Creating Knowledge Implementation Plan

1 Introduction

The research and knowledge exchange (KE) objectives in our strategy, 'Transforming Lives' are clear, ambitious and challenging.

> Our research and partnerships will provide innovative, practical solutions to real-world challenges.
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> - We will be recognised internationally for research which has real social, economic and cultural impact
> - We will identify and seize opportunities to lead in new and emerging areas
> - We will apply research to enrich students' learning and work with others to ensure translation into practice.

Our aspiration to be the 'leading applied university' sets some clear objectives. To be leading, our research and KE should be world class in our chosen areas of expertise and our research performance in key measures (income, research power, GPA, REF and KEF performance) leading amongst our competitor set.   To be leading and applied it must also demonstrably deliver social, economic and cultural impact and to do so better and more innovatively than our competitors.

This Creating Knowledge Implementation Plan focusses on the following six goals.

1. Establish 3-5 Research Platforms: areas of focus in which we are, or have the potential to be, world-class.
2. Build a Strong Research and Knowledge Exchange Culture
3. Increase Research and KE income
4. Deliver economic, social and cultural impact
5. Ensure research enriches the student learning and translation into practice,
6. Achieve an excellent result for REF2021 & KEF

1 Establish 3-5 Research Platforms: areas of focus in which we are, or have the potential to be, world-class.

1.1 Purpose

The proposed research platforms will allow us to clearly articulate areas of research and KE strength, raise the profile of these strengths and thereby enhance our reputation.

They should be visible to, understood by and broadly owned by staff and students. They will act as a framework on which to encourage and develop a strong institutional research culture and the development of research and scholarly activity and provide foci for intra-university collaboration.

The platforms will enhance the external profile to our research and KE, supporting our strategic objectives regionally, nationally and internationally. They will be beacons for external collaboration supporting our plans to grow research income, allowing us to make funding bids at scale, including participating and where appropriate leading large consortia.

The research platforms will guide our research and KE investment decisions.

1.2 Criteria
Three criteria will be used to select the research platforms.

1.2.1 They will reflect areas in which we are or have the potential to be world-class
They will be areas in which we currently have considerable existing capacity and capability or have the potential to develop such. There will be an expectation that they will make a significant contribution to the next REF submission including esteem, environment and impact indicators.

The research platforms will have the potential to produce world-class research and knowledge exchange outputs and impact by development, external collaboration, internal collaboration and investment.

1.2.2 Consistent with our applied mission
They will be aligned to other strategic objectives including enhancing the student experience, improving employability, local leadership and global engagement and have a clear focus on application and delivering impact.

1.2.3 Able to generate research and KE income to ensure sustainability and indirectly contribute to resource.
The research platforms will allow us to access relevant research and KE funding streams, enhancing our ability to bid at scale, where appropriate as part of or leading consortia.

In addition to research and KE income, the research platforms will contribute to other business streams including partnership development, international recruitment and commercial activity.

1.3 Candidates
The research platforms will be identified through a process described later in this paper, but to provide a guide to their nature and breadth the following candidates are suggested:

- Longer, healthier lives
- Thriving and safer, inclusive communities
- Future economy
- Culture and Creativity

1.4 Identification
Following approval of the principle of research platforms at CK Board and ULT a process of analysis and consultation to identify the research platforms will commence in January 2018. This will involve an initial mapping exercise and the testing of the criteria and their consequences led by the ADRs. This will ensure that the emerging research platforms will address the purpose described and recognise and include all areas of research excellence across the university. Thereafter there will be a period of consultation with internal and external stakeholders before a draft list of platforms is identified.   This list will then form the basis of workshops on each platform area.   Finally, an expert, external review panel will assess the platforms and the research strengths they comprise.

1.5 Implementation

Once the research platforms have been identified their leadership will be addressed.   It is currently envisaged that the ADRs will take on leadership responsibility in the first instance but it may then be appropriate to appoint research platform leaders through a recruitment exercise.

An annual internal conference will be held for each of the platforms. It is anticipated that a dedicated internal funding stream will be available to support internal, collaborative research and knowledge exchange projects.

The research platforms will guide research and KE investment decisions including the distribution of strategic CK investments, elements of HEFCE QR funding and the allocation of VC bursaries. A description of the approach to the avocation of QR funding is given later in this document.

2 Build a Strong Research and Knowledge Exchange Culture

2.1 Clarify & Promote the Role of Research & KE at SHU

Research and Knowledge Exchange is a vital part of the academic culture of the university, the Transforming Lives strategy and the future success of the university.

2.1.1 Sharing and Celebrating R&KE Achievements.

To support a strong research culture we will put in place communication plan that facilitate the sharing of information and news, such as funding opportunities, grants awarded, papers published, awards won and conferences and meetings.

