

# CONCORDAT FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

A UNIVERSITIES UK/GUILDHE  
CONSULTATION WITH THE HE SECTOR

INFORMED BY THE UNIVERSITIES  
UK/RESEARCH ENGLAND JOINT  
WORKING GROUP



Universities UK

Distinction and Diversity  
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## INTRODUCTION

Universities are major contributors to society and the economy at local, national and international levels. A key and growing part of the role of universities is proactive 'knowledge exchange', which is defined as a set of activities, processes and skills that enable close collaboration between universities and non-academic partners to deliver commercial, environmental, cultural and societal benefits, opportunities for students and economic growth.

The Government is committed to a strategic, long term approach to knowledge exchange. In return, it expects that universities are able to demonstrate the value of what they do and commit to pursuing excellence and sharing good practice. The concept of a Knowledge Exchange framework was highlighted in the Industrial Strategy *Building a Britain Fit for the Future* in 2018 as a way in which the contribution of universities to that strategy could be demonstrated and further developed.

As highlighted in the report of the McMillan Group in 2016, *University Knowledge Exchange (KE) Framework: good practice in technology transfer*, there is no single profile of knowledge exchange that is appropriate to all universities. What is best for a given university is very context driven through the discipline portfolio it has and the environment in which it is located. One size will not fit all.

There have therefore been two core challenges around identifying metrics that would allow the scale of KE activity to be measured, and in developing a framework through which the whole range of universities can describe and explain their own specific approach to KE.

A technical group chaired by Professor Richard Jones of the University of Sheffield has provided advice to Research England on the development of a metrics-focused knowledge exchange framework, and proposals for a pilot study have been published.

This consultation addresses the second challenge through the work of a joint UUK/Research England task group chaired by Professor Trevor McMillan, Vice-Chancellor at Keele University. It is proposed that a KE concordat be produced that provides a mechanism by which universities can consider their performance in the wide range of aspects of knowledge exchanges and make a commitment to improvement in those areas that are consistent with their priorities and expertise.

The aim of this concordat is therefore to give universities and their staff and students clarity of mission and to support their development, give partners an accurate representation of the approach that individual universities are taking to KE, provide clear indicators of their approaches to performance improvement, and give our governing bodies and government broad confidence in the activity that is taking place in universities. It also aims to stress how collaboration between universities and partners in various aspects of KE can be beneficial to all participants.

In this consultation, a series of high-level principles is proposed that aim to cover the range of necessary underpinning activities for effective knowledge exchange. Within each there is a set of enablers that give specific areas that could be considered desirable.

It is important to recognise that the draft concordat does not provide a prescribed recipe for effective KE in all institutions and for all universities. Rather it sets out examples of good practice in processes and approaches that would enable universities to fulfil a knowledge exchange role whether across the whole spread of their disciplines or for particular specific activities and relationships. These examples have drawn upon the advice and expertise of the task and finish group.

It is hoped that the level and quality of engagement with the concordat will be taken into consideration by Research England (and other funders as appropriate) in evaluating requirements for the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and other KE funding. The views of funders and other stakeholders are being sought in parallel to this consultation.

This document therefore proposes the aims, principles, enablers and the approach to implementation of a knowledge exchange concordat, and we would be very grateful for your views on all aspects of the proposal.

Responses to the consultation questions and any additional comments can be completed via the [online survey](#) by 1 July 2019.

Professor Trevor McMillan

Vice-Chancellor, Keele University

Chair, UUK/Research England KE Concordat Task and Finish Group

Chair, Research England KE Framework Steering Group

**Additional introduction from Alistair Jarvis, CEO, UUK and Gordon McKenzie, CEO, GuildHE**

We are very grateful to Trevor McMillan and the task and finish group for developing the thorough and helpful content of the draft knowledge exchange concordat. We have worked closely with the group to develop this consultation paper. Higher education engages in a wide range of KE activities, from working in partnership with businesses and charities to apply key research, scientific, technological, medical and cultural breakthroughs to developing key skills and attributes such as entrepreneurship that will drive productivity and growth to supporting company start-ups by students and staff.

