

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2016-2017

FOREWORD

In summer 2015, the University of Aberdeen published a new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020. Our Plan is centred on our institutional vision “to transform the world with greater knowledge and learning”. This Outcome Agreement sets out how the University intends to meet that commitment in partnership with the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government.

People are at the heart of the University’s vision. Members of the University community, be they alumni, students or staff, are central to driving the University forward, and all our strategies have been developed with this in mind. We want to attract the best students and staff, to build a working environment for our staff and students which is inclusive and supportive, embed all our activities in the ethos of equality and diversity, and to remain mindful of the importance of encouraging and enabling all in our community to achieve their full career potential.

We aim to offer our students the highest quality education, in an environment of inclusivity and equality of opportunity, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. Our undergraduate and postgraduate curricula offer a breadth of learning which sets us apart from competitors, attracting students from across the socio-economic spectrum. We want to ensure that all students have the opportunity to realise their potential by providing excellent research-led teaching, assessment and feedback, and by maximising their opportunities as responsible global citizens. This Outcome Agreement reflects this commitment, setting out our targets for widening access for all students, and providing excellent support to all students so as to make their educational experience as positive as possible.

Our research continues to have a measurable impact on the world and over the next five years we aim to strengthen our position further as a world-class, research intensive university. We will increase the impact of our research, working in partnership across all sectors to deliver on key areas such as skills development, multi-disciplinary research, and research innovation and impact, and engaging with the wider society wherever possible.

We have set challenging targets for the next five years and have developed a new planning process to embed our new strategic vision. An emphasis on internationalisation and digitalisation underpins our plans as tools to enrich our students’ learning experience, and to strengthen their sense of belonging and their level of engagement with the University. The continuing partnership with the Scottish Funding Council and the significant investment of public funds in University activities, continues to be paramount to our success. This Outcome Agreement states our ambitions for the coming years in the context of our new Strategic Plan and reiterates our commitment to our continuing contribution to the Scottish Government’s priorities.



Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

INTRODUCTION

1. The University of Aberdeen's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council sets out the University's commitment to delivery of its strategic objectives in line with the Scottish Government priorities. The Agreement is intended to help the University demonstrate its contribution to the Scottish Government's priorities as set out in the Scottish Economic Strategy and annual Programme for Governments in return for public investment. The process is intended to complement and support the University's strategic ambitions.
2. The 2016/17 Agreement builds on commitments made in previous plans and addresses the key changes introduced by the SFC for 2016/17, particularly relating to gender and care experienced students.
3. The University introduced a new institutional Strategic Plan in autumn 2015 for the next five years which is supported by ambitious strategic and operational plans by all academic Schools. The ambitions set out in our new plans will inform this Outcome Agreement.
4. For ease of reporting, the University's Outcome Agreement for 2016-2017 is structured around the seven aims within the Funding Council's National Measures and also refers to the University's new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020. The SFC National Measures are:

Aim 1	Improve access to higher education for people from the widest possible range of backgrounds
Aim 2	High quality, efficient and effective learning – learner journeys are short, efficient and effective as possible and learners experience the highest quality of learning and teaching and achieve successful outcomes
Aim 3	Right learning in the right place – secure coherent provision of higher education in Scotland in line with SFC's statutory obligation
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
Aim 5	Research base that is internationally competitive and improving its reputation and standing in the world
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
Aim 7	Sustainable institutions – ensure high quality of governance and management for institutions delivering long-term and financial and environmentally sustainable interactions

AIM 1: ACCESS

- 1.1 The University has recently developed a new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020. The vision of the new Plan is centred around 'People', be they students, staff or alumni. The University aims to further enhance a caring culture of belonging and collegiality, to attract and retain staff and students to strengthen our capacity and excellence, and to foster a positive culture that champions equality and diversity. We remain committed to the recruitment of students solely on merit and their potential to achieve and ensuring that all students, regardless of background, who have the potential to achieve through study at Aberdeen, are offered that opportunity.
- 1.2 In the University's new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, the University has set the following goals relevant to access to education and the student experience, to ensure we deliver the best experience from the time students apply to the university and until graduation:

Goal 1:

"To provide an outstanding educational environment reflecting the quality of an international institution, fostering a sense of community supporting all student in achieving their ambitions."

Goal 2:

"Working in partnership, to offer an exceptional, flexible and individualised educational experience that is demand-driven for students in Aberdeen, at a distance, and full or part-time".

Goal 3:

"To ensure every student has the opportunity to realise their potential by providing excellent research-led teaching, assessment and feedback."

Goal 4:

"To equip our students with skills and experience which will allow them to maximise their opportunities as responsible global citizens upon graduation".

OUR AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17

(National measure 1) Working in partnership with a range of FE colleges across Scotland, we will increase the number of articulation routes available for Scottish-domiciled college students to continue on to degree level study. We will also work closely with our partner colleges to ensure closer alignment of curricula at FE and HE levels to help smooth the transition in to HE for articulating students.

- 1.3 The University has been actively scoping out closer collaborations with Scotland FE Colleges. The University is currently in negotiations with Dundee and Angus College and is hoping to establish an agreement around a number of HNC/D Programmes from disciplines across the College, articulation with Mechanical Engineering being at an advanced stage. Initial meetings have taken place with Fife College with a view to collaboration.
- 1.4 FE college students are offered the opportunity to spend some time on campus every year and are given an 'Associate Student' status which gives them access to the University Library and sport facilities. Students on relevant articulation routes also have the opportunity to take online self-study units in Maths and Computing Science at the University to help build their confidence and smooth their transition from FE to HE.

(National measure 2) The University aims to maintain our proportion of students from the 40% most deprived postcodes at around 16% of entrants. The University also aims to continue to ensure that applicants from deprived postcodes are offered the same chance of entry to, and registration on, a University of Aberdeen degree programme as applicants from other backgrounds.

- 1.5 This continues to be a challenging target as entry figures for 2015/16 show. Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire between them contain only 4.7% of Scotland's MD40 postcodes by population. However, the University continues to admit a much higher proportion of students from these backgrounds than is proportionate; in 2015/16 15.7% (216 students including summer school participants) of our Scottish

undergraduate population came from MD40 backgrounds. Analysis also shows that applicants to the University from MD40 backgrounds have the same statistical probability (within 1% tolerance) as those from non-MD40 backgrounds of being offered a place and of going on to register on a degree programme. The University therefore considers that it has been successful in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We aim to increase the proportion of our intake of MD40 students to 16% of our Scottish domiciled Home students in 2016/17, thereby maintaining an upward yet realistic trajectory.

- 1.6 We continue to work closely with schools in SIMD areas in an around Aberdeen through various institutional initiatives and, as previously reported, we now have additional steps in our admissions processes to ensure that all applications from students from widening participation backgrounds or with protected characteristics are given additional close consideration to identify appropriate additional access routes, e.g. the Summer School. The University's Summer School for Access has undergone thorough review this year and a more targeted strategy has been developed for the Summer School in 2016 to improve further opportunities for students from low progression schools and deprived areas to experience university life. The University has decided to discontinue with the S6@uni project to allow resources to be focused on the success of the Summer School. The University has identified and formed a close relationship with a number of target schools in Aberdeen City and Shire (St Machar, Torrie, Kincorth, Northfield, Banff, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Bucksburn and Portlethen) and is working with them to identify suitable students. Ten priority places will be offered to each school for students who will get direct access to the programme. This new strategy has been well received by our schools and the uptake for 2016 has been good to date.
- 1.7 Within the admissions process, the Admissions Lead in Medicine is able to provide additional support for applications from students from disadvantaged and challenging backgrounds. In the admissions cycle 2015/16, the Division of Medical and Dental Education Admissions Committee will allocate additional discretionary points to applicants whose postcode of residence falls within the fourth and fifth most deprived postcodes as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). In addition to Widening Access discretionary points the Admissions Committee is also able to allocate additional discretionary points for very serious extenuating circumstances.
- 1.8 It remains an institutional concern that the current methodology for measuring MD40 and MD20 areas is inadequate for rural areas as it can mask individual cases of deprivation. This is particularly an issue for the University of Aberdeen, given its location, and we remain concerned that over-reliance on SIMD can inhibit our ability to properly support such individuals who may not be easily identified through the area-based approach.

