.2M | £2.27M | £1.98M | £2M | £2.2M |
| Income arising from the KTP programme | £392K | £564k | 617k | £693k | £550k | £550k |

It is noted that the KTG will be replaced by the Universities Innovation Fund in 2016/17. The university will address the specific guidance and any new measures relating to the Fund in its Outcome Agreement for 2017/18.

NPM 14: Participation in the Innovation Vouchers scheme
 Performance 2011/12 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 – 2016/17

| | Academic session | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Performance | | | | Targets | |
| | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 |
| Innovation vouchers awarded | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 7 |

The university is grateful to colleagues at Napier University, Edinburgh for sharing their experiences and processes relating to IVs. This has allowed the university to review its approach towards IVs and to increase its target in this area.



AIM 7: SUSTAINABLE INSTITUTIONS**Ensure high quality of governance and management for institutions delivering long-term and financially and environmentally sustainable interactions****Introduction**

The university currently meets all but one of the principles of good governance set out in the Scottish Code of HE Governance.

Through the approval of the university's strategy, associated strategic statements (which outline the university's ambitions around particular themes) as well as the development of a business plan linked to the financial forecast which provides details on how the university will implement the university's strategy the Board of Governors have clear ownership of institutional sustainability. The strategy of the university is measured through ten key performance indicators, against which an annual report of progress is compiled. As of December 2014, the Board will use five national performance measures within their suite of key performance indicators (student success, proportion of SDUE from MD20/40 backgrounds, student satisfaction retention of students and student destinations).

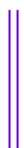
An update on progress against the major milestones and their associated actions within the business plan is considered by the Board at each of their meetings. The Board also receives information about progress against the university's operating plan, which contains detail on activities to achieve specific milestones.

A procedure that will allow RGU Estates to invest in energy and carbon reduction projects using funding provided by the Scottish and UK Governments has been approved by the senior management team. This funding is in the form of loans to be paid back from the savings generated through a reduction in energy consumption. The Estates department is driving forward this initiative and has identified two initial projects that have the potential to reduce RGU's carbon footprint by 266 tonnes every year.

The first project to receive funding and completed was an exercise in draught proofing single glazed style windows in a 1960's constructed building. The funding allowed the installation of a newly developed expanded foam solution which sealed the drafts in the windows without impacting on their operation. Expected savings of £7,971 and 44.3T carbon per annum are currently being verified. Due to a change in the Salix funding procedures, the main project identified (savings of 266 tonnes per annum) has not yet been implemented but is still under review

A number of campaigns which were implemented in 2014 as part of the university's ongoing commitment to carbon reduction/energy efficiency have been sustained as part of the university's ongoing commitment to carbon reduction/energy efficiency. Many of these have been developed jointly with the Students' Association. These have included:

- poster campaigns across the university and hosting an annual 'Green Fair' to promote sustainability and demonstrate what the university and local organisations are doing to help the environment. Exhibitors at the Green Fair included the Edinburgh Bicycle Co-operative, which came with a bike that used pedal power to make smoothies. There was also advice and information on hand



from RGU's sustainability team, the RGU:Union Climate Change Team (see below), Aberdeen City Council Waste team and Getabout. As a result of these initiatives and the student bike hire scheme, there has been significant increase in the number of staff and students cycling to and from the campus.

- The annual halls of residence energy challenge (monitors installed in all flats with the challenge to have the lowest energy usage during the year), promoted by RGU:Union as part of its Go Green initiative (see below). Comparative figures for 2013/14 vs 2014/15 show a reduction in electricity consumed with a saving of 41.4 tonnes carbon emissions.
- Staff and student transport initiatives (car share scheme with reduced permit charges and dedicated parking spaces in all car parks, reduced fares on public transport, bike to work, and cycling initiatives on site). To date, this initiative has resulted in a small reduction in the number of cars brought on site, but it is gaining traction and the aim is to grow membership.
- On-going energy reduction initiatives ("Turn it off" campaign, management of building temperature settings). Project savings resulting from this campaign in 2015/16 are estimated at £36,000 (180 tonnes CO₂).
- Development and implementation of a Recycling Policy in order to ensure that the furnishing and fittings from the recently divested buildings in the city centre are disposed of appropriately. This has included taking furniture apart to sort into wooden and metal components. During 2014/15 814 tonnes of waste material was generated and 86% of this was recycled, saving and estimated 775 tonnes of carbon emissions.
- A regular electronic publication for staff and students, 'The Green Times' to raise awareness of green events and methods of saving energy and acting sustainably

