Vision

Our vision is for the university to be clearly recognised world-wide for the quality of its research across all our faculties. We recognise the cultural importance of radical and innovative research that changes our view of the world. We also recognise the need for the broader impact of the research to be clearly exploited through partnership with those in industry, government, charity or the cultural sector. Our researchers will be supported in all forms of exploitation of the intellectual property they generate. This vision will be achieved through academic schools committed to a positive and inclusive research and innovation environment in which all staff and research students contribute. The Schools will be committed to embedding research-led teaching within their undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.

This strategy will be embedded in the collegiate culture of the University. Our values enshrine academic freedom, integrity and accountability, sustainability, critical thinking and intellectual creativity. The mutual support of academics at all levels, and of professional services staff is what makes this vision possible.

Context

Our research and innovation strategy links directly to our institutional plan and needs to be seen in terms of an institution that values both research and innovation but also the whole student experience. The University of Kent is among the top 6 universities in the UK when combining research intensity and student satisfaction.

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We have a tradition of critical thinking and influencing decision makers in government, industry and charities. Our research improves people’s lives, and our broad portfolio ensures that we reach all aspects of life: arts, economic prosperity, social cohesion, international development, justice, natural environment, health, and technology. Innovation, defined in this comprehensive way, has always been important for the University of Kent.

The following objectives set out how we plan to improve our position in the increasingly competitive and densely clustered UK higher education landscape. The objectives refer to the drivers that are needed for successful research and innovation. Measurable targets are in italics.

In this strategy we define ‘academic’ as a staff member who may be counted in international league tables or in REF. This includes staff listed with University of Kent affiliation in Scopus or Web of Science, staff with ‘Teaching and Research’ contracts, and staff who may in future be listed or have such a contract.

We define innovation as advancing enterprise, charity, government, non-governmental organisations, or public engagement. Under ‘government’ we include NHS trusts and NHS research. Innovation includes knowledge transfer, consultancy, continued professional development, contract research, intellectual property generation and protection.

This strategy provides a framework for Faculty and School strategies and for personal academic plans. The action points need to be interpreted. The Research and Innovation Board and the Directors of Research network, as well as Faculty and School meetings are important forums for working out further details. This strategy is also a framework for planning in Research Services, Kent Innovation and Enterprise, and the Graduate School.

**Objective 1: To increase our output of world leading research**

To be competitive we need to be fully international in our research objectives and recognise the external drivers for international recognition. Academic partnerships are increasingly important and there is a need for partnerships both in the UK, in the rest of Europe and in the wider world. Metrics are useful when used responsibly, and we recognise the need to evaluate our output through citation and other indicators.
At the University/Faculty/School level we will:

- Keep a broad portfolio of research and innovation activities.
- Make sure our hire, promotion, development and reward arrangements for our staff will be reflective both of our aspirations and the world leading activity of our staff.
- Measure world-leading research by field-normalised citations, network quality, and field-normalised income.
- Prioritise world-leading research and innovation activity in resource allocation. The highest performance will attract the highest level of support and reward.
- Develop one or more super-centres addressing global challenges. The centres will enhance the wide portfolio of the University.
- Ensure excellence in our support activities through Research Services, Kent Innovation and Enterprise, Information Services and the Graduate School.
- Provide support that is professional, enabling, simplifying, explaining, and guiding.

At the individual level we will:

- Create an atmosphere of excitement and fun around research and innovation.
- Adapt to changing priorities of society and of funders.
- Build networks of several hundred peers. Typically, from 100 at Lecturer level to 500 at Chair level.
- Address big questions, from global down to local level.
- Manage time better, finding a balance between teaching and research time.
- Disseminate the results of work using all appropriate and modern methods, including an institutional repository. Open access is our default mode of dissemination.
- Bring all undergraduates into contact with research during their studies. We will offer competitive project funding for undergraduate innovation.
- Achieve 25% of all outputs classified as 4* or equivalent in REF 2021, an increase from 20% in 2014.
- Increase the number of citations in Scopus and Web of Science by 25%.