The data collected annually through the HE–BCI survey demonstrates the impressive scale of knowledge-exchange activity across all types of institutions, and the Industrial Strategy recognises the importance of universities and colleges to future economic and social growth. The commitment of the government to the 2.4% target for research and development spending demonstrates the value of higher education knowledge exchange. To support the implementation of this commitment and the effective and accountable investment of planned additional funding, we believe that the sector should enhance and improve its KE practice and demonstrate its KE strengths. The aim of the draft concordat is to enable institutions to do this in a clear, flexible and appropriate way.

The KE concordat provides a key opportunity for the sector to demonstrate effective strategic leadership of KE within institutions, outline the KE activity and practice that are relevant to their strengths and circumstances, identify where improvements or innovation might add value, and support staff to develop.

Whilst this stage of the development of the KE concordat is focusing on the views of the sector, it is vital to the effectiveness of KE that it is undertaken through effective partnership with funders, businesses, the public sector and charities. The value of partnerships is embedded in this draft concordat and we will be working with Research England to engage with a wide range of partners. Our aspiration is that the implementation of the KE concordat will add significant value to partners as well as institutions.

We encourage and welcome your feedback on the KE concordat.

Alistair Jarvis

Gordon McKenzie

Chief Executive Officer

Chief Executive Officer

Universities UK

GuildHE

## **THE AIMS OF THE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE CONCORDAT**

As outlined above, the knowledge exchange concordat (KEC) is designed to:

- give universities and their staff and students clarity of mission and support their development
- give partners an accurate representation of the approach that individual universities are taking to KE
- provide clear indicators of their approaches to performance improvement
- encourage collaboration between universities
- give our governing bodies and government broad confidence in the activity that is taking place in universities.

**Q1 – Are these aims appropriate and valuable? Strongly agree/agree/uncertain/disagree/strongly disagree**

**Q2 – Please explain.**

## THE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE CONCORDAT

### Principles

The eight guiding principles are outlined below:

**Principle 1. Mission:** Knowledge exchange is a recognised part of the overall university strategy. We have a clear understanding of the institutional role and the purpose of KE and whom the intended beneficiaries are.

**Principle 2. Policies:** We have clear policies on all the types of KE that we undertake and we ensure they are understood by staff, students, collaborators and beneficiaries.

**Principle 3. Engagement:** We have clear access points, engagement mechanisms and policies developed to suit the needs of a wide range of beneficiaries working with institutions as publicly funded bodies.

**Principle 4. Working effectively:** We make sure that our partners and beneficiaries understand the ethical and charitable regulatory environments in which our institution operates and we take steps to maximise the benefit to them within that context.

**Principle 5. Capacity building:** We ensure that our staff and students are developed and trained appropriately to understand and undertake their roles and responsibilities in the delivery of successful KE.

**Principle 6. Recognition and rewards:** We recognise the achievements of our staff and students who perform high-quality KE activities.

**Principle 7. Continuous improvement:** We proactively strive to share best practice with our peers and have established processes for learning from this.

**Principle 8. Evaluating success:** We undertake regular institutional and collective monitoring and review of our strengthening KE performance using this concordat and through regional, national or international benchmarks to inform the development and execution of a programme of continuous improvement.

**Q3 – Are the principles an appropriate framework for the development of effective knowledge exchange in universities?**

**Strongly agree/agree/uncertain/disagree/strongly disagree**

**Q4 – Please explain.**

**Q5 – As a university would you sign up to the principles?**

**Q6 – If no/uncertain, please explain.**

## **Enablers**

For each principle, a set of possible enablers is proposed below. These are examples of good practice and give an indication of the sort of activities that could contribute towards the achievement of the aims of the concordat. They should not be considered as a prescribed set of activities and they do not represent a checklist against which universities can be judged.

**Q 7 – Is the approach to enablers appropriate?**

**Q 8 – If no/uncertain, please explain.**

**Q 9 – Will these enablers support effective knowledge exchange and partnership?**

**Q 10 – If no/uncertain, please explain.**

**Q 11 – Are there additional enablers that should be in the KEC?**

**Principles 1–8: Additional enabler .....for a range of staff and students to feed into the discussion.**

**Principle 1. Mission:** Knowledge exchange is a recognised part of the overall university strategy. We have a clear understanding of the institutional role and the purpose of KE and whom the intended beneficiaries are.