It is important that the efforts and achievements of colleagues are recognised.   A series of research prizes will be introduced. The following categories are proposed as a basis for further consultation:

- The Research Award - for significant achievement within the year.
- ECR Award - for significant achievement within the year by an early career researcher
- Impact Award - for significant achievement delivering economic, social and/or commercial impact.
- Partnership Award - for significant achievement in establishing external collaborations and partnerships (including KTPs).
- Research Teaching Award
- Research Support Award - for outstanding contribution supporting research in the university
- Research Team Award - for significant achievement by a team

Options will also be considered for recognising outstanding achievement and contribution sustained over a long period.

Professorial Lecture series provide an opportunity to celebrate the calibre of SHU's senior researchers and we will present the professorial lectures as part of coherent series, based on platform themes, augmented by high profile lectures delivered by distinguished external speakers.

2.1.2 Community

The success of the Research Platforms will depend on their ability to support conversations and facilitate collaboration across the university, between faculties and between disciplines. Internal networks will be encouraged, particularly those based on cross-disciplinary working.

2.1.3 External Communications

A review of research and KE marketing has been initiated that will address the following:

- market insight;
- profile & reputation enhancement
- website and other digital channels, and
- researcher career offer.

2.2 Develop & Support Groups and Individuals

2.2.1 Academic Development

The Academic Framework recognises research and KE as a vital part of the academic culture of the university and the career development of staff.

A formal research and KE mentoring programme will be introduced to support staff, particularly those who do not have extensive research experience in developing their research and KE activities. This will include support on identifying and initiating research projects, PhD supervision, seeking funding and approaches to publishing.

The University Concordat Action Plan will be reviewed and its implementation overseen by the Creating Knowledge Pillar Board.

In addition, we will develop a policy and an action plan, consistent with the Academic Framework, to ensure support and opportunity for early career researchers to develop.

2.2.2 Recruitment & Retention

We recognise that research performance is dependent on our ability to retain and recruit outstanding researchers. We will take a strategic approach to both, which will develop as the research platforms are established.

2.2.3 Performance & Time

The new AWP and Academic Framework recognise the importance of research and scholarly activity, the need for clear expectations and supporting performance.

In addition to the work underway as part of the Academic Framework, we will develop a sabbaticals policy that will provide a formal commitment of time for well-defined pieces of R&KE work.

2.3 Ensure the Appropriate Support and Structures are in Place

2.3.1 Groups, Centres & Institutes

Research institutes, centres and groups provide clear external profile, organisation structures that support the development of research and KE and foci for collaborative research. We will seek to clarify the definitions of institutes, centres and groups, as follows, so they are best able to support achieving the CK objectives.

Research and knowledge is increasingly embedded within departments or developed collaboratively between departments and research centres and institutes.

It is an important principle that organisational structures do not create barriers for staff between teaching and research.

Research groups or clusters are informal groupings with shared research interests or outcomes focus. They provide an important purpose and may have some bearing on line management arrangements, but they are not usually considered as organisational structures of financial business units. Research groups can and have successfully been established within departments.

Research Centres, on the other hand, are formal organisational structure created to support an area of research strength. They have clear organisational structures and will be considered as business units for financial purposes.

Research Institutes provide a clear outward facing profile for areas of research excellence.

Both research centres and institutes will have clear, well-defined leadership, objectives set as part of the annual planning round. Their performance will be monitored at CKPB and regularly reviewed.

Proposals for the creation of new research centres will be considered by CKPB if they have the full support for their respective faculty.

2.3.2 Financial support for research - CK investment and the allocation of QR funding.
The CK Board will initiate a range of schemes to support research through strategic investment in, for example, sabbaticals, PGR bursaries and strategic investment in the Platforms. The process of allocating investments funds and the QR funding will be transparent. There will be clear recognition of how QR income relates to UoA performance and clarity about how it is allocated in an annual QR statement.

A policy for strategic investment and the allocation of QR is being developed for review by the Creating Knowledge Pillar Board.

2.3.3 Financial Model.
A consistent financial model for the financial performance of research is being developed which will provide a thorough understanding of the financial performance across the university and a sound basis for planning and resource allocation.

2.3.4 Professional Services
Professional Services for all aspects of research and KE are being reviewed as part of the Professional Services Operating Model (PSOM) work. It is recognised that excellent research and KE support is critical to the success of the CKIP and the range of responsibilities and activities required to support the university's R&KE activities is diverse and complex.

3 Increase Research and KE income

3.1 A Strategic Approach to Identifying and Addressing Emerging Funding Opportunities

3.1.1 Intelligence and Planning
Our current approach to horizon scanning and the identification of opportunities for securing funding will be reviewed. We will also ensure that we take opportunities to raise the profile of our R&KE with policy makers and seek to influence policies that drive funding decision in so far as is possible.

3.1.2 Coordinating and resourcing large-scale applications.

For large scale funding applications we will ensure that resources are available for consortium building and bid development including the identification of clear leadership.

3.1.3 Use the Research Platforms as a basis for internal collaboration to bid at scale.
The research platforms will provide the basis of encouraging internal collaboration and the ability to submit large scale bids.

3.1.4 Develop External Partnerships and Alliances
Similarly, we will develop external partnerships and alliances, guided by the research platform to support consortium building and raise our profile with both potential collaborators and funding bodies.

