

Research Wales Innovation Fund Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23

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Section A: Overview

1. Strategic ambitions

Please provide an overview of your institution's 3 year [and beyond if longer term plans are available] approach to research and innovation activity which will be supported by RWIF. You may wish to highlight broad areas which you are targeting, and describe how RWIF funding will align with your institutional mission and internal strategies. [max 300 words]

The Open University's mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.

In light of the crisis posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and having regard to the impacts of Brexit on the economy, we have chosen to focus our funding on the OU in Wales' unique areas of strength, namely support for skills, and civic mission and public engagement. These investments will have the greatest impact in Wales in terms of meeting HEFCW's vision for Research and Innovation and enabling social and economic prosperity across the country. As the situation changes, we will review annually the split in the use of the RWIF funding.

This aligns with our current Research and Enterprise Plan which includes the following objectives:

- Build our capacity in distinctive engaged, open research through increased and widened public and stakeholder engagement with OU research
- Develop the number and significance of our large-scale, external research and enterprise partnership.

From 2022/23, as a key part of the new OU Strategy and the focus of our new Research Plan, we will be working on a set of key societal challenges, owned by the entire OU community, that we believe the Open University can play an important role in tackling.

Our OU Knowledge Exchange (KE) plan is being updated in 2020/21 to align with the KE Concordat and actions within the RWIF strategy will feed into this.

In Wales we will create opportunities:

1. To build a skilled and productive nation by supporting employers and individuals to upskill and reskill through flexible distance learning progression pathways
2. To build innovation capacity and impact throughout Wales by delivering and supporting citizen-engaged and applied research and sharing across communities
3. To share our expertise as leaders in researching and producing high quality flexible online and distance learning with partners – building on needs identified as a result of Covid-19
4. To align our work to the present and future needs of Welsh society by co-producing and developing new distance learning content arising from our academic research
5. To support the development of a highly skilled and socially aware nation by fostering critical thinking and building an informed and engaged citizenship.

As an all-Wales university, we will seek to deliver positive economic and social outcomes, public engagement, and impact to all areas of Wales, including the most marginalised communities.

In doing so, we will demonstrate our values of inclusivity, innovation and responsiveness, working with partners in further and higher education, and with the public, third, and private sectors, to ensure our innovation and engagement activities achieve reach and significance.

2. Capacity Grant

Provide some narrative on how your institution plans to make use of the capacity grant included within RWIF, and the one-off Innovation Capacity Development Fund (see paragraph 14 in Circular W20/09HE for further guidance on the Capacity Grant). How will this be used to support and enhance capacity and incentivise and improve performance in knowledge exchange? [max 300 words]

The RWIF Capacity Grant and the ICDF allocation has been prioritised to:

- secure the learning and investment of the initial HEFCW I&E funding
- support the continuation of posts and activity which has begun to have real impact with partners and communities
- embed work which was at early stages of development
- learn from evaluation.

From this strong base, we are:

- Growing our partnerships with FE

- Developing our work with employers on skills development
- Extending our programme of public engagement and civic mission work.

There are four continuation posts which build on previous HEFCW investment. We continue to boost our civic mission work, particularly in light of Covid-19, sharing our expertise as a high-quality, flexible, distance learning provider through a programme of support to other organisations and through the development of new, free, online, bilingual learning material.

New staff are also building capacity to support new programmes for skills and employability aligning to national and regional sector priorities, in particular in digital skills, health and social care, and leadership and management, and aligned to OU research. They are building on the public engagement work started through HEFCW Civic Mission funding to support critical thinking, citizenship and public debate.

This funding ensures sufficient administrative, activity, and programme support resources to be made available from the OU in Wales office.

We are developing and delivering programmes and activities which align to the present and future economic and social needs of Wales by drawing on research and innovation capability from across The Open University's four faculties and our world-leading distance learning production expertise. Activity is benchmarked against the university's work in all four nations of the UK, sharing best practice, improving performance, and building capacity for innovation and engagement from The OU in Wales.

Section B: Specific content

3. Commercialisation / income generating activity

RWIF has been designed to incentivise and reward performance, particularly in terms of external income capture. Outline the direction of travel for the next three years which will support delivery of the KPIs outlined in 3.1. Provide details on key areas of investment and growth. Outline where RWIF will be used to add value to existing activities, or how it will support new developments. Further guidance on this section is available in Circular W20/09HE. Your response should be framed in terms of social and economic prosperity for Wales. [1000 words max]

The OU in Wales will utilise funding to develop new methods to deepen engagement with employers. This will enable more employers in Wales to access the broad range of flexible OU study for their staff, through relevant skills training via a range of short courses and core qualifications. This will contribute to a more resilient, better skilled, and productive workforce in Wales and enable The OU in Wales to generate new income.

