

**Statement in support of the launch of the opportunity to sign up to the Knowledge Exchange Concordat principles and development year for England**

In the week beginning Monday 26 October, Universities UK and GuildHE launched the opportunity for institutions to sign up to the principles and participate in the development year for England. The KE Concordat is a UK-wide initiative with different arrangements in different nations of the UK, however institutions from across the UK can participate in the development year.

The [KE concordat](#) provides a framework for effective knowledge exchange and supports institutions to develop clear and ambitious strategic objectives for their KE activities. The development year will provide peer feedback to participating institutions on their strategic objectives and action plans and share examples of approaches to improvement and development of KE policies, practices and strategies.

Institutions have demonstrated the vital and diverse role they play in supporting the countries and communities of the UK through very challenging times. Those challenging times are still with us, but it is important to continue to both enhance and improve what we do and remind policy makers at all levels of our commitment and value. The KE concordat will provide an opportunity to do this.

Institutions can sign up to the principles contained in the KE concordat and participate in the development year for England through completing a Letter of Commitment. Details of the self-evaluation and action plan exercises that form part of the development year have been released on the KE concordat [portal](#) for institutions to see what is involved. The evaluation of action plans will be in the context of an institution's own strategic objectives for knowledge exchange. Both action plans and feedback will be confidential.

The evaluation of institutional action plans will be undertaken by evaluators drawn from the sector and partners. The nomination forms and criteria for evaluators will be issued in December 2020 with evaluators selected by February 2021. The opportunity to become an evaluator will be widely circulated and nominations from institutions, business, charities and other partners will be welcomed. The selection of evaluators will place an emphasis on appropriate knowledge and experience but will also have a strong focus on diversity. The evaluation process will be moderated to ensure consistency, clarity and relevance.

The process of institutional self-evaluation and submission of action plans will be supported by a series of webinars. We will work in partnership with Research England, NCUB, PraxisAURIL, ARMA, NCCPE and others to develop a range of webinars on each principle as well as the self-evaluation process and we will share the content widely. Institutions can also get direct support through getting in touch with the support team via the KE Concordat portal.

The KE Concordat process will be evaluated to inform future development. When institutions sign up to the principles and development year for England, they are invited to identify the expected benefits of participation. These will inform the overall evaluation. The webinars will provide an opportunity to seek continuous feedback and the individual institutional contacts will be surveyed to inform the final evaluation report.

## Working with partners

Effective partnerships are crucial to successful knowledge exchange and the KE Concordat has been developed with a number of partners who have outlined their support for the KE Concordat below.

*“Committing to improving partnerships across higher education and business and the community is an important step in helping support economic, social and creative growth and recovery, post pandemic. Existing ties have been fundamental to the excellent work done by universities to support each other, communities, businesses and public health services to respond to the multiple challenges of COVID-19, and developing these partnerships and enhancing knowledge exchange will have a key role to play in future recovery, growth and levelling up, especially at the local level.*

*The KE Concordat provides institutions with an opportunity to reflect on their ambitions for knowledge exchange activities and to receive feedback on how they plan to develop them, by signing up to the principles – of which many universities have already done so – and participating in the development year.”* **Julia Buckingham, President, Universities UK**

*“We are pleased to be inviting our members to sign up to the eight principles of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. Small and specialist institutions play vital roles in local, national and international knowledge exchange ecosystems by working with businesses and other organisations large and small to deliver social, cultural and economic benefits. We look forward to working in partnership with Universities UK and Research England during the development year to support our members and the wider sector in continuing to grow strong knowledge exchange practice.”* **Dr David Llewellyn, Chair, GuildHE**

*“Research England welcomes the continuing progress of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat, embedding further the important work led by Professor Trevor McMillan. Higher education providers are asked today to commit to a development year in England which will ensure the exercise delivers value for its participants and will align the Concordat with our ongoing work on the Knowledge Exchange Framework. The Concordat together with the KEF will be key features in our planned review of the HEIF method.”* **David Sweeney, Executive Chair of Research England**

*“We welcome the KE Concordat, which outlines good practice, and guiding principles for effective, transparent, and ethical engagement in knowledge exchange activities, and supports our [Vision for Research and Innovation](#). Through recently approached [Research Wales Innovation Strategies](#) all of our institutions have signed up to the concordat with the aim of aligning their practices to the eight leading principles. We will work with institutions during 2020/21 to further develop and adapt their strategy commitments and support them to demonstrate full concordat commitment.”* **Dr David Blaney, Chief Executive, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales**

*“The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) welcomes the KE Concordat as a positive contribution to furthering good practice in effective knowledge exchange. We are currently conducting a ‘review*

*of coherent provision and sustainability’ and will consider the role of the Concordat in supporting our strategy for KE and innovation within that context. In the meantime, we encourage institutions to sign-up to the guiding principles of the Concordat, while recognising that the current challenging environment may impact on the level of priority and implementation that can be given this year. We see this year as an opportunity to learn how the Concordat is adopted and implemented across the UK. The opportunity for any UK institution to take part in the development year process in England, should they wish to do so, is welcomed in this context.”*  
**Dr Stuart Fancey, Director, Research and Innovation, Scottish Funding Council**

*“The Department for the Economy Northern Ireland (DfE NI) welcomes the establishment of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat as a mechanism through which good practice in Knowledge Exchange Activities can be further embedded in Northern Ireland Universities. In the short term, we will be encouraging our Higher Education Institutions to adopt the principles of the concordat, whilst seeking to learn from the experience of others across the UK in its development year. In the longer term we will be considering how the concordat interacts with our approach to supporting effective and high quality Knowledge Exchange through our Higher Education Innovation Funding.”*  
**Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary Skills and Education Group, Department for the Economy Northern Ireland**

*“The development year for the Knowledge Exchange Concordat represents an important opportunity for universities to proactively commit to self-improvement and evolve current processes to build increasingly successful partnerships with businesses. Knowledge exchange needs to be prioritised and embedded at every level and good practice shared amongst the community about how to work even more effectively with external partners. As we rebuild post-Covid, university- business collaborations will prove vital to the our social, economic and healthy recovery, in attracting R&D investment, delivering future skills and employability, and building partnerships internationally.”*  
**Joe Marshall, Chief Executive of the National Centre for Universities and Business**

*PraxisAuril, the UK’s professional association for knowledge exchange practitioners, has supported and informed the Concordat since its inception. PraxisAuril members have unique insight into the day-to-day practicalities of engagement between universities and external research users. PraxisAuril advocates strongly for diversity of KE missions and strategies, supporting a model of KE that allows institutions to play to their strengths and resources rather than seeking a ‘one size fits all’ model. The Concordat will allow institutions to play to their strengths while also learning from others. Sean Fielding, Chair of PraxisAuril and a member of the Concordat Steering Group which developed the eight principles said: “The UK is already one of the best countries in the world for turning good ideas from the knowledge base into new products and services and generating new concepts for policymakers. The Concordat should help the spread of good practice and lead to constant improvement.”*  
**Tamsin Mann, Director of Policy & Communication, PraxisAuril**