Objective 2: To increase impact and the exploitation of our intellectual activity through partnership with industry, government, charities and wider economy

Innovation is a way of thinking, a frame of mind, a skill to acquire. Innovation is essential for impact.

At the University/Faculty/School level we will:

- Create an intellectual climate conducive to innovation.
- Make our intellectual property more visible, also including works of art produced by our academics.
- Bring all undergraduates and taught postgraduates into contact with innovation during their studies. We will offer competitive project funding for undergraduate innovation.
- Measure world-leading innovation by network quality, recommendations for impact, and income.
- *Ensure innovation income increases by 50% by setting targets for selected academics.*

At the individual level we will:

- Make sure all research has an impact outside academia, directly or indirectly.
- Conduct research in synergy with enterprise, advice to government, support for charities, or public engagement.
- *Include non-academics in professional networks.*

**Objective 3: To increase our income from research and innovation**

Financial sustainability is necessary to secure the future of the University. Funding has to be sufficient to enable world-leading activities.

At the University/Faculty/School level we will:

- Provide support for complex grant applications, EU networking, and highly visible public engagement.
- Support commercialisation of intellectual property.
- *Double research funding across all Faculties, with at least 50% of staff attracting significant funding for their area (funding beyond travel and subsistence).*
- Plan sun-setting of unsuccessful activities, and reallocate resources.
- Optimise the size of research units, while keeping a wide portfolio of research. Increases in the size of a unit need to be sustainable.
- Estimate income taking into account the portfolio of research topics and the plans of academics. Expenditure on new staff, equipment and PhD scholarships needs to be planned several years ahead. The transition of externally funded Fellows to Lecturers will be included in the School financial plans.
- *Ensure that academic leave is sustainable and prepares for external funding or follows on from funding.*
- Have clear performance expectations and monitor individual research and innovation plans on an annual basis.
- *Benchmark the physical space for research and innovation.*
- Maintain an estates master plan that allows for expansion.

At the individual level we will:

- Ensure that partnerships, regional, national and international, are properly funded and sustainable.
- *Make sure that the cost of the resources required by projects reflects the cost of infrastructure and administrative and technical support awarded by funders. Zero-overhead grants need to generate demonstrable benefits.*
- Exploit and safeguard intellectual property as a source of income.
Objective 4: To increase our postgraduate research programme

Objective 3 above has set out how we will increase our income from research and innovation, and this will lead to increased numbers of postgraduate research students.

At the University/Faculty/School level we will:

- Provide high quality training to postgraduate research students via our Graduate School.
- Maintain or start Doctoral Training Centres in all three Faculties.
- Be in the upper quartile in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.
- Review annually the number of PGT and PGR students per ‘Teaching and Research’ staff member in each School, and compare with our peers.

Objective 5: To embed equality and diversity within all our activity

In May 2015 the Athena SWAN charter was expanded to include arts, humanities, social sciences, and professional and support roles. The charter now promotes gender equality more broadly, and focuses not just on barriers to progression that affect women. This presents an opportunity for the University, given our mix of subjects.

At the University/Faculty/School level we will:

- Foster equality and diversity as part of a culture of supporting and celebrating our people.
- Offer scope for personal growth for all staff.
- Respect the Research Council UK’s expectations for equality and diversity, including participation in schemes such as Stonewall Diversity Champions.

At the individual level we will:

- Promote diversity and equality to Athena silver standard in all research and innovation activities, at all career levels.
- Undertake training designed to raise awareness of EDI issues in the workplace, e.g. the ‘Every Researcher Counts’ resource from Vitae.
- Provide high quality leadership to junior staff, and inspire colleagues. Informal mentoring at all levels of seniority will be part of our research and innovation culture.
Summary of main quantifiable targets

- 4* outputs from 20% to 25%
- Increase citations by 25%
- 100+ peers in professional network
- 50% more innovation income
- Double research funding
- At least 50% of staff in each Faculty attract significant funding for their area
- Upper quartile for PTES and PRES
- Athena Silver standard