Clarity of mission is essential for efficient and effective knowledge exchange. University staff, students and external organisations need to understand the aims and priorities of senior university leaders and governors in relation to the whole range of knowledge exchange activities undertaken by the institution.

*Key enablers could include:*

- Strategy relating to KE is developed, regularly reported on and updated following institutional consultation and approval by governing bodies.
- A clear statement of which modes of KE are prioritised and supported in the context of underpinning institutional strategy and priorities and how the benefit is maximised for wider societal outcomes. Social and cultural benefit should be considered alongside economic benefit.
- Where this is a KE objective, a published statement on the nature of the civic/regional leadership role of the institution within its place-based contexts, including its role in bringing together public, private and third-sector organisations into a wider KE ecosystem.
- A defined approach to both academic and professional leadership roles within the senior management team, and how institutional accountabilities relating to KE are overseen by the university governing body.
- An evidenced approach to sustainable institutional investment to meet agreed institutional KE objectives and which demonstrates full consideration of maximising opportunities for the efficient, effective and shared use of both human and capital assets.
- A clear commitment to provide routes and support for students to engage with enterprise and entrepreneurship.

**Principle 2. Policies:** We have clear policies on all types of KE that we undertake and ensure they are understood by staff, students, collaborators and beneficiaries.

A well-defined set of relevant policies ensures that all parties engaged in KE have a good mutual understanding as to how the university values KE activity.

Institutions could provide evidence of a clear set of policies covering those areas of KE central to the institution's mission and values, and consistent with its charitable status. These might include formal mechanisms/policies covering:

- IP exploitation, including licensing and spinouts, shareholdings, revenue-sharing, and support available.
- Accessing specialist facilities, including costing and pricing, access and availability, and attendant support.
- Employer engagement, including how student and graduate talent can be accessed and by which mechanisms.
- Collaborative and contract research, including arrangements for cost and revenue sharing of IP exploitation, warranties and indemnities.
- Engagement of, and with, the public on research and the broader activities of the university.
- Consultancy and advice, including formal policies on the provision of advice by individual academic staff on a private or institutional basis.
- CPD and employer engagement in course development and delivery, including a clear approach to accreditation and quality assurance, and potential for customised provision.
- Regeneration and local business support, including policies on preferential access to services and facilities, institutional collaboration locally, and partnership with local authorities and local/regional economic development structures/devolved administrations.
- State aid, liability insurance, R&D tax credits and other technical and legal matters.
- Mechanisms for ensuring awareness and compliance with these policies within the university.

**Principle 3. Engagement:** We have clear access points, engagement mechanisms and policies developed to suit the needs of a wide range of beneficiaries working with institutions as publicly funded bodies.

*Key enablers could include:*

- An unambiguous route for external parties to access a defined point of initial contact.
- Published guidance on how initial enquiries are triaged and responded to within professional timescales.
- Published guidance on how relationships with external parties are managed to professionally accepted standards in order to deliver high levels of partner confidence.
- Use of formal agreements (in plain English) to cover any substantive KE work undertaken to ensure everyone's rights and responsibilities are clear, and everyone is clear what to expect from each other.
- Formal arrangements for timely and efficient execution of agreements and mechanisms to monitor this to inform improved service delivery.
- A formal approach to understanding and growing the depth and breadth of relationships with particular partners, sectors and stakeholder groups and the management of relationships with multiple institutional touch points.

**Principle 4. Working effectively:** We make sure that our partners and beneficiaries understand the ethical and charitable regulatory environments in which our institution operates and we take steps to maximise the benefit to them within that context.

*Key enablers could include:*

- Clear communication to beneficiaries on the institutional approach to KE and collaboration as publicly funded institutions, regulated by charity law.
- Published and transparent policies on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), liabilities and warranties in relation to its access by third parties as a result of licensing or the outcomes of collaborative research.
- Clear communication to partners/beneficiaries on the requirements upon it as a charitable organisation to use IP arising from KE for non-commercial teaching, research or professional practice.
- Clear communication to partners/beneficiaries stating the importance of publishing the outcomes of research and KE, supported by public investment.
- Published mechanisms used to assure the ethical integrity and quality of its research, teaching and KE, and which reserve the right to decline work that cannot meet these standards.
- Respect for partner confidentiality, including the use of appropriate formal agreements.
- Formal mechanisms in place to ensure that where we cannot provide solutions that we can refer opportunities to those in our networks who can.