We have been actively developing links with employers over the last three years. Our degree apprenticeship programme has enabled us to secure partnerships with

a range of organisations and sectors, which includes key companies in Wales like Admiral and Tata Steel, to NHS Boards and local authorities, as well as micro, small and medium sized employers. We are delivering in all the Regional Skills Partnership areas, which has provided a strong base for further growth.

RWIF funding has enabled growth in capacity and has supported the formation of a new Skills team. The team has dedicated resource to:

- Engage new employers and further relationships with existing employers to offer OU courses
- Work with colleagues within faculties to unlock opportunities for research, innovation, and knowledge exchange and sharing these with employers
- Grow employer relationships through collaboration with FE/HE partners
- Align to key strategies like RSP Employability & Skills Plans and City/Growth Deals
- Evaluate the effectiveness of emerging qualifications e.g. microcredentials.

In Year 2 and 3, RWIF funding will be invested into the development of an OpenSkills Academy, aimed at employers and employees as a destination for skills solutions. The service will help users access support to improve employability and productivity through flexible learning via free, funded or paid for courses, promoting the OU's 'alternative' offers such as microcredentials, short courses and vocational qualifications while still providing links to core qualifications and signposting our free OpenLearn courses.

The OpenSkills Academy brand and services will enable the OU in Wales to deepen relationships with employers and create a network, leading to more agile relationships and increased numbers of employees accessing OU courses for professional development, as well as longer term opportunities for research and innovation. This will provide the return on investment from RWIF funding and create a long term, sustainable revenue stream for the OU in Wales.

OpenSkills Academy website

The website will provide employers and employees a unique, interactive service. LMI data reveals time, funds, time to organise training and difficulty finding providers and relevant courses are barriers to training. The site will aim to overcome these barriers and provide unique options for users.

3.1 Provide details of your institution's strategic KPIs for Commercialisation / income generating activity

Commercialisation/income generating KPIs		Y1	Y 2	Y 3*
Total learners accessing courses through the OpenSkills Academy brand Baseline: 0	Target (cumulative)	n/a	20	80
Number of employers accessing the OpenSkills Academy and purchasing CPD programmes Baseline: 0	Target (cumulative)	n/a	3 (pilots)	20

*Dependent on funding. Targets to be reviewed annually in light of actual funding received.

3.2 How will your strategic approach in this area align with HEFCW's [Research and Innovation: the Vision for Wales](#)? Select the pillars supported:

- Excellence
 Place
 Innovation
 Collaboration

3.3 How do your strategic ambitions for commercialisation and income generating activity support the Vision's goals, milestones and ambitions?

[Max 250 words]

Short term goals

- Provide an alternative route to higher education.
- Develop an online platform for employers to access high quality accredited and non-accredited learning.
- Provide a service for employers to assess their skills needs and meet skills gaps.
- Align with RSPs' skills priorities especially in the areas of digital and leadership skills.
- Introduce microcredentials to employers in Wales as a new CPD option for staff.

Medium term milestones

- Aid economic recovery and support employers to meet skills and staff shortages through education.
- Employers are engaging with multiple elements of the OpenSkills Academy to address skills need.
- Increased engagement between employers and HE to meet skills gaps.

- Case studies produced of successful engagement and impact on the workforce.
- OpenLearn being used as an additional tool by L&D teams within employers
- Evaluation of the OpenSkills Academy informs and shapes curriculum development.

Long term ambitions

- The OpenSkills Academy recognised as a leading resource and CPD hub for employers in Wales.
- Changed perceptions on employer use of HE sector to address skills shortages through alternative education routes.
- Microcredentials seen as a credible route to encourage lifelong learning.
- Strengthened ties with RSPs and seen as leaders in the microcredential space in Wales.
- Developed a stepping stone for FE learners to explore HE education through engagement with academy courses.

4. New business growth and skills support

Outline the support you intend to provide for new start-ups, spin-offs, and meeting the targets of schemes such as the WG's Youth Entrepreneurship Programme. Provide information on where RWIF will add value to existing activities, and where it allows you to invest in further growth. Further guidance on this section is available in Circular W20/09HE.

Your response should be framed in terms of social and economic prosperity for Wales. [1000 words max]

As the only university with reach into every community in Wales, (and the whole of the UK), we want to build on that advantageous position to be able to support skills development across the whole country and this is the focus for this section.

While the aftereffects of Covid-19 are yet to be fully experienced and post-Brexit changes beginning to be experienced, it is accepted across most sectors and governments that a large-scale national effort to upskill and reskill organisations and learners will be necessary in order to support our recovery. As a society, we will need a renewed focus on the importance of systematic life-long learning.

The OU has been the leading innovator in the field of distance learning for over 50 years, and the leading provider of online learning since the turn of the millennium. During the Covid-crisis, we have responded quickly to requests for support in developing online distance learning from a range of organisations, helping them in the initial stages of the online pivot. The focus of our skills support will be to continue to contribute to recovery and renewal during the next year, adding value to existing work and growing the significance and reach of partners' online pivot, and growing face-to-face activity through a range of activity.

