College of Social Sciences
RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE STRATEGY 2020 - 2024
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Social Science at the University of Glasgow has made great progress since the publication of the College’s last Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy in 2013/14. A new wave of talented researchers have joined our ranks, bringing fresh energy to our research portfolio, our long standing areas of world class expertise continue to thrive, and we have embraced the opportunities of the challenge-led funding landscape. In doing this we have found innovative and exciting ways to work across disciplinary boundaries to bring social science expertise to bear on the world’s most pressing issues.

1.2 Vision

Our vision is: World-class social science research that delivers positive impacts on societies and economies. To deliver on this vision, we will focus our efforts on making Glasgow the best University in which to develop a research career in the social sciences; a University with a collegiate, collaborative, research environment, excellent support for research income generation and innovative approaches to engagement with impact partners

1.3 Values

For Glasgow to be the best place to build a research career in the social sciences we will build on the University’s values in all we do:

**Passionate**

- We will support creativity, citizenship, research leadership and ambition. We will encourage people to work together to be ambitious, adventurous and confident, and to have the courage to accept and balance the risk of failure with reward in the pursuit of excellent research

**Professional**

- We are committed to a supportive, collective, committed research culture. We embrace diversity and difference. We share our work openly and actively, seeking out opportunities to collaborate with our local and international partners, and to influence research funders

**Progressive**

- We will always work in an ethical and sustainable manner, respect our partners and their contributions and will use our research to benefit and enhance the global community, the South and West of Scotland, and Glasgow
2. Context

As we look forward to the next strategic period, the pace of change in our funding environment will accelerate and we must re-double our efforts to curate a research environment for Social Science at the University of Glasgow, which will attract brilliant students and where the world’s best research talent can flourish. Our strategy will enable us to be agile in response to three aspects of the funding context: international focus, challenge-led funding; and new models for research funding.

2.1 International Focus

The College Of Social Science has enjoyed a stream of funding success through the Horizon 2020 programme and in particular through awards to outstanding Glasgow social scientists from the European Research Council. However, political uncertainty over the long-term trajectory of the UK’s relationship with the European Union will undoubtedly continue throughout the period covered by this strategy, and the nature of our future access to European Union research funding programmes may remain unclear for some time. In turn, the international focus of UK public funders, through the Newton Fund, and the Global Challenges Research Fund, is firmly fixed on emerging economies and low- and middle-income countries respectively. With a mixture of long-standing global partnerships based on years of trusted co-working, and newly established links, Glasgow’s social scientists are well placed to respond.

2.2 Challenge Led

Within the UK public funding landscape, the creation of UKRI is having far-reaching effects on the structures of research. Challenge-led approaches to the commissioning of research calls are now a firmly established feature of the environment, where researchers from diverse disciplines are asked to come together to cocreate solutions to complex, multi-faceted problems.

This requires new modes of working; investing time in networking and working to understand how different methodologies and approaches can best complement one another. It also requires researchers able to develop personal skills and strategies that bring together the ability to engage in interdisciplinary coalitions, with the ability to make contributions to their own discipline. Researchers will also have important contributions to make, through proactive engagement with non-academic partner organisations, to support UKRI to identify and prioritise the foci of challenge led programmes.

The University of Glasgow remains one of the UK’s best broad-based institutions, where opportunities to forge new research and knowledge exchange relationships abound, and robust professional support is in place to support researchers at all career stages to navigate new connections; we look forward to the myriad new research ideas that will emerge from our community.
2.3 New Models of Research Funding

The last strategic period was characterised by significant constraints on UK government spending on research, and it is likely that the forthcoming period will see continued pressure on the UK government funding settlement for social science.

The sector has already seen moves to consolidate social science research funding around areas of existing excellence and we anticipate that major, funded Centres and large investments will be key anchors for the attraction and retention of funding in our research environment. Specific support to proactively plan for sustainability will therefore be required. The continued buoyancy of social science research will also require the consideration of other approaches to funding, to create a sustainable, mixed portfolio. From philanthropic support, to strategic partnership with external organisations, there is an imperative for us to develop the capability to work with new funders and to build new alliances.
3. Achieving our vision

3.1 Aims

To deliver world-class social science research that delivers positive impacts on societies and economies within this dynamically changing environment, our aims are to:

- **Build a collegiate, collaborative research culture, where time invested in ideation, exchange, team development and research leadership is valued and recognised.**
- **Invest our resources, time and energy to grow, maximise and diversify our research income to ensure our ability to invest in our post-graduate researchers, staff and infrastructure.**
- **Deepen and widen our impact partnerships, with a focus on innovation in our approaches to engagement.**

In pursuing these aims, we – research students, early and mid-career researchers, local research leaders, senior leaders and professional staff - will work together to build a strong College research community, which works together through the three key pillars of research activity: applying the intellectual strength of our disciplines; working within strong interdisciplinary partnerships; and deepening and widening our impact partnerships with communities, charities, businesses, and governments.
3.1.1 Strength in our Disciplines

Creative engagement within our disciplines and subject areas is the backbone of our research. Being confident and bold in the ways we apply our theories and develop new insights is important for our students, for the Research Excellence Framework, and for ourselves. Interdisciplinary, challenge-led, research also requires strong, critical, theoretically rigorous disciplinary foundations. To build strength in our disciplines, we must invest, value and recognise effort in our local research clusters, groups and subject areas, enabling local research leaders to work in partnership with professional research support to design and deliver bespoke activity programmes.

