
Keele Research Strategy Refresh

Introduction

Research is central to Keele's mission. Our research performance, as exemplified in our world-leading [Primary care Research](#), is a key contributor to our reputation and remains at the heart of our future plans. Our ambition is to continue to deliver, and expand the range of world leading, innovative interdisciplinary research that transforms understanding and brings real world benefit to society, communities and individuals.

Our research reputation is built upon our disciplinary strengths, which span the arts & humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, health and care. These are strengths in which we will continue to invest and build. Beyond this, and a key feature of Keele's research, is our significant and distinctive reputation for interdisciplinary research as showcased through our flagship [University Research Institutes](#).

Keele's research mission is reinforced by a reputation for high-quality research-led teaching. Keele's distinctive contribution to the UK and international higher education landscape is as a leading research University, which also offers high-quality education and training of future researchers, generating high-levels of student satisfaction and employability.

Delivering the Research Strategy successfully will mean continuing to improve research performance across the whole University. This is vital to our wider mission and ambition to attract leading researchers at all career levels and high-quality student applicants; and, thereby, increasing our impact and reputation nationally and internationally. The success of the strategy will depend on the continued strong performance and commitment of Keele's researchers. These expectations are encapsulated in the University's Academic Role Expectations.

The Research Strategy is built on seven focal pillars:

Strategic Pillars

- **Research Excellence:** We will conduct research of the highest quality that has the potential to be world leading and transformational
- **Innovation:** We will place innovation at the heart of what we do, maximising the economic, and societal benefits of our research
- **Collaboration & Partnership:** We will build and maintain strong and sustainable partnerships with collaborators from academia, business, industry, healthcare, the cultural, civic, public and third sectors; this will be supported by our commitment to public involvement in and engagement with research
- **Excellence with Impact:** We will ensure our research has an impact beyond academia through effective collaboration, co-production, partnership working and knowledge exchange

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- **Reach and Significance:** We will develop, deliver, disseminate and support implementation of our high quality research, ensuring impact at local, national and global scale
 - **Integrity:** We will continue to embed a culture of research integrity, with robust governance processes to ensure the standards of the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity are not only met but exceeded
 - **Inclusion:** We will maintain our strong institutional commitment to inclusion, continually promoting equality and diversity among our students and staff across all career stages

Objectives

1. Research Quality

We will use the Research Excellence Framework (REF) as an important evaluation of our progress and performance in the pursuit of the highest quality of research, measured in both the eyes of our peers and those benefiting from our research across the world

Success measures:

- 80% of publications submitted to REF 2021 to be ranked at 3 or 4*
- Achieve an average GPA of 3.5 across outputs, environment and impact in REF 2021

2. Research Income

We will grow and diversify income to support our research, setting ambitious but achievable targets at university, school and individual level

Success measures:

- Research spend per annum to reach £25m by 2023
- Value of grant successes per annum to reach £30m by 2023
- Funding from UKRI to reach 25% of total research income (spend) by 2023
- Continue to invest in world class facilities to support Keele's research

3. Knowledge Exchange & Impact

Robust partnerships and context-bespoke engagement are central to the delivery of Keele's overarching research aims. Building on areas of existing good practice we will continue to adopt a coordinated approach to the delivery of our research and knowledge exchange strategies

Success measures:

- Income with non-academic collaborators to reach 50% of total research income by 2023
- Build on recent investments in facilities and infrastructure to develop and deliver world leading research in collaboration with a range of industry, corporate, cultural, civic, public and third sector partners as exemplified through the [SEND project](#)
- Through the partnerships enabled by our [Keele Deals](#), foster regional collaborative research that builds on our shared needs and ambitions thereby providing significant benefits for the local area
- Maintain a suite of impact case studies in development

4. Interdisciplinarity

Whilst maintaining support for core academic disciplines, we will continue to develop and nurture cross-cutting interdisciplinary themes which build on Keele's research strengths and position the university to respond to key economic, societal and global challenges

Success measures:

- Continue to invest in, strengthen and promote the following research themes that have been identified as areas of major interdisciplinary strength and excellence:
 - Social Inclusion
 - Sustainable Futures
 - Global Health
- Expand the role of the [Institute of Liberal Arts & Sciences](#) to provide a broader range of seed-corn opportunities and platforms for growing interdisciplinary research and the strategic conversations that make it happen
- Continue to support excellent research within the core academic disciplines across the University, recognising that this research provides a vital platform for interdisciplinary activity

5. Global Challenges

We will provide dedicated funding and professional support to support development and delivery of research which aims to address some of society's most pressing global challenges