**Principle 5. Capacity building:** We ensure that our staff and students are developed and trained appropriately to understand and undertake their roles and responsibilities in the delivery of successful KE.

*Institutions could provide evidence of the following:*

- Use of established institutional approaches to gain full value from ensuring a diverse workforce and well-developed policies for ensuring equality.

*For professional staff supporting KE:*

- Recruitment of appropriately experienced and/or qualified/accredited KE professionals demonstrating aptitude and ability to broker and manage KE activities and understanding of commercial and academic drivers.
- A commitment to, and evidence of, continuous development of KE staff at all levels of their career through formal training, mentoring, sharing best practice and engagement in relevant networks and communities.
- Regular review of performance, including feedback from external partners.
- A clear and evidenced approach to ensuring the professional standard of staff members within professional KE teams, e.g. through processes for accreditation, peer review and staff exchange.

*For academic staff and students:*

- Evidence that KE policy and practice form part of new staff induction and ongoing staff development programmes.
- Accessible and appropriate training to support KE activities, including due consideration of staff induction and formal academic practice development programmes.
- Accessible and appropriately promoted professional and administrative support to academic colleagues in furtherance of their KE activities.
- Accessible and appropriately promoted support for staff and students wanting to establish and grow new enterprises or activities.
- Accessible and appropriately promoted skills training for students expected to engage with non-academic partners on behalf of the institution as part of their curricular or non-curricular activities.

- **Clear identification of approaches for the development of KE/entrepreneurship skills in curricular and non-curricular student activities for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.**

**Principle 6. Recognition and rewards:** We recognise the achievements of staff and students who perform high-quality KE activities.

*Key enablers could include:*

- Clear indicators of what is considered high-quality KE.
- Defined approaches to recognising and rewarding successful KE activities and outcomes within promotions criteria and reward processes.
- Defined approaches to institutional recognition of successful KE by academic staff and students via processes other than formal promotion and reward, such as revenue-sharing policies, staff prizes and the celebration of success stories.
- A published approach to how KE activities are recognised within workloads and rewarded with time allocations appropriately.
- Clear reporting processes that allow the institution to know whether its policies are being followed.

**Principle 7. Continuous improvement:** We proactively strive to share best practice with our peers and have established processes for learning from this.

*Institutions could provide evidence of the following:*

- A formalised approach to the use of beneficiary and partner feedback to drive improvements in KE performance.
- Active engagement with national and international organisations established to support sharing of best practice.
- A defined approach to learning from outside HE by engagement with public and private stakeholders, including government, local authorities, enterprise partnerships and industry/business representative bodies, including their representation on advisory and institutional governing bodies.
- A commitment to the recognition and use of objective benchmarking measures to improve KE performance, including the KEF and other appropriate evidence-based international benchmarks and quality standards.
- A commitment to considering the role of external peer review of KE performance improvement, informed by KE performance as described by the KEF.
- Published mechanisms to show how the institution manages the quality of KE, taking into account the range of KE activities that the institution has prioritised, including use of recognised quality management processes, formal procedures on how feedback is used to improve KE quality, complaints procedures, and arrangements for timely and efficient execution of agreements and mechanisms.

**Principle 8. Evaluating success:** We undertake regular institutional and collective monitoring and review of our strengthening KE performance using this concordat and through regional, national or international benchmarks to inform the development and execution of a programme of continuous improvement.

*Key enablers could include:*

- Commitment to carry out regular self-assessment against the concordat and development of an improvement plan covering:
  - Regular reporting on KE activity to institution's governing body
  - Benchmarked evidence of scope and scale of services (via the KEF metrics)
  - Third-party evidence of the value of interventions such as that derived via surveys of customer satisfaction
  - How KE policies are being promoted and followed across the institution
  - Service delivery quality derived from meeting management benchmarks/targets.
- Third-party evidence of the institution-level contributions KE makes at local, national or global scales.
- Periodic governing body review and approval of KE policies and KE performance and improvement plans and assurance of their efficacy via established institutional programmes such as internal audit.