(National measure 3) The University will continue to work with local low progression schools to increase the number of students from these schools and aid their retention. The target for 2016/17 will continue to be set at 60 entrants from target schools.

- 1.9 The University has already taken steps to reach out beyond to those applicants who may come from deprived backgrounds not included within SIMD areas, with particular focus on low progression schools to support and encourage pupils to consider a University education. As noted in our 2014/15 Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation Report, while numbers are small, a greater proportion (around double) of applicants from these schools went on to register successfully compared to those from non-low progression schools or from our overall applicant pool, and 100% of offer holders from low progression schools went on to register on a degree programme with us.
- 1.10 The *Aim4Uni* project is the University's brand name and umbrella designation for all of its own Widening Participation activities and programmes. It was started in 2003 and has provided a range of different WP outreach and on-campus activities during its long history. The project is targeted towards local secondary schools that have lower than the national average progression rates into higher education and some activities are also offered to feeder primary schools of the 13 target secondary schools. A number of events are organised under this project, including an Easter Revision School, Primary 7

French days, on-campus induction events, S6 Enhancement/Science Practical days and School presentations.

- 1.11 The University will aim for 60 entrants from target schools which represents an increase over the 2014/15 figures (50).
- 1.12 The University remains committed to the *Aspire North* (SHEP) Programme. As the Funding Council will be aware, the University has experienced some staffing issues in relation to the delivery of this programme in the past year, but these have now been resolved.
- 1.13 The University is keen to improve the coordination of the various recruitment activities relating to widening access. In an effort to achieve this goal, management of the Access to Degree Studies Programme which offers part-time (daytime or evening) and distance learning opportunities to mature students considering a return to education, will be moving into the Admissions Unit in academic year 2015/16 to develop a more coherent service for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 1.14 All applicants from Reach schools anywhere in Scotland will be guaranteed an interview in the School of Medicine should their academic achievements meet our minimum academic requirements and their UKCAT score fall within the top 75% of scores for applicants to Aberdeen.
- 1.15 Reach continues to actively work with the Admissions Selectors in the Law department. The initiative has a well-developed programme in place to widen access and arranges a number of events in the North-east of Scotland aimed at school pupils, REACH pupils and at special groups of school pupils.
- 1.16 The REACH project is due to finish in June 2016. A funding bid will be submitted this year for a new initiative which will hopefully support the ethos of the REACH project in encouraging access to high demand courses such as Medicine and Law. Currently, University statistics look positive, particularly in Medicine, as the Funding Council will have seen from the official report.

(National measures 4-5) We will increase recruitment of students with care experience or protected characteristics and increase retention of this student group

- 1.17 The University now holds the Buttle Trust Quality Mark. This initiative is currently undergoing some change as the Buttle Trust Quality Mark is due to cease by 2016. The University remains fully committed to the ethos of supporting the recruitment and ongoing assistance to care leavers/young people in care and will continue to engage with initiatives in this area.
- 1.18 In 2015/16, 24 students declared themselves as having care experience but, as these figures rely on students self-declaring their status, they may not be wholly representative. The University has in place various support mechanisms as laid out in paragraphs 1.19 and 1.20, and aims to increase the number of students with care experience in 2016/17.
- 1.19 The University has in place special support arrangements for Care leavers and emphasises providing individualised support to all such students. This includes a single point of contact for any queries or help that students require and year-round accommodation for the duration of their degree programme. The personalised contact is available from the earliest stages of considering entry, through the application stage, their studies and on to graduation, with support to preparing for graduate employment.
- 1.20 The University has put special IT processes in place to carry out additional checks into the admissions process to ensure that candidates from protected characteristic groups, care leavers, students from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes and students from low progression schools are identified and given special consideration for admission. It is intended that the new university systems set up to identify and monitor such students will aid retention.
- 1.21 The University has joined the Champions Board recently set up to support a seamless process for supporting care leavers entering and progressing at University. The Champion Board includes the University, Robert Gordon University, North-East Scotland College (NESCOL), Aberdeenshire and

Aberdeen City councils. The Champions Board has been a welcome development which offers opportunities to network and develop our services further. As part of this initiative, the Board is launching a 'Regional Care Experienced Student Award' in December 2015 to celebrate the achievements of care experienced students.

- 1.22 As part of our efforts to raise aspirations amongst pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, we successfully completed a pilot exercise for an Aberdeen Children's University in academic year 2014/15 and hosted the first Graduation Ceremony in June 2015. The Children's University aims to foster an enjoyment in learning and raise aspirations amongst pupils from the age of seven to 14. The programme allows pupils to undertake a number of activities to build up a portfolio of learning and to 'graduate' at various levels. The programme was very well received and we are now working with Aberdeen Shire and NESCOL towards a second 'graduation' in summer 2016. Discussions are taking place with Aberdeen City and RGU regarding their participation in the project and we hope to attract more partners in near future to secure the long term sustainability of this initiative.
- 1.23 The additional funded UG and PGT places provided by the SFC have been very successful in helping to develop critical mass in key areas. In light of recent changes in funding to the additional funded UG 'skills for growth' places, we will endeavour to secure industry matched funding for as many of these places as possible. However, in light of the economic downturn still being experienced by our key partner industries, it may be necessary to agree transitional arrangements for some of these places in the short-term in order to ensure continuity of provision.

AIM 2: HIGH QUALITY LEARNING

The University is committed to providing all our students, irrespective of their background, with the best possible educational experience, so that by the time they graduate they have become global citizens with a strong academic background. In the University's new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, the University has set the following Goals under the headings of "Learning and Teaching" and "People":

Goal 1:

"To provide an outstanding educational environment reflecting the quality of an international institution, fostering a sense of community supporting all students in achieving their ambitions."

Goal 2:

"Working in partnership, to offer an exceptional, flexible and individualised educational experience that is demand-driven for students in Aberdeen, at a distance, and full or part-time".

Goal 3:

"To ensure every student has the opportunity to realise their potential by providing excellent research-led teaching, assessment and feedback."

Goal 4:

"To equip our students with skills and experience which will allow them to maximise their opportunities as responsible global citizens upon graduation".

[People:] **Goal 2:** "To attract and retain staff and students to a globally significant international institution strengthening capacity and excellence, in Aberdeen or another University location."

OUR AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17

(National measure 6) In our Strategic Plan 2015-2020 we have pledged to reduce non-continuation and achieve a maximum of 6% non-continuation into Year 2 by 2020. As part of this target, we will aim to have improved our non-continuation rate from 11.3%¹ to 10.5% by 2016/17.