Enhanced capacity in this area enables us to work more closely with Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) and provider fora, aligning sector skills priorities across all three regions in Wales with a more targeted offer. We are actively identifying

priority sector skills gaps and developing solutions to be piloted through our place-based local engagement and then rolled out at a regional or national level. This helps the economy in allowing people to find and keep suitable employment in their local communities.

Our strategic focus is:

i) Building CPD capacity

We will continue to work with partners to understand their staff CPD needs and will offer bespoke, timely and relevant training packages. Where courses are not available, we are able to commission the co-creation of Open Educational Resources (OER) and content relevant to partner and wider socio-economic needs. We will work with a range of partners including SME employers, industry, government bodies, FE colleges and schools to scope and develop new and relevant CPD courses.

We will enhance the growth potential of SME employers and help raise the skill levels of their employees under the OpenSkills Academy. Employers are vital to the Welsh economy and are often deeply embedded in their communities. It is crucial for their success that the workforce is given the opportunity to continuously develop its skills and be resilient to turbulent economic forces, which can have wider social impact in disadvantaged areas. We are prioritising two key areas:

- a) Developing competent digital skills at all levels
- b) Developing improved leadership and management.

We work with education providers in local authorities, FE colleges and schools to support the pivot to online learning, creating webinars, courses and bespoke support. We are also building our schools CPD research capacity, aligned to our PGCE team, listening to what works and how things can be improved as part of the current crisis and with regard to the Curriculum for Wales.

We will continue to develop and evaluate our employability work with students and graduates, mainly through our GO Wales and Graduate Support Fund programmes. This will inform future funding proposals and seek to continuously improve the opportunities and experience for OU students and alumni.

ii) Further education collaboration

Developing better HE collaboration with FE colleges is one of HEFCW's priorities. Our model of open access across all areas of Wales enables learners to stay in their communities to learn at a higher level. Our work with FE colleges will deliver innovative progression pathways from level 2 to level 7, including degree apprenticeships.

Working with FE colleagues, we will continue to develop partnership projects that identify gaps aligned to regional skills need and deliver new progression pathway programmes, providing opportunities for staff to upskill.

We will continue to establish partnerships across Wales which build upon our successful pilot FE initiatives, expanding these and extending our reach to increase awareness and opportunities amongst FE students of a wider range of higher learning opportunities. By Year 3, we will have worked with FE colleges across every region to establish partnership agreements, deliver pilot activities and successfully develop FE/HE progression pathway programmes. We will have built mutually beneficial FE/HE relationships that increase knowledge and awareness of additional higher learning opportunities within learners' communities.

We will also work closely with FE college staff to identify their own CPD needs and build provision to support collaboration. We will build sustainable staff expertise and networks between HE/FE and industry that creates stronger regional focus and capacity around key skill sets. This will also create opportunities for staff and learners to engage with research and innovation, which will include the creation of HE/FE learning resources.

We will also build clear connectivity between industry future skills needs and regional demand in priority sectors across Wales and support the development of a talent pool from L2 – L7.

Whether learners are currently in post and looking to upskill or change careers and reskill, we are well positioned to identify progression pathways to support the Welsh economy and align to the sector skills priorities most in need. In the post-Covid recovery period, there is a need to radically relook at the way we structure our workforce and develop new skills. We can work with employers and key stakeholders to create resources to provide support to enhance place-based skills in industry.

iii) External collaboration

Building on our existing programme of academic/industry workshops and bespoke Strategic Insight Partnerships (SIPs) with FE colleges, we will broaden the reach of these opportunities from Year 2 to ensure that they are offered wider than the FE sector to increase research, innovation and skills development across a wide range of external partners and the OU.

4.1 Provide details of your institution's strategic KPIs for new business growth and skills support

One of the OU's strategic objectives is to enhance our future **growth and sustainability** by diversifying our reach and sources of income. We will do this through:

- Devising a clear approach to developing offers for students and corporate customers focusing on our short, flexible, learning development provision using both OU and FutureLearn platforms for the UK and international audience
- We will continue our focus on growing degree apprenticeships in the UK
- We will prioritise resourcing for strategic change that adds value and operational activities to increase student numbers.

High level measures of success:

- Increase income through diversification
- Continue to increase directly registered student numbers at all levels (new and continuing).

Another OU strategic objective is to support **student success**. Our Student Employability Strategy is focused on Enhanced Employability for Student Success and deepening our employer engagement is one of the key themes.

Building CPD capacity

Through building CPD capacity we will contribute to the growth and sustainability strategic objective by growing our partnerships and increasing learner numbers while diversifying our reach across Wales. Following the dip in CPD as a result of the pandemic, KPIs for Years 2 and 3 have been amended downwards). An additional KPI has been added to reflect revenue generated through corporate learning relationships and microcredentials.