## COMMITMENTS OF UNIVERSITY SIGNATORIES

Universities that sign up commit to:

- Making it clear to staff, students and partners what they will do, what they expect within universities and how they expect to work with partners
- The regular evaluation of approaches and processes to ensure continuous improvement in what is done
- Adopting the principles outlined in the KE concordat as a framework for effective knowledge exchange
- Publicly committing to the KE concordat
- Conducting an evaluation of their KE strategy and practice, using the KE concordat
- Producing and publishing a short action plan that identifies priorities, good and innovative practice and areas where improvement is needed
- Considering and responding to feedback and advice from the Independent Panel.

**Q 12 – Do you agree with these commitments**

**Strongly agree/agree/uncertain/disagree/strongly disagree**

**Q 13 – Please explain.**

## PROPOSED CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Consultation timeline

- Consultation formally launched April 2019
- Consultation closes 1 July 2019
- Consultation responses taken into account and final version of concordat created by Autumn 2019.

### Implementation timeline

- Autumn 2019 – HE institutions sign up to KE concordat and non-HEI stakeholders commit to support
- Spring 2020 – guidance on self-evaluation and pro-forma for action plans distributed
- Spring 2020 – Independent Panel formed
- Summer 2020 – action plans published by higher education institutions
- Autumn 2020 – feedback to institutions on action plans, assessment of institutional engagement and stakeholder support, recommendations for next steps.

Universities UK and GuildHE want to work with Research England to ensure the right balance between individual university feedback and sector-level scrutiny and feedback. Research England has committed to work with the higher education sector to establish appropriate systems to evaluate individual university responses to the concordat, and the exercise overall.

In England, Research England will support delivery by distributing guidance on self-assessment and action plan pro-formas to all English HEIs and support the establishment of an Independent Panel at an appropriate point once universities have completed their self-assessments and published their action plans on their websites.

The Panel will review individual university action plans and provide feedback to the institutions. The Panel will also review the overall exercise and make recommendations to supporting stakeholders and to universities on next steps. This may include comment on steps that supporting stakeholders should take. The value of the Independent Panel is that it will provide expert advice and guidance to the sector, enhance the development of good practice. It will also ensure that the importance of stakeholder engagement and partnership is embedded in the evaluation of the KE concordat and in so doing will enhance the status and effectiveness of the KE concordat.

Research England and UUK are currently consulting key non-HEI partners, including university, research and innovation funders, to get their views on this document and how they may support the concordat and its implementation. This includes UK-wide funders, enabling the concordat to be implemented across the nations of the UK, should Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland choose to do this, as well as other KE funders seeking to reduce the accountability burden across different funding streams. This also includes funders and representatives of businesses and of other partners, with a view to stimulating good partnering behaviours across all KE participants.

**Q14 – Do you agree with the proposed approach to implementation?**

**Strongly agree/agree/uncertain/disagree/strongly disagree**

**Q15 – Please explain.**

**Q16 – Should Universities UK and GuildHE commit all of their members in England to the implementation of the KE concordat?**

**Yes/no/uncertain**

**Q17 – Please explain.**

**Q18 – Are there any other comments, suggestions or questions that you would like to make?**

## **JOINT UUK/RE KE CONCORDAT GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

**Professor Trevor McMillan**, Vice-Chancellor, Keele University (Chair)

**Joanna Allatt**, Knowledge Exchange Policy Advisor, Research England

**Sean Fielding**, Director, Innovation, Impact and Business, University of Exeter

**Alice Frost**, Head of Business and Community Policy Team, Research England

**Professor Richard Greene**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Manchester Metropolitan University

**Professor Emma Hunt**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Arts University Bournemouth

**Dr Gillian Murray**, Deputy Principal (Enterprise and Business), Heriot-Watt University

**Dr Tony Raven**, Chief Executive, Cambridge Enterprise, University of Cambridge

**Professor Jerry Roberts**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, University of Plymouth

**Greg Wade**, Policy Manager, Universities UK

**Professor Roderick Watkins**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Anglia Ruskin University

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