3.1.2 Strength in our Interdisciplinary Partnerships

Responding to the world’s most pressing problems, and responding to the strategic drivers in our funding environment, requires respectful and innovative interdisciplinary research. At Glasgow, leading the University’s Research Beacon, Addressing Inequalities, much of our research is fuelled by our passion for social justice and our commitment to understanding and mitigating the impacts of inequality locally and globally.

To build critical mass in our interdisciplinary partnerships, under the umbrella of the University Research Beacon, Addressing Inequalities we will focus our research development support on five, social-sciences led, interdisciplinary themes. These are described in more detail in Section 4.

• Challenges in Changing Cities
• Digital Society and Economy
• Justice, Insecurity and Fair Decision Making
• Address Inequalities
• Sustainability

To build these themes we will create space and opportunities for people at all stages of their career to meet, learn, discuss, create and innovate across disciplines and build new research programmes.

3.1.3 Strength in our Impact Partnerships

For our research to deliver positive impacts on societies we need to further strengthen our partnerships with colleagues working in other sectors. Whilst continuing to provide support to all researchers in personal impact planning, we will focus our knowledge exchange development activity on deepening a number of strategic relationships, and on brokering new collaborative relationships, in particular with the private sector, and with socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, creating space for new research priorities to emerge from engagement activity.
Aim 1.

Building a collegiate, collaborative research culture, where time invested in ideation, exchange, team development and research leadership is valued and recognised.

Our dedication to the curation of a supportive, collective, committed research culture is a fundamental part of who we are. Strong research communities are the result of collective effort on the part of researchers at all career stages, skilled local leadership, and professional support. We will develop and deliver activities that support a collective committed research culture; some will be focused specifically at disciplinary or interdisciplinary level and some will focus on supporting strength in impact partnerships. All activity programmes will be designed to be, wherever possible, inclusive and open to postgraduate research students, and staff at all stages of their career. We will develop systems in which this collective effort will be valued and rewarded through our staff development processes.

**Strength in our Disciplines**

- We will support the development and delivery of research development activity programmes specific to the needs of each school/subject/research group/cluster (e.g. writing and reading groups, strong processes for peer review of grant applications and outputs, skills development, networking events). Activity programmes will be locally led, designed to suit disciplinary needs, and supported by research development professionals. Leadership of and participation in team development, ideation and exchange activities will be valued and recognised.

**Strength in our Interdisciplinary Partnerships**

- We will develop and deliver open event programmes aligned to the College Interdisciplinary Research Themes to encourage within-College and cross-College networking for the development of ambitious new research. Activities will be focused on interdisciplinary insight and specific challenges including, for example, seminars on different disciplinary perspectives on tackling challenges, and skills development in working across disciplines, and writing large, interdisciplinary, grant applications.

**Strength in our Impact Partnerships**

- We will promote a working culture in which relationships with impact partners are nurtured, developed and shared, allowing broad constituencies of research students and staff to engage with communities and external organisations to understand their challenges and priorities, and to co-create new research agendas.
Aim 2.

Invest our resources, time and energy to grow, maximise and diversify our research income to ensure our ability to invest in our post-graduate researchers, staff and infrastructure.

The external funding environment for social science is changing at an unprecedented pace, and the vibrancy of our research will depend on our ability to engage with these changes, taking on new challenges to grow our research income, and thereby our ability to invest in our research community.

This ability to invest will be driven by a mixed economy of research funding. In our traditional areas of strength and focus, such as UK public funders of research, we will pursue ‘persistent success’ to ensure our continued access to social science research funding. But we will also work in partnership to explore new research funding opportunities from less familiar areas of UKRI, from private sector collaborations, from new international partnerships, and from philanthropic giving.

Strength in our Disciplines

• We will ensure that researchers at all career stages have a good understanding of the research funding landscape, particularly the disciplinary nuances which pertain to their subject, so that research subjects/groups/clusters can develop and deliver appropriate local plans to maintain or grow their research income

Strength in our Interdisciplinary Partnerships

• We will focus our research development activity on our Interdisciplinary Research Themes as key areas of opportunity for the growth of our research income, developing bespoke plans, including a focus on new research funders, for each theme in partnership between Theme Leaders and research development staff
• We will develop and deliver a dedicated governance and operational structure to conduct sustainability and investment planning for major externally funded Centres, planning for persistent success

Strength in our Impact Partnerships

• We will deepen our impact partnerships with key sectors and organisations in areas of maximum mutual opportunity, developing, in particular, deeper private sector research and development relationships
Aim 3.