CPD KPIs (using HE-BCI survey data)		Y 1	Y 2*	Y 3*
Total learner days of CPD/CE courses delivered (FTE equivalent) Baseline: 298 (HE-BCI 2018/19)	Target (cumulative)	+5%	+5% (+15% original)	+5% (+25% original)
Number of partners/employers participating in CPD increased Baseline: 138 (HE-BCI 2018/19)	Target (cumulative)	+5%	+5% (+15% original)	+5% (+25% original)
Revenue generated through corporate learning relationships and microcredentials Baseline: £1,684,694 (2020/21)	Target (cumulative)	N/A (new KPI measure)	+8%	+10%

*Dependent on funding. Targets to be reviewed annually in light of actual funding received.

Further education collaboration

Through building opportunities with FE colleges we will contribute to the growth and sustainability strategic objective by increasing learner numbers, including degree apprenticeships and testing new collaborative projects while diversifying our reach across Wales. We will also contribute to student success through a better understanding of FE student needs as they consider accessing higher learning.

FE Collaboration KPIs		Y 1	Y 2*	Y 3*
Increased number of learners on co-developed courses and through new progression pathways Baseline: 6,850 (2019/20)	Target (cumulative)	+1,000	+2,000	+3,000

Number of pilot activities developed with FE colleges	Target (cumulative)	3	5	7
Number of pilot activities rolled out	Target	-	2	4

*Dependent on funding. Targets to be reviewed annually in light of actual funding received.

External collaboration

Through our engagement with external partner organisations we will grow our opportunities for collaboration with OU in Wales and Faculty staff to develop wider research and innovation opportunities.

External collaboration KPIs		Y 1	Y 2	Y 3*
Number of HE/ external collaborative workshops/SIPs delivered**	Target	4 (FE/industry only)	10 (original target 8)	16

*Dependent on funding. Targets to be reviewed annually in light of actual funding received.

**SIPs and workshops can be delivered to support any section of the strategy

4.2 How will your strategic approach in this area align with HEFCW’s [Research and Innovation: the Vision for Wales](#)? Select the pillars supported:

- Excellence
- Place
- Innovation
- Collaboration

4.3 How do your strategic ambitions for new business growth and skills support the Vision’s goals, milestones and ambitions?

[Max 250 words]

The OU in Wales has a broader view than the Vision’s specific goals, milestones and ambitions due to the skills focus of this section of the strategy.

Short term goals

- Supporting employers’ recovery from Covid-19 by upskilling staff through CPD in online provision
- Exploring practical solutions for FE/HE collaboration and industry engagement
- Identifying gaps in skills provision for regional sector skills priorities and progression pathways from FE/HE

Medium term milestones

- Welsh workforce has increased digital skills
- Increased HE-external partner collaborations built from workshops and SIPs
- Positive working relationships between FE/HE and early progression pathways formed anticipating the intent of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

- Influence the development of course provision that aligns to sector skills priorities and progression pathways

Long term ambitions

- Full economic impact of Covid-19 on workforce mitigated by short/medium term actions
- Clear progression pathways in key priority sectors
- HE and industry research and scholarship collaborations and a clear understanding of the OU's unique offer across the whole of Wales.

5. Civic Mission and Public Engagement

Outline how RWIF will support continued or new activity across your communities. Place-based civic mission is broad, incorporating a vast range of activities including support within the community to meet the skills needs of industry, HE-FE partnerships in skills, innovation and engagement, public engagement through research, and meeting societal challenges. Support for the community within university premises for e.g. events, lectures etc, would also be a means of supporting civic mission. Further guidance on this section is available in Circular W20/09HE.

Your response should be framed in terms of social and economic prosperity for Wales. [1000 words max]

The OU is not just a university. We are a movement for social change. At the heart of our mission is to build a better, more engaged, and more informed society by making higher learning open to all.

We recognise that Wales faces myriad changes and challenges over the coming years. These have been made more urgent because of Covid-19. We seek to play our role in meeting those challenges and equipping the nation to respond to those changes.

Our social mission forms the basis of our work in this area and is embedded throughout all our activities across teaching, research and scholarship. The objective of our civic mission work is to enable people to change their thinking, broaden their understanding and build their knowledge.

Funding in this area of work provides us with an opportunity to develop new ways to support society and the economy through and post Covid-19, as well as continuing and growing existing work.

We will boost staff capacity and activities in this area to work in and with communities and those who serve them, listening to their needs, and offering co-produced solutions to enhance critical thought and sharing our research and knowledge to improve lives.

Our strategic focus will be:

○ **Fostering critical thinking and building an informed and engaged citizenship**

We believe that education as a public good is much wider than the teaching of course-specific subject matter; it is also about fostering critical and independent thought.

Skills like these are inherently valuable to the economy and society at large but must also be part of the national effort to address misinformation and democratic disengagement. Critical thought has become so important to help us all understand the daily mass of information we are presented with and which is now necessary to keep ourselves healthy.