- 2.1 The University's Strategic Plan has set ambitious targets for retention across the University for the planning period 2015-2020. All of our academic Schools have set targets for achievement in this area and will be monitoring this area closely. Notwithstanding the ongoing emphasis on working closely with students to address non-continuation, the University's Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 outlines a variety of other developments aimed at enhancing our teaching and learning environment thereby impacting on retention. This includes initiatives such as the aim for all of our modules to have a digital presence at the end of the planning period to help engage students, as well as aims on improving our student:staff ratio, and ensuring that all teaching staff hold relevant professional qualifications. These measures are in addition to recent improvements such as the change to the academic year, bringing first half-session exams before the Christmas break, to assist retention. We aim to have achieved a non-continuation rate of 10.5% by 2016/17.
- 2.2 We reported in the 2015/16 Outcome Agreement that we had created a Retention Task Force to support retention activities. The Task Force consists of representatives from all academic Schools, Student Support, the Students' Association, and Academic Affairs, amongst others. The remit of the group is to promote sharing of best practice in identifying and improving non-continuation rates across the Institution with a view to enhancing the student experience at the University. Current initiatives emerging from the task force include:

- *Data collection and harvesting* - Extraction of the most relevant data pertaining to non-continuation and also student withdrawal. While the group recognises the differences between these data, the former will help direct strategies to at risk cohorts (e.g. 1st year students in their

¹ As retention is a key priority for the University, we use a more stringent measure than that reflected in HESA statistics, counting all students who withdraw early, including those made exit awards, as having not completed or continued. As a result, our internal statistics on non-continuation will not match HESA data.

first semester), while the latter will inform on reasons for student difficulties and may help in guiding the design of intervention strategies.

- *Hosting a retention best practice swap shop* - As a showcase of good practice, an event will be hosted in December 2015 that will include short interactive presentations on use of the Blackboard VLE Retention Centre (see below), student engagement through social media, communication strategies for incoming students, and what makes induction/early engagement events successful.
- *Reviewing the withdrawal proforma* – Evaluating the current online withdrawal form with a view to revising to more effectively recording reasons for student withdrawal (to guide in the design of intervention strategies) and to enhance communication channels for maintaining contact with those students who wish to keep in touch with the University.

(National measure 5) By 2016/17, we will aim for continuation rates for the SIMD 40 cohort to be 91% and for the 21 and over cohort to be 90%. We intend that within three years there should be no difference of statistical significance in the retention rates of these cohorts and others.

2.3 The University pays close attention to non-continuation data. Annually non-continuation data is analysed in detail and considered by Senior Management and academic Schools, with regard to level of study, student domicile, incoming qualifications, and entry route (summer school, access, clearing). In 2015-16, we have added to this analysis, and for the SDUE cohort, we have also considered non-continuation with regard to each protected characteristic group. In so doing, we are pleased that there is no significant difference in the retention rates of those within and outwith the protected characteristic cohorts of disability, gender, and BME. There does appear to be a difference between those within and outwith the SIMD 40 cohort and those SDUE students who are 21 or over when entering level 1.

2.4 Whilst we note a difference in retention rates between those within and outwith the SIMD 40 cohort and those SDUE students who are/are not 21 or over when entering level 1, there has been a year on year improvement in rates of non-continuation amongst both these protected characteristics groups since 2011-12. In 2016-17 we intend for this positive trend to increase, with continuation rates for the SIMD 40 cohort to be 91% and for the 21 and over cohort to be 90%. We intend that within three years there should be no difference of statistical significance in the retention rates of these cohorts and others.

2.5 The University's widening participation team provides dedicated support to students who come from a care environment to aid retention, and this will continue. In addition to support detailed in the previous section around dedicated personalised support and all-year accommodation, students are offered one-on-one support with academic-related skills such as study skills and essay writing, which has been well received and has been shown to aid retention.

2.6 Other initiatives to support the student experience, and in turn, re-admission and retention rates include:

- The University has engaged one of our Ambitious Futures (www.ambitiousfutures.co.uk/) trainees to use internal data to explore trends in the pattern of undergraduate non-continuation from 1) first half-session to second; and 2) first year to second year. The intended output is a report to help us understand what action we might take in relation to the first year experience in order to maximise a student's chance of success.
- The Centre for Academic Development is investigating the enhancement value of Learning Analytics embedded within our Virtual Learning Environment, MyAberdeen, with a pilot project led by the School of Biological Sciences exploring assessment analytics in the early identification of 'at risk' students.
- From August 2015, all taught students, undergraduate and postgraduate, have been able to make their curriculum choices online via *MyCurriculum*. This online, student-led system guides students through their course choices ensuring that they meet regulatory and timetable requirements. It is intended that this enhanced method of course registration will allow students

greater autonomy in their curricular choices, and engender a greater sense of ownership and commitment to students' programmes of study.

- In addition to the Retention Task Force the University has recently appointed two other cross-college project groups in relation to Feedback (on assessment), and Positive Outcomes. Each project group comprises membership from academic and professional services, and student representation. Membership reflects those areas that have a clear record of success as well as those where the data are below what would be expected.
- A review of our Personal Tutoring system is being undertaken at School level to look at better tailoring the system to specific school requirements.
- As part of our OneSource initiative we are scoping a Student Relationship Management System to allow us to ensure more effective interactions with students, particularly where students have flagged an issue.

2.7 The University recently signed up to be a partner institution in the SFC-funded 'Back on Course' project run by the Open University (OU) which aims to support students who withdraw from HE. Partner universities work with the OU to identify students who have withdrawn (either actively or passively) and teams of counsellors from the OU then attempt to contact those students to offer support in exploring their further options, including return to HE, either at the same or a different HEI. The project also includes a research element which seeks to establish better intelligence about the barriers to retention facing students and what additional support from HEIs might have a positive impact. After a successful rollout across England and a pilot phase in Scotland, project is being rolled out more widely.

(National measure 7) In our Strategic Plan 2015-2020, we have set targets for student satisfaction as measured by the NSS and hope to achieve scores of 92% in Teaching and 72% in Assessment and Feedback by the end of the period. We aim for a year-on-year improvement over the next five years as part of this strategy.

2.8 The University continues to be committed to raising student satisfaction across the University and hopes that the various measures detailed above, along with a focus on increased student engagement, will result in improved ratings in student satisfaction surveys such as the NSS. We continue to monitor closely our performance in both the National Student Survey and our Institutional Student Survey, and to develop measures to increase participation levels in both, to assist a more representative insight into the satisfaction level of our students.

2.9 The University aims to improve its student satisfaction as measured by the NSS considerably by 2020 and all Schools have set individual targets in this area and will be supporting activities such as engaging regularly with students to maximise engagement with the survey, to raise satisfaction further. All academic Schools are to be within 1% tolerance of the institutional score on both measures.

2.10 As previously reported to the SFC, an Enhancement-Led Review (ELIR) was carried out in 2013 where it was confirmed that the University has effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.

AIM 3: RIGHT LEARNING IN THE RIGHT PLACE

- 3.1 It is important that our academic programmes cater for the individual and that we recognise changing demand, whether from the student population or the economic or societal environment, promoting gender equality wherever possible. Working with our alumni, partners in business, industry, the public sector and the third sector, we will continually review student requirements and in turn improve employability skills (see also Aim 4 for information about our employability strategy). In the University's new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, the University has set the following Goals under the heading of "Learning and Teaching" relevant to our provision and commitment to addressing societal demands:

Goal 2:

"Working in partnership, to offer an exceptional, flexible and individualised educational experience that is demand-driven for students in Aberdeen, at a distance, and full or part-time".