Success measures:

- Annual programme of investment to pump prime global challenge focused research, in collaboration with partners in low and middle income countries
- Use the lens provided by our flagship interdisciplinary Research Institutes in Global Health, Social Inclusion and Sustainable Futures to develop, deliver and disseminate research at a global level
- 50% of all publications to include international co-authorship by 2023

6. People

We will aim to recruit and retain world-class researchers and practitioner-researchers, ensuring a vibrant research culture and providing an environment in which their research can flourish

Success measures:

- Provide targeted investment and support in recruitment of academic staff who are, or have the potential to become, international leaders in their research field
- Allocation of a minimum 20% of time for research to individuals deemed to have significant responsibility for research
- Monitor the inclusivity of the research cohort through Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter
- Provision of clear guidance on individual research excellence through implementation of Academic Role Expectations and promotion criteria clearly linked to research
- Compliance with the principles outlined in the [Researcher Development Concordat](#), measured through retention of our [HR Excellence in Research Award](#)
- Encourage, support and promote leadership in research, within and beyond the institution

7. Postgraduate Research

We will foster a community of postgraduate students learning how to undertake impactful research who will go on to become ambassadors for research at Keele University

Success measures:

- Develop the Keele Doctoral Academy to facilitate strategic advancement and coordination of postgraduate research
- Explore development of new postgraduate opportunities that build on our strong research partnerships, such as joint and split-site postgraduate degrees and professional doctorates
- In alignment with Keele's research strengths, increase graduate research student numbers while maintaining the highest academic quality:
 - a. Increase our home/EU population of PGRs by 30% by 2023
 - b. Increase our international population of PGRs by 150% by 2023

8. Research Integrity

We will continue to develop and enhance our robust governance structures, professional support and academic leadership for research ethics, governance and integrity as essential backbones of our research mission

Success measures:

- Delivery of a rolling annual programme of professional support, online resources, workshops, seminars, training and other events that continue to support development of a culture of research integrity
- Well established culture of research integrity and governance to be an audit function across the main risk areas of research
- Successful annual monitoring of research governance, ethics and integrity through Council, ensuring Keele remains compliant with the standards set out in the Concordat for Research Integrity

9. Support & Facilities

We will provide researchers with access to high quality facilities, infrastructure and professional support

Success measures:

- Provide high quality professional support across the research lifecycle, from development to dissemination, embedding a culture of continuous improvement into service delivery
- Provide investment to improve the use of Keele's physical estate, offering more engaging and inclusive spaces for research
- Working in concert with the Digital Strategy, improve our use of digital technology as a key enabler of research by improving access to (i) cutting-edge computing and storage facilities (ii) machine learning in approaches to field surveying and path-finding; and (iii) using technology to support compliance with the fast evolving open access and open science agenda

How we will achieve our strategy

In order to realise the place of research in an ambitious institutional mission, all research leaders will work closely with key strategic drivers: in particular, the FSP, OneKeele, the programme for curriculum reform, as well as well as key institutional delivery vehicles such as the Keele Doctoral Academy, the Institute of Liberal Arts & Sciences, the Keele Institute for Innovation & Teaching Excellence and the emerging Digital Strategy. Investment in high-quality research careers will be achieved through reformed Faculty and School planning processes, as well as by the Vitae Researcher Career Development framework. In parallel we will develop our Integrity agenda through continued investment in leadership and network building, as well as continuing national engagement with the UK Reproducibility Network. Equality and diversity will be central to the entire mission through the People Strategy, Athena Swan and REC.

Our focus on research excellence will continue to be overseen by the rolling Research Excellence audit that has been in place since 2017, including the audit and management of impact. At the same time, we will foster an effective culture of impact and equitable engagement through, for example, the annual Impact Festival and the continuing embedding of engaged research. Innovation will be supported by the research development functions of RAISe. The Partnership Team in RIE will continue to develop high-value partnerships as exemplified in our civic beacon Keele Deals.

University Research Committee will continue to play a coordinating and overseeing role in relation both to performance and delivery as it has done since 2018. Faculties will develop localised versions of the overarching strategy. Performance will be overseen by a variety of connected mechanisms including the dashboards developed by RIE, and the profiles for individual researchers. These will inform the horizon scanning and planning of Faculties, Schools, and the ID institutes – as exemplified in the planning and monitoring of GCRF. Communication and development frameworks, already in place, will be further developed, linking Faculty Deans for Research, Institute Directors, PVC R&E, who collectively will develop a shared sense of mission through the Research Leaders' Network.