We will:

- Provide resources and information to encourage critical thinking and create active citizens through the creation of learning resources. We are working with different communities, listening to their experiences and using our academic expertise and a partnership approach to help them to engage with higher learning opportunities.
- Enhance our own understanding of Wales' varied communities by building relationships with key stakeholders and by building on our current local engagement pilots and working with national bodies and think tanks.
- Amplify the voices of our communities and understand more fully the barriers which under-represented groups of people face in accessing higher learning by providing opportunities for public debate on societal challenges.

We share our learning within the OU and through the Universities Wales Civic Mission Network, which is chaired by the OU in Wales' Deputy Director, to other HEIs in Wales and beyond.

○ **Enhancing our offer of free, bilingual, online learning**

As a university, we believe that Welsh citizens have a right to learning throughout life, and that learning should not be a one-off experience which ends at 21 years of age. It can and should take many forms – online and in-person, formal and informal.

Through our commitment to our own civic mission, we will:

- Invest in new, bilingual educational resources and skills-focused courses on our free online learning platform - [OpenLearn](#) - to inspire achievement and support employability for informal learners via digital credentials.
- Work with partner organisations to develop online learning resources to meet the needs of the people and communities they work with. We will work with partners to promote our free online resources and ensure that we reach and inspire as many new learners as possible.

- Explore opportunities with partners to pilot digital learning initiatives, adding value to local partner core learning programmes by developing blended face-to-face and online learning opportunities that raise awareness and progression to higher learning, particularly in Wales' most deprived communities.

This work will seek to incorporate our Reaching Wider OpenLearn Champions and OU Ambassador programmes and our OpenTalks series, which all aim to widen access to our free learning.

- **Developing and sharing OU research and knowledge to the people of Wales**

Many communities feel that they do not have a voice, feeling marginalised and subject to stigma due to misrepresentation of their communities.

We will:

- Grow capacity for open, citizen engaged research to amplify the voice of people from diverse communities, providing platforms for their views to be heard, building on the initial success of the co-produced UKRI place-based public engagement research project and extend its reach to wider communities. We will work with academic staff to develop further engaged research collaborations.
- Build the amount of OU research conducted in Wales, based on OU research priorities, linking to the developing OU research programme of societal challenges and supported by a RWIF Faculty Fund.
- Continue to develop place-based research-led community engagement programmes. Where possible, these will be co-designed with local partners and communities and will support increased awareness and progression opportunities into higher learning for non-traditional learners from some of Wales' most deprived communities.
- Develop robust Wales-centred research capabilities with both Wales-based academic staff and our central academic schools. We will increase the amount of homegrown applied research in Wales though building capacity with academic staff based in Wales, especially in core areas such as education, and health and social care. We will further develop the work we are currently doing with schools to:
 - Further support the blended learning approach to education
 - Conduct research on the impact of new curriculum and teacher CPD needs in Wales
 - Support partnerships with schools to include provision of free resources to help classroom discussion and debate
 - Coordinate the wide variety of engagement with schools across the OU in Wales.

- Showcase our research across Wales through public engagement events, live streaming and outreach activities, including our OpenTalks programme and public engagement activities with partners.

As a result of this funding, we will reach communities that do not feel they traditionally have a voice and introduce our research and resources to foster critical thinking, leading to an increased understanding of citizenship and genuine public engagement.

5.1 Provide details of your institution's strategic KPIs for civic mission and public engagement

Civic mission and public engagement contribute to a number of the OU's strategic objectives: growth and sustainability; technology that enables success; excellent teaching and research; and student success.

A key objective in our Research and Enterprise Plan is to build our capacity in distinctive engaged, open research through increased and widened public and stakeholder engagement with OU research. We will do this through building on our long-term partnerships with the BBC and other organisations, our open educational platforms, and our existing commitment to the [National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement \(NCCPE\) Manifesto for Public Engagement](#). At present, the OU is currently undertaking a listening exercise to develop a new programme of research based on societal challenges. The exercise will be completed during the academic year 2021-22 and form the basis for refreshed research and engagement plans in the university.

Furthermore, our civic mission and public engagement work also aligns with our Learner and Discovery Services Strategic Framework:

- Design and production - collaborate to design and produce world-class modules, short courses, digital content and learning experiences at scale to ensure student success, drive new student registrations and deliver the OU's curriculum plan for all four nations
- Knowledge and information - unlock institutional knowledge and information to advance learning, teaching and research
- Services and support - deliver high quality services that support student success, employability, research and scholarship
- Innovation - drive innovation in everything we do
- Engagement, enterprise and partnerships - build partnerships, encourage enterprise and engage with a wide range of diverse communities to ensure the OU delivers its social mission.