OUR AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17

(National measure 8) We aim to maintain the number of UG entrances to STEMM courses and to take action to address any issues of gender imbalance in our student population

- 3.2 The University has seen an unexpected drop in applications to STEMM programmes and there are indications that the current downturn in the international oil and gas industry is affecting applications. The University will therefore aim to maintain the number of UG entrants to STEMM courses for 2016/17.
- 3.3 The University is well aware that in certain disciplines, e.g. Engineering, Education, Languages, Computing Sciences, Engineering and subjects allied with Medicine, there is a significant gender imbalance, both in the number of applications received and students admitted. Discipline-specific gender imbalance is a sector-wide issue which will require a consistent approach over a prolonged period to create significant change. However, we are proactively looking to increase gender balance, especially within the undergraduate STEMM population, where appropriate, and putting in place measures to address any areas of under-representation. We are now in our second year as partners in the ECU Attracting Diversity project. This year we are focusing on working closely with academic Schools to engage them in the project and building a clear picture of current outreach activities (e.g. outreach in local secondary schools) and sharing good practice at School and subject level. As part of the institutional planning process, we engage the Athena Swan officer where needed to help address issues, and encourage Schools to develop action plans as part of their annual operational planning process. We are also considering ways in which we can improve the collection of data on the gender split at point of entry, and will be carrying out qualitative research with students in liaison with the Students' Association (AUSA) regarding the barriers students may have faced getting into University. The findings will be used to improve recruitment activities centrally and within our Schools.

(k) We aim to increase the number of students taking language courses via 'sustained study' with at least 105 students taking a language course across at least two consecutive semesters outwith their degree programme

- 3.4 As reported in our 2015/16 Outcome Agreement, the new student-oriented mode of curriculum choice has led to an increased uptake of language courses as 'Enhanced Study' options. The University aims to continue to increase the number of students taking language courses via sustained study and has set a target of 105 students taking a language courses across two consecutive semesters outwith their degree programme by 2016/17.
- 3.5 The University approved its first Gaelic Language Plan in 2013 and has therefore come to the end of the second year of plan implementation. The University remains pleased with progress made to date and continues to monitor the many initiatives implemented to date, many of which have been student-focussed. We continue to review our implementation strategy at regular intervals to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to the project.

AIM 4: DEVELOPED WORKFORCE

The University actively works with business, industry and the public sector to develop educational programmes which address the needs of society. As part of this mission, we have been very proactive in providing support to our students to improve their employability skills and make full use of the various opportunities open to them to allow them to grow academically and socially, work with communities and employers and taking part in international educational partnerships. In the University's new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, the University has set the following Goals under the headings of "Learning and Teaching" relating to employability and skills:

Goal 1:

"To provide an outstanding educational environment reflecting the quality of an international institution, fostering a sense of community supporting all students in achieving their ambitions."

Goal 4:

"To equip our students with skills and experience which will allow them to maximise their opportunities as responsible global citizens upon graduation".

OUR AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17

(National measure 9) In our Strategic Plan 2015-2020 we aim to increase the number of our graduates who go on to graduate-level employment or further study to 80% by 2020 and to achieve 79% by 2016/17.

- 4.1 The University has in place an Employability Framework which ensures that university staff and students share a common understanding of employability and skills in the context of both the formal academic curriculum and the co-curriculum. The Framework acknowledges that effective learning, teaching and research are the cornerstones of employability development in our students and comprises five employability strands, namely: Aberdeen Graduate Attributes; Curriculum Development, Employer Engagement, Co-curricular Activities and Career Planning.
- 4.2 The University has set targets around student employability in the Strategic Plan for 2015-20 and as part of this process, all academic Schools have set targets in their annual plans. Employability is a university-wide responsibility and requires partnership working between academic Schools, the Careers Service, the International Office, the Students' Association, Alumni Relations and other Professional Services. Improving positive student outcomes and destinations data requires a high level of collaboration across and beyond the University e.g. alumni, employers and professional bodies. The Careers Service will target its work towards specific academic Schools and disciplines to support implementation of new school-level strategic employability plans in 2015-16. As part of our ongoing employability work a broader network of graduate employer contacts from different employment sectors and organisational sizes, including SMEs and Third Sector Organisations will be nurtured with the aim of increasing student access to career enhancement activities. To enable our students to have full knowledge of available graduate opportunities SMEs will be the focus of a dedicated employer event in 2016-17.

(o) Strategic Plan 2015-2020: We will increase the number of students with co-curricular activities recorded in Enhanced Transcripts by 20% in academic year 2016/17.

We also aim to increase the number of students undertaking an international experience during their studies from 265 in 2015/16 to 300 by 2016/17, through formal centrally managed programmes.

- 4.3 We aim to increase the number of students with co-curricular activities by 20% in 2016/17 from the current baseline of 400. This increase will be achieved through our employability strategies for Schools and collaborations between the Careers Services and Personal Tutors.

- 4.4 Academic Schools and the Careers Service, through closer partnership working, will strengthen the University's credit-bearing work-related learning course provision. Collaborations will increase opportunities for students to achieve University-recognition for work placements, internships, work-based projects, part-time work and volunteering, and for the experiences to be accredited and assessed within the academic curriculum. Benchmark is to be established in 2016-17. The Careers Service remains committed to providing a multifaceted approach to developing students' employability skills. Developments in 2015-16 include launching a career mentoring international pilot for Indonesian students, supporting the establishment of the innovative Students' Association-led Leadership Academy and progressing a novel one-week micro internship initiative.
- 4.5 We will continue to ensure employability skills and attributes are embedding in students' co-curricular learning including our well established skills award, (STAR - Students Taking Active Roles) which attracted several hundred students in 2014-15. Equality of opportunities is fundamental to our careers and employability delivery and provision. To extend our reach, a new online Professional Skills Course will be rolled out to undergraduates in 2016-17 to support students to identify, develop and evidence their skills and attributes.
- 4.6 Partnership working to support taught postgraduates' skills development will be driven by the SFC-funded, 'Making the Most of Masters (MMM) Legacy Project' (2015-17). The MMM model, of credit-bearing work-based projects (WBPs) as an alternative to a traditional academic Masters dissertation, is now a firmly embedded option across the University. Project deliverables in 2016-17 include growth in WBPs numbers to 100 as well as sector-wide dissemination and practice sharing activities.
- 4.7 The University has developed a strong internationalisation strategy which underpins the University's strategic plan and our activities relating to recruitment, research, transnational education project (TNE) development and partnerships.
- 4.8 As part of its expanding internationalisation agenda, the University has been promoting student exchange programmes with a particular emphasis on promoting opportunities for our own students for temporary overseas study. Fairs and events are being held to promote the various opportunities on offer and, as a result, the University has seen an increase in the number of both applications and actual enrolments to the Erasmus programme and various student exchange programmes from 204 in 2014/15 to 265 in 2015/16.
- 4.9 The University will continue efforts to enhance further international exchange through Erasmus, international exchange programme and overseas volunteering, as well as Aberdeen-based opportunities for students to experience other cultures and languages, many of which form part of our sustained study options. We aim to increase participation on these schemes, with 300 students per year undertaking international experience through programmes managed centrally by the University by 2016/17.
- 4.10 The University opened an 'International Centre' in summer 2015 which has hosted a variety of events to support international students and add to the international atmosphere on campus. These have been very well attended and well received by students. Events held to date – some of which have been held in association with Robert Gordon University - include international welcome events, orientation events around 'Simply Living', themed food events (e.g. Pancake breakfast, Guy Fawkes afternoon with food, American Thanksgiving with good etc), and day trips out (e.g. to Loch Ness, castles, Christmas markets etc).
- 4.11 We will continue to offer events such as these through to 2016/17 to strengthen internationalisation at our campus but are also aiming to introduce a series of new ongoing programmes, such as English Language Groups, Language Cafes and a Language Exchange Programme, along with a monthly film night and outings planned for introduction in 2016/17.

