

Innovation, Impact and Knowledge Exchange at the University of Sheffield.

Introduction

The University of Sheffield defines its mission as “*the goal of changing the world for better through the power and application of ideas and knowledge*”. This process involves partnerships with people and organisations beyond our walls; these partnerships are not one-way, and the insights that we gain from our partners stimulate and enrich the research we do, fuelling innovation and keeping our researchers in touch with the real questions and challenges faced by modern society. Knowledge Exchange (KE) is more than a funding mechanism. It is a key priority and strategic need for our University, and we place it at the heart of our activities.

The University has formalised its commitment to Impact, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (IIKE) in this IIKE Strategy, which has 4 key objectives:

1. To create and maintain deeper partnerships with external organisations
2. To make the most of our Intellectual Property
3. To engage with our City region
4. To embed Impact, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange within our organisation

1. Creating and Strengthening Partnerships

The University strives to develop sustainable partnerships which are based on shared goals and maximise opportunities for both parties. To achieve this, we need to have processes and structures which enable us to be flexible and responsive to the needs of our partners. Partnerships will take different forms and will encompass a variety of activities across all of the University functions.

We will:

- *Develop and grow our external networks.* By establishing a network of partners and understanding their priorities, we will be able to respond promptly to new funding and research opportunities that benefit both parties. Our network will include policy and decision makers in the private and public sectors, and funding agencies. We will understand and respond to the underlying drivers of policy across all areas of our business.
- *Have a proactive approach to developing partnerships.* We will proactively work to identify, prepare, develop and sustain these relationships. As well as one-off project work with partners, we will proactively build collaborative, long term projects and offer a portfolio of framework agreements so that potential partners can develop an ongoing working relationship that best suits their needs without having to constantly renegotiate contracts.

- Understand and respond to our partners' needs. We will set up a professional account management team, with clear roles and responsibilities. The work of this team will be to build trust, ensure consistency, develop a better understanding of mutual areas of interest, and take a University-wide responsibility for developing, maintaining and growing relationships. This team will include academics, professional services and faculty specialists.
- Provide professional operational support. Research and Innovation services will provide top-quality corporate services to support the account management process and will respond quickly to the changing requirements of our partners.
- Develop accessible gateways. Faculty KE teams will be outward looking, aligned to the external business environment rather than the University's internal structure and enable cross-department and/or cross-faculty collaborations. They will be networked across all departments and faculties so that each KE Professional can act as a single point of contact to identify and access expertise anywhere in the University.
- Develop centres of innovation. We will optimise the use of our innovation facilities and space, and will integrate them into our broader structures for developing partnerships. In addition to providing accommodation and business support for SMEs and spin-outs, we will also offer the opportunity for co-location of laboratories with external companies and wider access to University research.

2. Engaging with our City region

The University of Sheffield takes great pride in its partnerships with local business, government, museums, galleries, schools, colleges and community groups. We play a key role in developing innovation and skills, and are committed to placing our research at the service of the social, economic and cultural prosperity of the Sheffield City region.

- The Civic University. We will be true to our fundamental values as a Civic University. This means identifying and developing relationships that add value to the University and the wider region.
- Accessibility for SMEs. Highly visible gateways will provide clear pathways to our knowledge, business support, incubation and enterprise facilities. We will develop our network of locally based Alumni working within the region's industries and businesses. We will quantify and collate our level of interaction with local business and industry.
- Shaping Regional Policy. The success of the regional economy depends on a spirit of collaboration. We will play our part in helping to shape and influence the direction of regional strategies. To stimulate economic growth and the emergence of new companies we will work in partnership with local government, enterprise partnerships and with Sheffield Hallam University to drive innovation, growth and enterprise.
- Engaging with the wider community. The University adds vibrancy to the wider social and cultural community of the city Region, and contributes to the cultural economy. We take pride in the strength of the relationships we have with a diverse range of people and communities and will continue to involve and engage with the public in our research. We will establish a public engagement team to develop these relationships further, value staff who demonstrate talent in this area, identify internal champions and disseminate best practice across all Faculties.

- Local Alumni and business angels. We will enhance links with our alumni and local business angels, and develop opportunities to work in partnership with them across relevant aspects of our IIKE activity.

3. Making the most of our Intellectual Property

We will stimulate innovation within the University and with our partners, and maximise the impact of our ideas and knowledge on the wider world, through the development of protectable Intellectual Property (IP)

We will:

- Work closely with our commercialisation partner Fusion IP, to identify and develop the most appropriate route to exploit University-owned IP.
- Improve understanding and participation. We will ensure academics and external organisations understand how we work with Fusion so that both IP exploitation and collaborative R&D opportunities can be realised. Our commercialisation team will be proactive in promoting the benefits to academics, and in supporting the development of their IP portfolio through our commercial assessment process.
- Maximise other opportunities. Timely decisions will be made on the development of innovations, technologies and spin-outs that fall outside Fusion's core interests. We will ensure that proper consideration is given to the exploitation of all potentially successful IP that might benefit the University and City Region. We will also continue to align Proof of Concept funding in a purposeful way to improve the value and applicability of the IP our research produces.

4. Embedding Impact, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange.

To bring this strategy to life, we will transform our corporate structures and processes to foster the values and vision of IIKE so that they become integral to the way the University operates.

- Impact. We will ensure that, by sharing and applying the knowledge our research generates, it has as powerful an impact as possible in boosting the economy, improving lives and preparing for the future. We will be proactive in identifying, developing and reporting on the impact resulting from our research.
- Appropriate and sustainable structures. An IIKE Advisory Group will be established. This group will disseminate best practice and ensure institutional coherence and purpose for our IIKE activities. The Advisory group's approach will be driven by our strategic needs, not by funding mechanisms, and will be based on a long term approach which responds to industrial and societal need.
- Empowering people. HR processes will be developed to recognise and reward activities relating to knowledge exchange, impact and engagement. Facilitated secondment programmes will be developed to allow individuals to move both ways between the University and partner organisations.
- IIKE networks. We will create a network of KE professionals, organised around Faculty gateways which will work across disciplines with specific industry sectors.

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- Communicating Change. We will make it easy for all audiences to identify and understand the range and breadth of research conducted at the University of Sheffield and will use targeted media to show how this research is changing the world for the better.
- Student Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. Our students will become the next generation of innovators and business leaders. We will give all students the opportunity to engage with enterprise education and support students and recent graduates in the development of entrepreneurial ventures.