In order to foster critical thinking and build an informed and engaged citizenship we will engage with potential learners through national and place-based strategies with communities and our partners by listening to their needs and co-creating opportunities for knowledge exchange. Our free, online learning, research and outreach facilitate a lifelong learning culture across all areas of Wales, including the most marginalised communities.

Civic Mission KPIs

- **Number of people reached through our CM and PE activity**

Year 1 – 10% increase on baseline

Year 2* - 25% increase over baseline (increased from 15% in original strategy)

Year 3* - 25% increase over baseline (increased from 20% in original strategy and reflecting that the numbers will be likely to dip following post pandemic HE-BCI reporting in 2020/21)

(Baseline: 456,554 - HE-BCI 2018/19 data)

With the embedded aims of working across sectors, working with communities of interest such as BAME communities and people with disabilities as well as by the end of Y3* (subject to funding) engaging with place-based communities across local authorities in Wales.

Measure includes: numbers of learners in Wales who attend our public events (in person and online), our OpenLearn courses and our multi-media.

- **Number of new community place-based or communities of interest pilots and roll outs**

Year 1 - 3 new pilots

Year 2* - 2 additional pilots and roll out 3 programmes

Year 3* – 3 additional pilots and an additional 2 rollouts

Building on our current partnerships work in six local authority areas in Wales, we will build on last year's pilot projects that tested what works and we will roll out into wider sector projects/programmes in local areas or with communities of interest during 2021-22.

- **Development of new, funded citizen-engaged and applied research activity in Wales**

Year 1 - 1 additional

Year 2* – 1 additional

Year 3* – 1 additional

(Baseline: 1 - 2019/20)

*Dependent on funding. Targets to be reviewed annually in light of actual funding received.

We are seeking to grow our home grown and funded research and will work with academic staff to support them to develop externally funded research in Wales. A new RWIF Faculty Fund will support staff from across the OU to support research and impact activity and capacity development in Wales.

Wales Innovation Network (WIN) KPIsPerformance

Through conversations with VCs, PVCs and HEFCW, there is agreement that the performance measurement of WIN will include:

- **A material uplift in research and innovation income to the Welsh sector resulting from bids supported by the Wales Innovation Network.** The Network will aim to secure an additional £30m to Welsh institutions over the initial three year period.
- **To achieve this, as a KPI the Network will aim to support a number of bids over the three year period which total a minimum of £30m.**
- Finally, we would anticipate that at the two and three year points the initiative will **produce reports for the WIN Board, in partnership with participating institutions, outlining the bids developed with the sector including the number of partners in each bid.** These reports would reflect overall progress including relationship building with UKRI, industry and business. These reports may also outline the performance of the topline KPIs at a regional level to consider how the benefits of WIN have been felt across Wales and institutions.

5.2 How will your strategic approach in this area align with HEFCW's [Research and Innovation: the Vision for Wales](#)? Select the pillars supported:

R Excellence
 R Place
 Innovation
 R Collaboration

5.3 How do your strategic ambitions for civic mission and public engagement support the Vision's goals, milestones and ambitions?

[Max 250 words]

The OU in Wales has a broader view than the Vision's specific goals, milestones and ambitions due to the civic mission and public engagement focus of the overall strategy.

Short term goals

- Develop new resources by listening to communities on key issues that affect them across Wales
- Provide leadership on the development of framework for civic mission
- Partner public, third and community sectors upskilled in digital literacy and digital learning
- UKRI engagement strengthened through delivery of BG Reach project and follow-on funding achieved.
- Increase in collaborative research bids through WIN and OU in Wales seen as a credible partner.

Medium term milestones

- Increase understanding awareness across Wales of the benefits of critical thinking in deciphering information from different sources
- Growth of research capacity to undertake citizen-engaged and applied research in Wales and increased grant capture.
- Grant capture and engagement in Welsh collaborative research through WIN.

Long term ambitions

- Wales to be internationally recognised as the exemplar of civic mission
- Public awareness of the benefits of HE as a key contributor to social and economic success in Wales
- Improved digital skills and digital literacy across the whole of Wales leading to a more equal Wales
- OU in Wales respected for civic mission-related research and providing an increased contribution to REF 2028.
- Other HEIs seek out the OU in Wales as a credible collaborative research partner.
- The OU in Wales demonstrates contribution to research tackling societal challenges.

Section C: Alignment to policy and priorities

6. Wales and UK Policy

Describe how your RWIF strategy aligns with relevant place based regional, Welsh, and UK policies such as e.g. local city region / regional growth deals; [WG's Prosperity for All: economic action plan](#); [UK Industrial Strategy](#); [Public Services Boards](#); [UPP Civic University Foundation](#); [Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy](#); [Science for Wales](#); [Regional Economic Frameworks](#) etc.

[500 words max]

This strategy aligns clearly with a number of the key themes set out in Prosperity for All, which continues to have effect, and in particular skills and employability. Through this strategy, we will be building skills capacity in the workforce, filling regional and national skills gaps and meeting national skills priorities, and enhancing the nation's capacity to think critically and socially.