- 4.12 In 2016/17 the University hopes to have opened its first international campus, in Hadong in South Korea. This campus will offer a specialised postgraduate portfolio aimed at the international oil and gas sector and will offer Masters degrees in Engineering and our MBA in Energy Management, in addition to research, training (CPD) and consultancy for the offshore industry in Asia.
- 4.13 In addition to this, the University has set ambitious targets for strategic multi-tiered partnerships and is in discussions with a number of international institutions regarding extensive collaboration.

AIM 5: RESEARCH

We intend to build further on our strong research position by building capacity and ensuring we provide an environment and culture where our researchers thrive. The University's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 sets out the following goals relating to research and knowledge exchange:

Goal 1:

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

[People]: Goal 3:

"Continue to foster a positive University culture in order that all are fully engaged and committed to our future and to be champions of equality and diversity".

OUR AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17

- 5.1 (r) The REF 2014 results for the University of Aberdeen showed general improvement of research quality across the board, with a number of areas demonstrating excellent performance with world leading research. The REF results have helped to shape our strategic and operational plans at institutional and school level, and in identifying areas of investment and disinvestment. We have set clear targets for the value research income and the impact of research outputs. At individual level, these are expressed in our Framework of Academic Expectations.

(National measure 11) Strategic Plan 2015-2020: We will increase our postgraduate research student numbers per member of academic staff year-on-year to bring us in line with top institutions from a current baseline of 0.62 per FTE to 0.89 by 2020.

- 5.2 (v) Our Postgraduate Research student numbers have increased over the reporting period, from 831.48 FTE in 2013/14 to 937.04 in 2014/15 and in our Strategic Plan for the next five years we aim to increase our student numbers per member of academic staff significantly by 2020 to build a strong and diverse PGR population.
- 5.3 The University provides extensive support to PhD students and research staff within the University. Located within the Centre for Academic Development, Researcher Development provides the University of Aberdeen's PhD students and research staff with opportunities to enhance their professional skills. These opportunities encompass both skills training workshops and opportunities for newly acquired skills to be put into practice. We also recognise, however, that not all staff will remain within academia. To this end, the Centre also provides opportunities for researchers to acquire skills that will support them in any chosen career (e.g., enterprise, entrepreneurship, consultancy and writing for non-academic audiences).
- 5.4 In addition to Researcher Development, the Centre is home to the University's Educational Development and e-learning teams. The former supports enhancing teaching skills, whilst the latter supports the development of online course material. The Centre is also home to the Student Learning Service, which assists students who are experiencing difficulties with their studies. As such, the Centre provides an array of opportunities for research staff and students to acquire the professional skills that will allow them to further their academic careers.
- 5.5 The Public Engagement with Research (PERU) Unit provides a year round suite of activity to give PGRs opportunities to put new skills into practice. PERU was pivotal, working closely with the Researcher Development team, in securing an RCUK Catalyst award in 2012. This project has defined Aberdeen's leading role in skills through practice and continues to shape our strategy and provision for researcher development. Our approach develops a relationship with the researcher community from induction, through skills development, to practical experience and tangible evidence for career progression. Several hundred opportunities are available for researchers to gain valuable skills and to engage the wider public with their research. Important incentives have also been introduced, to which PGRs can

apply. These include Enabling Funds and a Principal's Prize for Public Engagement and the Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) fund encourages researchers to devise, organise and deliver University wide activities with a career development focus.

5.6 We have recently introduced new initiatives relating to PGR support:

- **PGR Student Induction 'Collaboration Challenges'**

We have introduced novel ways to engage students, through which they will develop skills and provides robust evidence for career development plans. An example is through seed funding where, during induction sessions, PGR students are challenged to develop a small activity that could assist their fellow researchers in the acquisition of transferable skills. These challenges work well in getting students to engage in developing their transferable skills early in their degree—namely communication and team working skills – and the winning teams have been awarded a small amount of funding to further develop their proposed activities. One of the winning teams is creating an online postgraduate journal entitled 'Granite'. Granite's editorial board has issued its first call for papers, and the board has received training in peer review. From an initial small investment of time and money from the Centre, the journal will lead to a number of RPG students training a large number of PhD students in writing, editing and managing a publication. It also provides a natural outlet for attendees of the Centre's writing workshops to practice their writing.

- **Support for Supervisors:**

Working closely with each of the Colleges, a structured Supervisor training programme for new (to supervising and to Aberdeen) supervisors was developed and delivered. The first workshop on progression and monitoring is well established in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine and has been used as a model of good practice; workshops two and three complement this. The programme was based around three core modules: good practice in supervision; supporting PhD writers, and examining research doctorates.

5.7 **Scotland wide collaboration:** Aberdeen has been leading collaboration in researcher development across Scotland through existing channels. The initiatives we have in place foster collaboration with research pools and doctoral training partnerships, for example:

Arts and Humanities Research Council Graduate School (part SFC-funded) - public engagement training session for PGR students with BBC's Helen Keen - students devise and deliver a live public event within the training timeframe as part of the AHRC Being Human Festival in Aberdeen

SUPA (Scottish Universities Physics Alliance) - Physics students from across Scotland take part in public engagement training (delivered by Aberdeen) and deliver a live event as part of the Glasgow Science Festival

EastBIO (East of Scotland BioScience Doctoral Training partnership) (SULSA (Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance) Doctoral Training Partnership) - Following training, Life Sciences students design and deliver a live event as part of British Science week in Aberdeen

5.8 The University of Aberdeen has held the HR Excellence in Research badge since 2012. The badge recognises the University's commitment to the professional and personal development of our researchers through the support we offer. The badge also recognises that our policies and practices align with the principles of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the EU Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Their Recruitment.

5.9 **Support for Principal Investigators (PIs):** PIs are critical to our research environment and we continue to deliver PI Leadership Development programmes for new or aspiring PIs as well as for experienced PIs. We have taken steps to update and refine the HR modules within these to incorporate the key elements of policy and strategy relating to the recruitment and development of researchers. An online handbook is also available to offer guidance and good practice for PIs, managers and supervisors.

(National measure 12) We aim to increase research, consultancy and other knowledge exchange income from a baseline of approximately £64M in 2015/16 to at least £65M by 2016/17.

- 5.10 Research income at the University of Aberdeen has grown by 10%, between 2012/13 and 2013/14 (the most recent data available) and our share of Scottish income has increased slightly. Across the sector, research grants and contracts income grew by 6%. Our share within the Scottish sector of RCUK, charities and EU income has increased slightly (RCUK: 6.3% 13/14 and 5.7% in 12/13; charities: 5.1% in 13/14 and 4.6 in 12/13; EU: 9.7% in 13/14 and 8.1% in 12/13). At the same time, around 20% of all central government, health authorities and local authorities-funded research in Scotland was carried out at the University of Aberdeen in both 2012/13 and 2013/14, reflecting our strengths in health services, medical and nutrition research. Our share of UK industry funded work has increased from 11.5% in 2012/13 to 12% in 2013/14 thanks to strong links with the oil and gas sector.
- 5.11 (s) The University remains committed to the seven pooling initiatives with which our researchers are involved: Northern Research Partnership (NRP); Scottish Institute for Research in Economics (SIRE); Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA); Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance (SICSA); Marine Alliance for Science and Technology (MASTS); Soillse (Gaelic Research Capacity) and Scottish Universities Physics Alliance II (SUPA).
- 5.12 Scottish institutions are important collaborators and partners – in 2014, 48% of our publications were co-authored with researchers and collaborators in the UK, with Scottish institutions the most prominent of these. This is at least partly due to the engagement across the Scottish sector through the pooling initiatives which have also enabled large grant awards (e.g. more than £1.6m to Aberdeen researchers in 2014/15 through SULSA).
- 5.13 (t) The University of Aberdeen is fully compliant with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. We are subscribers to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and have, in the last year, reviewed our governance processes against the standards set in the Concordat and by UKRIO. Compliance has been tested by both internal audit and external (RCUK) audit.
- 5.14 (u) Analysis of our submission to REF 2014 showed an imbalance in the submission rates for male and female researchers, similar to that reported across the UK HE sector. Our equality analysis by age, disability and ethnicity shows that these groups are represented proportionately in the selected population. The disproportionate exclusion of women is concentrated in two areas where there is a large number of female staff predominantly engaged in teaching.
- 5.15 The central Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) recommendations were around institutions proactively addressing inequalities in staff selection for the REF 'rather than simply accept them as a general sector issue'. We have been putting in place a number of measures aimed at improving the work/life balance of all staff, including a workload model, child friendly policies around meeting times, sponsorship of the AURORA Leadership Programme to increase representation of women in senior roles.
- 5.16 'People' are at the heart of the new Strategic Plan in realising our vision for the University. We have set ambitious targets for enhancing equality and diversity across the institution which will be championed by our staff, including targets for Athena Swan Awards, equality and diversity training amongst staff and relevant students, participation in the ECU Race Equality Mark, and other initiatives which support our diverse staff and student population.