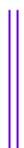
The Estates Department continues to work with the Student Union on their Energy Challenge and has committed resources in support of this. RGU: Union's Go Green initiative aims to provide students and staff with the opportunity to significantly reduce the environmental impact of the University whilst gaining valuable experience and qualifications. To achieve this goal, Go Green is running four projects:

- the Bike Hire Scheme will offer a low-carbon link between the city centre and campus. The Halls Energy Challenge will support and inspire students in reducing their domestic energy consumption
- the Community Allotment will facilitate local growing, engaging students and staff with the environment, and
- the Energy Ambassadors Scheme will train students to carry out energy audits for local groups, organisations and companies that will result in buildings becoming more energy efficient, whilst gaining valuable work experience and qualifications

In addition, the second phase of the new Riverside East building has been completed with an additional renewable energy resource (roof mounted Solar Voltaic panels) to supplement the initial Ground Source Heat pump system. The combined impact of both systems provides 15% of the building's energy.

Sustainability Advisory Group

This group advises the university on sustainable practice. Some members deal with sustainability as part of their role in a service department in the University, and some have an academic interest in sustainability. Membership includes the Student Association, the Estates Department and academic representation. The four main areas of interest are:



- Energy - led by RGU Maintenance Contracts and Energy Manager
- Green Travel - led by RGU Transport Manager
- Waste Management - led by the University Records Manager & Information Compliance Officer
- Climate Change - led by the Student Association

The following initiatives are in progress for the current academic session:

- Reduction in operational temperatures of University buildings by 1% to 20-21 centigrade which is expected to save £36,250 and 180 tonnes of carbon emissions
- Reduce operational times of car park lighting – expected saving £14,000 and 70 tonnes of carbon emissions
- Development of a feasibility study to install a Combined Heat and Power facility with estimated savings of £300k and 1100 tonnes of carbon emissions per annum
- Waste management – improve recycling awareness and levels including feasibility of a food recycling program on campus (savings under development)
- Climate Change (Student Association) – continued progress in the awareness of the impacts of energy use, waste, recycling on the environment along with the ongoing projects in relation to the Community Allotment and the energy ambassador scheme

The university is not involved in any of the 3 HE Carbon Reduction Programmes.

NPM 15: Sustainable institutions - carbon footprint

NPM 15: Sustainable institutions – carbon footprint

Performance 2011/12 – 2013/14 and targets 2014/15 – 2017/18

| | 3 year period ending | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Performance | | | Targets | | |
| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| Gross carbon footprint – tonnes (3 year period) | 8862t | 9249t | 10792t | 9235t | 8988t | 8538t |

Source: Annual HESA Estates Management Record (EMR) return. The actual figure for 2014/15 will be reported via the EMR in March 2016.

NPM 16: Sustainable institutions – annual capital and maintenance spend

NPM 16: Sustainable institutions – annual capital and maintenance spend

Performance 2011/12 – 2014/15 and targets 2015/16 – 2016/17

| | Academic session | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Performance | | | | Targets | |
| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| Annual capital and maintenance spend on estates as a proportion of value of estate | - | 12% | 5.9% | 6% | 2.3% | 8.6% |



The source of data for 2014/15 and for the targets is the Financial Forecast dated June 2015. Maintenance spend is forecast to reduce in 2015/16 due to the removal of some older buildings from the university's ownership and the fact that the estate has two major new buildings.