It also draws on the values set out in the Programme for Government: those of community, equality and social justice, putting collaboration ahead of competition, maximising fairness, and eliminating inequality. The Programme for Government embeds an approach to skills which allows everyone the best chances in life and builds an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future.

The activities set out in this strategy feed into the Welsh Government's objective of achieving innovative, equitable, and future-focussed thinking and practice, allowing more people to develop skills for the future and to promote both individual and collective health and prosperity.

Furthermore, by building the values of collaboration and integration into this work from the outset, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, we will be responsive to the changing needs of the economy and society, across sectors and communities, as we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic and seek to build back fairer.

Additionally, and in the specific context of Wales' recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic, this strategy aligns with the Economic Resilience and Reconstruction Mission – which prioritises wellbeing, drives prosperity, is environmentally sound, and helps everyone to realise their potential – and the Covid Commitment – which commits to leaving no one behind and providing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.

At a UK level, this strategy supports the general thrust of the UK Government's levelling-up agenda and the Build Back Better Plan for Growth. Notably it will support the objective of raising technical and basic adult skill levels, thereby helping to promote economic growth and ensuring that employers are able to draw on a skilled pool of potential employees.

This also aligns with the Innovation Strategy, and particularly its objective of unleashing and supporting business to innovate, ensuring a diverse pool of skills and talent, ensuring that research, development and innovation meet the needs of businesses and places across the UK, and ensuring that our activities are helping to respond to the major domestic and international challenges of our times.

This activity will also have effect of helping to narrow disparities between different communities, both geographical and figurative, and of removing barriers faced by people from under-represented groups in realising their potential which are objectives of both the Welsh and the UK governments.

The OU's mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. This aligns closely with the UPP Civic University ambitions around access and retention. Through this strategy and our other core work, we are building a highly-skilled population and are helping to make learning throughout life the norm for everyone in Wales.

7. Meeting the requirements of the UK Knowledge Exchange Concordat

Institutions in Wales must demonstrate through their RWIF strategies commitment and alignment to the principles of the UK Knowledge Exchange Concordat. A development stage will take place during 2020-21 to implement a Welsh model.

For this initial stage we are asking institutions to confirm, through their strategies, that they are aware of the KEC principles which were outlined as part of the initial [consultation](#), and that they are committed to alignment through the Welsh model for engagement. Revised RWIF strategies can be submitted annually as part of the monitoring procedure, and this process will be utilised to demonstrate full KEC commitment following the development year. [500 words]

The OU is committed to the KEC principles and has a Knowledge Exchange (KE) Working Group which will help implement the new KE Action plan for the University. The KE Group acts as a community of practice to enable all four OU nations to deliver high quality public engagement and knowledge exchange activity and champion the principles of the KEC.

The KE Action plan will replace the existing OU impact plan, whilst complementing and building upon the Research and Enterprise plan (2018-2023). The ambition is to create a plan that enables cross-OU collaboration and contributes to devolved policy and strategy, adhering to the priorities of each nation government and funding body.

A key aim of the KE Action plan is to create a KE strategy that aligns with our mission, institutional strategy, and distinctive strengths. The KE strategy will be aligned to the KEC principles.

The KEC provides an opportunity to better coordinate activities that are already well aligned to the principles of the KEC. For example, our Enhanced Employability and Career Progression (ECP) strategic programme which enables employers to contribute to curriculum development (Principle 2), our extensive training and academic professional development programme (Principle 5) and our clear KE promotion pathways (Principle 6).

The original intention for institutional sign up to the KEC principles has been paused due to coronavirus emergency, but the OU will become a signatory once the KEC implementation is restarted.

8. Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

Provide specific information on the RWIF strategy will support the seven goals, and five ways of working in [the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015](#);
[250 words max]

In January 2021, the Civic Mission Framework was launched as part of the Civic Mission Network. The OU in Wales are currently mapping activities to the framework and are contributing to the contribution of the new OU strategy on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Well-being goal	Notes
Prosperous Wales	Bridging skills gaps; promoting innovation; promoting learning throughout life; supporting deprived communities; increased employability; improved relationships between FE/HE and business community.
Resilient Wales	Citizen-led and place-based research; promotion of learning at home, thereby limiting travel; advancement of critical