(v) The University has set ambitious targets for Athena Swan awards across the University for the planning period 2015-2020. By the end of 2016/17 we aim to have renewed our institutional Bronze Award and have all Schools applied for Bronze Award, with at least one School applying for Silver Award.

- 5.17 The University has been a member of the Athena SWAN Charter since 2011, was one of the first institutions to sign up to the expanded Athena Swan Charter, and as a result we have now set targets for all Schools across the University. The University remains committed to its principles and, as part of this effort, has set ambitious targets around equality and diversity in its Strategic Plan, including Athena Swan. As part of this effort, we will continue to monitor female representation at senior levels in STEM subjects and will promote our Senior Women's Network to staff in all subjects.
- 5.18 The University currently holds an Athena Swan Bronze award. Within the period of the University Strategic Plan 2015-2020 we aim to submit for several Athena Swan accreditations, including an institutional silver award and a number of departmental Silver Awards, and for all other Schools to submit for a Bronze Award. To support this activity, the University has an equality and diversity team with two dedicated Athena SWAN staff members, based within HR, and self-assessment teams have been set up within all Schools. By the end of 2016/17 we aim to have renewed Institutional Bronze and have all Schools applied for Bronze Award, with at least one School applying for Silver Award.

(u) Strategic Plan: The University has a set a 100% target for staff participation in the online Equality and Diversity training modules offered by the University and aims to exceed 90% by the end of 2016/17.

- 5.19 The University continues to implement strategies for improving support for disabled staff. HR have been delivering training to new academic line-managers where support to disabled staff is covered extensively. Line-managers will also receive specific equality and diversity training where appropriate. The University's Staff Disability Network also supports disabled colleagues by providing opportunities for networking and for discussing University policy developments and their impact on disabled staff.
- 5.20 In the last Outcome Agreement the University also pledged to develop a mental health awareness campaign. A Mental Health Working Group has been established with a remit to provide recommendations to senior management regarding how to further support staff and students with mental health problems and how to promote the support already in place and we aim to launch our campaign by 2016/17.
- 5.21 The University has improved its score in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI): in 2014/2015, we rose 66 places in the Index and we aim to see ongoing improvement year-on-year. The submission for the 2016 WEI has recently been submitted with results expected in 4-5 months' time.
- 5.22 The Staff LGBT Network is now self-managing and organises social and other events with University input. The Network was shortlisted for Staff Network Group of the Year by the Scottish Equality Network.
- 5.23 A Race Equality Working Group has been established within the University with a remit to explore the extent of concerns/issues related to race at the institution, and to provide recommendations to the University Senior Management regarding where improvements could be made. The Group was set up as a response to the ECU's publication regarding BME academic flight, which indicated that BME academic staff were significantly more likely to consider a move overseas.
- 5.24 Equality and Diversity training became mandatory for all staff in the second half of 2014. The training has been heavily promoted since 2014/15 with the result that uptake has improved greatly and this will be further promoted in the coming year so that a 100% staff participation is achieved by the end of 2016/17 which, it is hoped, will result in equality and diversity being embedded in all our activities.

AIM 6: UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

We already work closely with partners in business, industry and the public sector to ensure that our research has social, cultural and economic impact. The University's Strategic Plan 2015-2022 set out the following goal relating to collaboration between the University and industry:

Goal 2:

"To increase the non-academic impact of our research on the world through an enhanced portfolio of knowledge exchange activities with industry, business and society."

OUR AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17

(z) We will increase Innovate UK engagement by 20% by 2016/17

(National Measure 13) We will increase EU funding and industry funding by 10% by 2016/17

- 6.1 The new Strategic Plan outlines our ambitions in relation to our contribution to the development of Scotland and the UK and we have set out to enhance our strategic partnerships and will support commercialisation of intellectual property arising from research to this end.
- 6.2 In the planning period 2015-2020 we aim to increase our consultancy and other KE income per FTE to bring it in line with top UK institutions. A number of initiatives are ongoing which align with the Universities Scotland 5-Point Action Plan which demonstrate our commitment to the plan. The following sections provide more detail on these.
- 6.3 *Universities Scotland Point 1 (Engaging in sustained dialogue with each of Scotland's priority economic sectors through Industry Leadership Groups to ensure barriers to effective partnership are systematically identified and tackled).* We have been working collaboratively with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Enterprise and Robert Gordon University to deliver a bid for a UK City Deal. In particular, the University of Aberdeen has taken a leadership role in developing the concept for an Innovation Hub – a key component within the Deal proposal. The Innovation Hub proposal comprises of sector specific support for Energy, Biopharmaceuticals, Food Security and Nutrition and Big Data. We will continue to work with the public sector partners and the industry forums to develop the full business plan and towards the delivery plan. These sectors represent areas of strength for the university and areas where we will enhance our industry collaborations.
- 6.4 We have increased our engagement with the UK Catapults, in particular Cell Therapy, Transport and Satellite Applications, where we have active projects. We also have active engagement and specific projects with all of the SFC-funded Innovation Centres. We aim to increase this further by 20% by 2016/17 through an increased number of applications and awards as well as income.
- 6.5 *Point 2 (Harmonising and simplifying contract, project and partnership negotiations through the development and adoption of business –friendly template contracts and agreements).* We are committed to continuing to provide leadership for the development of the Universities Scotland RCDG template contracts and their wider use and uptake across the sector. Existing template contracts are consistently used in our interactions with SMEs for voucher projects.
- 6.6 *Point 3 (Simplifying business access to university knowledge and supporting an informed understanding of the knowledge exchange process).* We have significantly improved business and public access to our research output. Since 2012, we have more than doubled our Open Access compliance; currently just under 60% of our journal articles can be accessed through our Research Repository, AURA. We have evidence that this has resulted in increased usage of AURA downloads; the number of downloads has increased from 46K in 2014 to 74K in 2015 (up to 6 December).
- 6.7 We have engaged in a programme of promotion and engagement with regard to our impact case studies using digital media technology to present these in a business-friendly format.

(National measure 14) We will grow our innovation voucher engagement with a view to grow by 10% by 2016/17.