3.2 Address Key Funding Streams
Growing research income will require a strategic approach to the full range of key finding streams that currently include:

- Government and Public Contracts
- Regulated Income such as research councils and the European Union
- International
- Knowledge Exchange and Commercial
- Charities and foundations

We will need to be able to respond to changes to funding opportunities as policy changes (e.g. formation of UKRI, Brexit, etc.) impact.

The PVC Research and PVC for Enterprise will ensure that development of KE income and the business-readiness activities are coherent and complementary.

3.3 Supporting & Facilitating Income Generation

3.3.1 Partnership Development
The development of partnerships is a key success factor for growing income from all funding streams. This relates to the profile -raising work articulated above.   It is important that we are able to provide a clear and consistent offer to potential partners and funders.   That we are consistent in our relationships with partners.

We will ensure a clear approach to partner development and relationship management.

We will also explore measures, such as the provision of match funding, to support partnership development.

3.3.2 Supporting Staff
As part of our approach to supporting and developing staff (ref) we will ensure that the research platforms provide staff with opportunities to engage in and develop internal and external collaborative networks. Staff development, particularly mentoring arrangements should include support in seeking funding and bid writing.

We will put internal peer review processes in place to improve the quality of submitted bids.

3.3.3 Building Capacity
The research platforms will provide the basis for encouraging and supporting internal collaboration

The Consultancy Policy will be reviewed to ensure it is aligned with our objectives and supports staff in developing research and HE.

Clear expectations of funding and bidding activity will be articulated for research centres and staff where appropriate (at reader and professor level).

4 Deliver economic, social and cultural impact

4.1 Optimise the impact of current Large Projects
The university is engaged in a number of high profile projects including the AWRC and NCEFE both of which are located at the Health Innovation Park. The HIP is an opportunity for SHU to provide an exciting innovation ecosystem. We will ensure the success of both AWRC and NCEFE and look for new opportunities (such as the CCHT and ORRIC) to achieve our objectives.

4.2 Develop other vehicles and models
We will develop existing and explore new vehicles for improving our impact. We will ensure that funding streams such as the SIP provide a sustained positive impact on growing capacity and impact.

We will review our approach to commercialisation of our intellectual property, including licensing and spin-outs.

We will extend and deepen our relationships with businesses through developing collaborations and networks and through business engagement activities, ensuring a consistent and complementary approach to the 'Business-readiness' work led by the PVC Enterprise.

5 Ensure research enriches the student learning and translation into practice.

5.1 Research & Teaching & Learning
Research should enrich the academic experience for students and staff. There will be an expectation that all academic staff should be engaged in some students-facing activities and that all students will have direct experience of research, allowing them to develop research literacy and skills. The development of curricula, course structure and delivery are important aspects of ensuring that research and KE enrich the academic experience.

5.2 Develop a Vibrant Doctoral School

5.2.1 Recruitment
We will aim to grow PGR numbers, taking a more proactive approach to target setting by faculty and mode (PhD, Prof Doc, research masters), while recognising the importance of ensuring that the appropriate supervisory capacity, facilities and space are available to support an excellent postgraduate research student experience. We will work with GED to promote our PGR offer internationally.

Where appropriate to meet our research and knowledge exchange goals we will participate in and lead external doctoral research collaborations, such as UKRI Doctoral Training Partnerships, and HEI led Doctoral Training Alliances.

University PGR bursaries and scholarships will be aligned with the research platforms.

We will develop match-funding schemes to promote applied projects with commercial partners as described above and promote the importance of collaborative models of undertaking doctoral research. Match-funding arrangements include in-kind contributions as well as financial contributions.

We will continue to develop the portfolio of provision including our range of professional doctorates.

5.2.2 Graduate Student Experience

The Doctoral School provides the framework through which we will deliver a consistently excellent PGR experience (as indicated by PRES performance) and ensure that PGR students are both part of and contribute to the university's research culture. Through events like 'The Three Minute Thesis' we will raise the profile of the Doctoral School and celebrate the success of our students.

The PGR student experience will support the career development of our students including embedding systems to routinely offer opportunities for PGR students to teach and engage in external activities including outreach and international opportunities.

5.2.3 Graduate Student Voice

The Doctoral School will develop the graduate student voice including considering the case for a Graduate Student Union and develop opportunities for more student-led events and developing more inter-disciplinary and collaborative communities.

5.2.4 Supervision

The Doctoral School will support research supervisors through the provision of training and support fora.

5.2.5 Reputation

We will develop the external profile of the Doctoral School to support our recruitment ambitions and continue to be an active member of national and regional PGR bodies.

We will be proactive in develop as a collaborative partnerships for PGR and key aspects of provision.

5.2.6 Structure and Support

Professional services support for the Doctoral School is being reviewed as part of the PSOM.

6 Achieve an excellent result for REF2021 & KEF

Preparations for REF2021 are led by the PVC for Academic Staffing and Equalities, working with the Assistant Deans and Unit of Assessment Coordinators.