	thinking about society; work aligned to Societal Challenges (including, possibly, climate justice); improved digital skills leading to less need to travel unnecessarily.
More Equal Wales	Specific support and activities targeted at Widening Access communities, thereby opening up learning to those who would not otherwise have the chance; enhancing critical thinking and the notion of active citizenship; provide platforms for underrepresented groups; improved digital skills (known to be factor in poverty and inequity).
Healthier Wales	Direct correlation between learning and improved health outcomes; direct correlation between access to learning and improved mental health and well-being; increased employability leading to reduced poverty, and thereby better health outcomes.
Wales of Cohesive Communities	Citizen-engaged research and activities bringing people together; using public spaces in communities to provide learning; focus on the role of the school at the heart of the community; work targeted at under-represented communities.
Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language	Changing the way society thinks about learning and the culture surrounding that; commitment to making free online learning resources available in both languages; activities based in Welsh-speaking deprived communities.
Globally-responsible Wales	Enhancement of critical thinking and the notion of active citizenship; part of a UK-wide university; enhancement of homegrown research and what that can contribute not only at home but also to the world.
Way of Working	Notes
Long-term	Focus on long-term skills gaps and economic trends; tackling intergenerational poverty through learning; increasing the nation's long-term capacity for critical thought.
Integration	Homegrown research integrated into the needs, trends and priorities of localities and regions in Wales; collaboration with FE and across other

	sectors; part of a UK-wide university linked into UK Government priorities as well as Welsh Government priorities.
Involvement	Working directly with citizens; specific in-community work using community assets such as libraries and schools.
Collaboration	Collaboration with FE, private sector built in throughout; integration with e.g. Regional Skills Partnerships built in throughout.
Prevention	Focus on long-term trends, using learning and research to plug gaps, identify trends, meet regional and national needs.

9. Impact on Welsh Language

Outline the positive impact RWIF investment will have on opportunities to use and support the Welsh language. Where appropriate you may wish to refer to the themes in the [Cymraeg 2050](#) action plan.

[250 words max]

<u>Cymraeg 2020 theme</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Increasing the number of Welsh speakers	<p>Working with Coleg Cymraeg to develop their associate lecturer distance learning skills.</p> <p>Explore opportunities with the Coleg Cymraeg to involve Welsh users in research opportunities</p> <p>Through our links with FE colleges, introduce bilingual OpenLearn courses as part of Welsh medium learning pathways</p>
Increasing the use of Welsh	<p>Increasing the number of bilingual courses and resources available on OpenLearn.</p> <p>Promoting Croeso! beginners Welsh to partners to help upskill the basic language skills of their workforce.</p> <p>Ensure that staff recruited through the funding have Welsh as a desirable or essential skill and give staff the opportunity to learn Welsh in the</p>

	<p>workplace and to improve Welsh language skills.</p> <p>Ensure that Welsh speakers can continue to contribute in Welsh at OU public learning events</p>
Creating favourable conditions – infrastructure and context	<p>Promote the Rural entrepreneurship bilingual and Academi Arian courses course to partners as part of entrepreneurial programmes (see 9.5, Cymraeg 2050)</p>
Other opportunities to use and support the Welsh language	<p>Promote Welsh language OpenLearn courses – such as Everyday Skills in Maths – to Welsh-medium employers as part of CPD.</p>

Section D: financial assurance

10. Use of Research Wales Innovation Funding

How is your RWIF allocation 2021/22 being used to deliver the strategy set out in Section B, and what are your anticipated priorities for the use of RWIF funds in future years? [250 words max – or append a table outlining broad investment areas]

Our RWIF allocation 2021/22 is being used to:

- fund several strategic and support posts
- support 4 pillars of activity, supported by our Partnerships, OpenTalks and OpenLearn Wales/Cymru hubs:
 - building pathways to progression
 - place-based and community engagement
 - development and delivery of the OpenSkills Academy
 - Citizen engagement and democratic deficit.

The funding will provide continuity to 7 posts working in these areas (4 previously supported by HEFCW I&E project funding in 2019/20 and RWIF funding 2020/21), and create 4 new roles, increase our capacity further on cross-sector partnerships, foster citizen engagement and build CPD capacity and skills development.

Our newly created Skills team has a focus on skills, employability, research, innovation and engagement. Additional capacity in this area will support us to leverage the expertise of Faculty teams and central OU departments to bring further academic expertise to Wales and support Wales-based staff in developing capacity for research, skills development, innovation and engagement. Two of the extra roles will develop and support our CPD work.

The other 2 roles will support our partnership work with place-based and communities of interest and help us to deliver pathways to higher learning.

Funding will also be used for recurrent costs in relation to public facing activities and pump priming new activities to support collaboration.

Looking forward to future years, it is expected that the future RWIF funding will maintain the created posts and continue to fund activity around engagement and learning opportunities in line with this strategy.

Section E:

Regulatory Requirements

NB: HEFCW may request further information / clarification on any of these areas

i) Welsh Language Standards (2018) <i>[Use the drop down menu]</i>	This strategy complies with Welsh Language Standards 2018
ii) Equality Impact Assessment <i>[Use the drop down menu]</i>	This strategy has been Equality Impact Assessed
iii) Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) <i>[Use the drop down menu]</i>	This strategy will contribute towards the aims of the WFG Act 2015
Signature: Vice Chancellor	 Louise Casella
Date	09/09/2021