- 6.8 *Point 4 (raising awareness of opportunities for business arising from university knowledge, including advocating the potential contribution to product and process innovation).* We will grow our links with SMEs through Interface and the various forms of Voucher projects. We currently have 10 per annum and a target to grow by 10%. Increasingly H2020 require industry partners with a particular emphasis on SMEs. We aim to increase our level of H2020 income, and as a result will increase the level of industry engagement.
- 6.9 *Point 5 (Expanding our role in company formation through enhanced start up and spin out programmes).* We have launched Enterprise Campus North providing support for the North East partners. We have seen a steady growth in activity to 14 clients engaging with the team at the end of Y1 and 24 clients to date. Complementing Enterprise Campus, we have launched ABVenture Zone – a facility providing high quality innovation space for enterprise training and incubation for entrepreneurs. We have delivered 11 new tenant start -ups and pre-start-ups within the facility and for 2016/17 we would anticipate the facility being at capacity.
- 6.10 We will continue to provide training and support for staff engaging in entrepreneurial activities, with a particular focus on post-doctoral and early career researchers.
- 6.11 We are committed to developing an environment to encourage and support the development of enterprise and innovation skills, business development and entrepreneurship amongst our students as this is fundamental to foster student employability. The University will aim to increase the volume of students engaging in enterprising activities and their success in these activities through continuing collaboration with the Scottish Institute for Enterprise, Enterprise Campus and the Aberdeen Business Enterprise Society.
- 6.12 We will continue to play a key role in the cultural and economic fabric of Aberdeen and the NE of Scotland, including hosting a diverse range of events and activities which engage the public. Our events engage over 35,000 people per annum held at various venues throughout the region. We support student-led initiatives such as student festivals, student societies, publication and others.
- 6.13 We will continue to offer incentives to promote our cultural impact, e.g. the Principal's annual prize for public engagement, annual training programmes in sciences communication etc.

AIM 7: SUSTAINABLE INSTITUTIONS

- 7.1 The University continues to be committed to the redevelopment of our estate in order to support the best possible student and staff experience. In recent years significant investment has seen the University open the Sir Duncan Rice Library (2011), the Aquatics Centre extension to Aberdeen Sports Village (2014), and a new pre-school childcare facility in 2015. We are due to open our new Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health building in January 2016. The University is currently working on identifying priority projects for further development of the estate, with a mix of new build and refurbishment projects sitting alongside work to enhance the condition and functionality of our older estate. In all cases the aim is to support our emerging needs in both teaching and research.
- 7.2 The University is committed across its capital programmes to the principles of sustainable estate development. The opening, in August 2015, of the new Rocking Horse Nursery, saw the University open what will be the first fully certified Passivhaus building at a Scottish university, and the first pre-school facility in Scotland to adopt this demanding energy-efficient design concept. The Passivhaus concept provides a high level of comfort for users, while consuming very little energy for heating for cooling.
- 7.3 The new Rowett building, due to open in early 2016, is on course to achieve the challenging BREEAM 'Outstanding' standard, and will be one of only a handful in Scotland to have achieved this level.

OUR AMBITIONS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016/17

(National measure 15) In our Strategic Planning period 2015-2020 we aim to reduce carbon emissions by 20%, and to achieve a 4% reduction in energy consumption per m² per annum. To support this ambition, the University will introduce a new Carbon Management Plan in 2015/16 spelling out institutional ambition for mitigation and adaption to climate change, alongside a detailed project portfolio, through to 2020.

- 7.4 While progress against carbon reduction targets was hampered in 2014/15 by a pause in our capital programme, we will in 2015/16 introduce a new Carbon Management Plan that covers the period to 2020. That plan will detail a series of projects and activities intended to deliver significant energy efficiencies and associated carbon savings, with a target of 4% reduction in energy use per annum likely to emerge.
- 7.5 We are also working to improve our understanding of our extended carbon footprint. In 2015 we have been able, for the first time, to detail our emissions derived from Business Travel. This allows us to produce a genuinely comprehensive institutional carbon footprint that covers all scopes of emissions.
- 7.6 We continue to be an active participant in sector and regional initiatives to support sustainability. Our membership of the EAUC sees us participate in function specific support networks in areas such as waste, travel and energy, and we take advantage of the sector-specific training and support they provide, for example on the emergent Scottish Government sustainability reporting regime.
- 7.7 We are also engaged in regional networks that support collaborative efforts to address the local impacts of climate change. These include the North East Scotland Climate Change Partnership (NESCCP) and the recently established Powering Aberdeen (the vehicle for the city's Sustainable Energy Action Plan).
- 7.8 We continue to investigate, with Robert Gordon University and a major Scottish landowner, the possibility of establishing substantial off-site renewable energy generation projects. This ambitious project is in part dependent on the outcome of the Westminster Government's review of feed-in-tariffs, with an outcome of that review to become clear in early 2016. A decision on how best to proceed with this project will be taken in 2016.

- 7.9 Our Strategic Plan commits to a continuation of our aim to achieve a 4% year-on-year reduction in energy consumption per m², reflecting both international and Scottish Government targets, while also contributing to an ambitious target of a 20% overall reduction in carbon emissions by 2020.
- 7.10 We will report on progress through the now mandatory sustainability reporting regime, piloted by the Scottish Government in autumn 2015.
- 7.11 Our target for annual capital and maintenance spend on estates and buildings will continue to be set at 4.5% of insured asset value.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2016/17 MAPPED AGAINST THE SFC NATIONAL MEASURES

*The University should report on aspirations for achievement by 2016/17 for all starred 'National Measures'

Aim 1		
Improve access to higher education for people from the widest possible range of backgrounds		
Outcome	National Measure	University of Aberdeen Targets
<p>More even patterns of participation by different groups of learners, including those from areas of deprivation, from protected characteristic groups and care backgrounds.</p> <p>An increase in the number of students articulating with advanced standing from HNC/HND to degree level study.</p> <p>More institutions applying best practice in contextualised admissions.</p>	<p>(1)* The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing.</p> <p>(2)* The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes.</p> <p>(3) The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants from the Schools for Higher Education Programme – SHEP (i.e. Schools with consistently low rates of progression to higher education)</p> <p>(4)* The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants by different protected characteristic groups and with care experience</p> <p>(5)* The number and proportion of FT first year Scottish-domiciled entrants from different protected characteristic groups and with care experience returning to study in year 2.</p>	<p><i>(National measure 1)</i> We will increase the number of articulation routes available for Scottish-domiciled college students to continue on to degree level study and will work with our FE partner colleges to smooth the transition from FE to HE.</p> <p><i>(National measure 2)</i> The University aims to maintain the recruitment of entrants from the 40% most deprived postcodes at around 16% of Scottish-domiciled Home entrants in 2016/17.</p> <p><i>(National measure 3)</i> The University will continue to work with local low progression schools to increase the number of students from these schools and aid their retention. The target for 2016/17 will continue to be set at 60 entrants from target schools.</p> <p><i>(National measures 4-5)</i> We will increase recruitment of students with care experience or protected characteristics and increase retention of this student group.</p> <p><i>(National measure 5)</i> By 2016/17, we will aim for continuation rates for the SIMD 40 cohort to be 91% and for the 21 and over cohort to be 90%. We intend that within three years there should be no difference of statistical significance in the retention rates of these cohorts and others.</p>
Aim 2 High quality, efficient and effective learning – learner journeys are short, efficient and effective as possible and learners experience the highest quality of learning and teaching and achieve successful outcomes		
Outcome	National Measure	University of Aberdeen Targets
<p>An improvement in the retention and success rates of learners.</p> <p>Greater flexibility in entry and exist points, where appropriate, to reduce potential inefficiencies in the learner journey where this is of benefit to the learner.</p> <p>Quality of learning provision and learner outcomes assured and enhanced.</p>	<p>(6)* The number and proportion of FT first year Scottish-domiciled UG entrants returning to study in year 2.</p> <p>(7) The difference from the individual institution's UK benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the NSS.</p>	<p><i>(National measure 6)</i> In our Strategic Plan 2015-2020 we have pledged to reduce non-continuation and achieve a maximum of 6% non-continuation into Year 2 by 2020. As part of this target, we will aim to have improved our non-continuation rate from 11.3% to 10.5% by 2016/17.</p> <p><i>(National measure 7)</i> In our Strategic Plan 2015-2020, we have set targets for student satisfaction as measured by the NSS and hope to achieve scores of 92% in Teaching and 72% in Assessment and Feedback by the end of the period. We aim for a year-on-year improvement over the next five years as part of this strategy.</p>

Aim 3 Right learning in the right place – secure coherent provision of higher education in Scotland in line with SFC’s statutory obligation		
Outcome	National Measure	University of Aberdeen Targets
<p>Universities are responsive to current and future skill requirements of employers</p> <p>More targeted recruitment to courses of national and regional economic significance.</p> <p>Nationally coherent and regionally aligned nursing provision.</p> <p>Implementation of the National Gaelic Language Plan.</p> <p>An increase in the number of students with practical skills in modern foreign languages and Gaelic.</p>	<p>(8) The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled UG entrants to STEM courses.</p>	<p>(National measure 8) We aim to maintain the number of UG entrances to STEM courses by 2016/17 and to take action to address any issues of gender imbalance in our student population.</p> <p>(k) We aim to increase the number of students taking language courses via ‘sustained study’ and to achieve 105 students in this category by 2016/17.</p>
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		
Outcome	National Measure	University of Aberdeen Targets
<p>An increase in the proportion of graduates in work or further study six months after graduating, and of those in work, a reduction in the proportion in Non-Graduate (as opposed to Graduate) occupations, where these proportions appear to be particularly high.</p> <p>Graduates are well prepared for work and can utilise their skills effectively in the increasingly international labour market.</p>	<p>(9)* The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled graduates entering positive destinations.</p>	<p>(National measure 9) In our Strategic Plan 2015-2020 we aim to increase the number of our graduates who go on to graduate-level employment or further study to 80% by 2020 and to achieve 79% by 2016/17.</p> <p>(o) Strategic Plan 2015-2020: We will increase the number of students with co-curricular activities recorded in Enhanced Transcripts by 20% in academic year 2016/17.</p> <p>We also aim to increase the number of students undertaking an international experience during their studies from 265 in 2015/16 to 300 by 2016/17, through formal centrally managed programmes.</p>
Aim 5 Research base that is internationally competitive and improving its reputation and standing in the world		
Outcome	National Measure	University of Aberdeen Targets
<p>An improvement in the sector’s performance in REF 2014 compared with RAE2008 was a key measure in previous years and SFC would propose that performance in a future REF exercise would continue to be a key outcome. SFC along with other UK funding bodies are</p>	<p>(10) Ratings of submissions to the Research Excellence Framework, relative to UK competitors. <i>(NB. we are not expecting HEIs to provide this information for 2016-17)</i></p> <p>(11) Number of PGR students.</p> <p>(12) Amount and percentage share (Scotland and UK) of income from the Research Councils, major research charities and the European Commission.*</p> <p><i>*SFC has particular interest in income from the three sources listed above and will continue to monitor income from these sources. Reflecting the</i></p>	<p>(National measure 11) Strategic Plan 2015-2020: We will increase our postgraduate research student numbers per member of academic staff year-on-year to bring us in line with top institutions from a current baseline of 0.62 per FTE to 0.89 by 2020.</p> <p>(National measure 12) We aim to increase research, consultancy and other knowledge exchange income from a baseline of approximately £64M in 2015/16 to at least £65M by 2016/17.</p>

<p>currently consulting on the nature of a future REF exercise.</p> <p>Scotland maintaining its share (relative to the UK) of Research Council and research charity income; and increasing its share of income from European Commission programmes. Enhanced research and KE collaboration.</p> <p>An increase in the number of institutions and departments securing Athena Swan awards.</p>	<p><i>different circumstances within different institutions, HEIs are welcome to indicate their institutions' aspirations for total research income, research income from these specific sources, or income from other specific sources such as government or industry.</i></p>	<p>(v) The University has set ambitious targets for Athena Swan awards across the University for the planning period 2015-2020. By the end of 2016/17 we aim to have renewed our institutional Bronze Award and have all Schools applied for Bronze Award, with at least one School applying for Silver Award.</p> <p>(u) Strategic Plan: The University has a set a 100% target for staff participation in the online Equality and Diversity training modules offered by the University and aims to exceed 90% by the end of 2016/17.</p>
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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

Outcome	National Measure	University of Aberdeen Targets
<p>In line with the Scotland CAN DO Framework, a step change in the engagement of business and industry through significantly enhanced HEI/industry collaborations including Innovation Centres and the Innovation Scotland Forum.</p> <p>Maximise the potential for leverage of further investment at the UK and European level to further enhance HEI/industry collaboration, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).</p>	<p>(13)* Range of established KTG metrics+ and the Higher Education and Business Community Interaction Survey (HEBCI). (14) The number of SFC innovation vouchers (IVs), Follow-on IVs and H2020 IVs.</p> <p><i>*SFC is currently consulting on the outcomes of a strategic review of the KTG. The outcome of this review may result in substantial changes to the allocation of KTG. Metrics will be collected in Autumn 2015 but the full set may not be collected in future years. Additional targets and measures around innovation and engagement may be introduced. Further guidance will be issues following the consultation period.</i></p>	<p>(z) We will increase Innovate UK engagement by 20% by 2016/17.</p> <p><i>(National Measure 13) We will increase EU funding and industry funding by 10% by 2016/17.</i></p> <p><i>(National measure 14) We will grow our innovation voucher engagement with a view to grow by 10% by 2016/17.</i></p>

Aim 7
Sustainable institutions – ensure high quality of governance and management for institutions delivering long-term and financial and environmentally sustainable interactions

Outcome	National Measure	University of Aberdeen Targets
<p>Institutions contribute to the delivery of Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 targets for reduced greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<p>(15)* Gross carbon footprint (3 year period)+ (16) Annual capital and maintenance spend on estates and buildings as a proportion of value of estate.**</p> <p><i>*From November 2015 it will be a legislative requirement for publicly funded bodies to use this measure to report directly to Government on progress with reducing their carbon emissions.</i></p>	<p><i>(National measure 15) In our Strategic Planning period 2015-2020 we aim to reduce carbon emissions by 20%, and to achieve a 4% reduction in energy consumption per m² per annum. To support this ambition, the University will introduce a new Carbon Management Plan in 2015/16 spelling out institutional ambition for mitigation and adaption to climate change, alongside a detailed project portfolio, through to 2020.</i></p>

<p>Institutions meet the principles of good governance set out in the Scottish Code of HE Governance.</p> <p>Institutions' governing bodies have clear ownership of institutional sustainability.</p> <p>Institutions have in place robust and coherent plans and processes for performance management and monitoring institutional sustainability.</p> <p>Institutions explore and exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness through collaborations and shared services.</p> <p>Institutions invest in their estates for teaching and research at a sustainable level.</p>	<p><i>**SFC formula capital maintenance grant must be used for estates build, or maintenance and debt servicing associated with capital developments. As a general guide, best practice suggests that investing somewhere between 4-6% of total asset value is required to maintain the estate in good order. All capital spending must be aligned to each university's estates strategy.</i></p>	
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