Deepen and widen our impact partnerships, with a focus on innovation in our approaches to engagement

Social science researchers at Glasgow produce excellent, engaged research through partnerships in every part of society and the economy, from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities locally and worldwide, through policy makers, practitioners and professionals, to entrepreneurs and private enterprises. We have had particular success in working with partners to achieve funding for ESRC collaborative awards for postgraduate research students. Our partnerships are not simply vehicles for impact; they enhance the excellence of our research at a fundamental level.

There is more that we can and must do; from being fearless in exploring relationships with new kinds of non-academic partners, through to recognising our responsibility to engage with our research funders in ways that can meaningfully contribute to the advancement of social science as a whole.

Strength in our Disciplines

- We will continue to support individual researchers to prepare personal Research Impact strategies, to plan their research and knowledge exchange activity with impact partnerships at the heart of what they do

Strength in our Interdisciplinary Partnerships

- We will identify key strategic impact partners within each Interdisciplinary theme and support the development of deeper collaborations with those partners for mutual benefit
- We will carry out bi-annual theme reviews to create space for new research priorities to emerge from engagement activity

Strength in our Impact Partnerships

- We will innovate in our approaches to impact partnerships, creating new pathways for social scientists to collaborate with communities, the policy community and with, and in, business
4. Our Interdisciplinary Research Themes

- Challenges in Changing Cities
- Digital Society & Economy
- Justice, Insecurity & Fair Decision Making
- Addressing Inequalities
- Sustainability
Challenges in Changing Cities

The reshaping of urban form and the change of use of urban space will be accelerated by rapid changes in the climate, mobility, labour market restructuring, housing, welfare regimes and globalisation. This theme focuses on growth and productivity, on economic perspectives on city change and on liveability including what makes for a healthy, sustainable, cohesive and productive city. It also focuses on changing city governance, on public and social policies and their enactment.

As fundamental structural, environmental, social and technical changes occur over the next 20 year horizon, cities will be the crucible in which those changes and the opportunities and challenges they bring are most keenly felt. The theme is cross-cut by the influence of data gathering and analytics, which will both be drivers of change to urban landscapes and enablers to the better planning of them, and is supported by innovative approaches to civic engagement, including through the Olympia Social Research Hub.
Digital Society & Economy

Digital technologies and services are ubiquitous and pervasive, seen in for example the development of a platform economy, increased datafication, extensive use of social media in everyday life and in security practices. These technologies underpin economic and organisational life, and feature in most people’s lives whether at work, in education, in relation to health and health and social care, in social and personal life and in cultural and political life.

Interdisciplinary social science is needed to understand and inform these multi-dimensional social transformations, addressing questions about equality, justice, knowledge, trust, citizenship, social cohesion, inclusion and diversity in contexts such as Fintech, the Law (including cyber security), governance, elections and ‘smart cities’. The significance of understanding that digital technology is both ‘socially-shaped’ and historically-shaped is that it means that social science can inform policy debate, industrial and security strategy, third sector roles, and other public issues that arise.
Justice, Insecurity and Fair Decision Making

The University of Glasgow brings together researchers approaching the emerging challenges of the contemporary world through study of the institutions, mechanisms and settings of Justice, Insecurity & Fair Decision Making.

We explore this theme across multiple scales and areas: from international courts to street corners, from prisons to work places, from private security to environmental security in health and social care and in the digitally driven disruptive fora of the future.

Using insights from politics, sociology, area studies, law, economics, history and criminology, Glasgow’s researchers are understanding the roots of insecurity and injustice and developing ambitious new solutions to drive fair decision-making, social cohesion, and resilience. They are doing this in a wide range of international settings, including by defending the global, rule-based order against challenges of populism and nationalism.

Together, Glasgow’s experts are anticipating the intensifying dynamics of justice, fairness and security facing communities worldwide, and proactively developing strategies to promote fairness, equity and social cohesion.
Addressing Inequalities

This theme draws together researchers from across the college with an interest in inequality, equality and human rights. It draws on a range of expertise from researchers working in areas of health and wellbeing, race, racism and ethnicity, migration, refugees and asylum seekers, income inequality, place and neighbourhood, poverty, gender, disability, age, LGBTQI, faith and religion.

Inequality is explored across time and a variety of sectors, including public health, health and social care, welfare, social security, education, housing, access to the law, leisure and culture, economic and social history, employment, and community engagement.

The theme encompasses both (a) understanding of the drivers of deprivation and marginalisation, both past and present, and (b) researching solutions to mitigate inequality and inequity, including policy and public service responses to inequalities, informed by an understanding of such drivers. Our work is comparative and has global reach.
Sustainability

Research that addresses the SDGs is a high priority in the UK and internationally. Environmental sustainability in particular is also relevant to other intergovernmental processes such as the Paris Agreement addressing climate change and environmental management and sustainability is critically important to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

GCRF is a major pillar of UKRI, learned societies and other sponsors that are promoting disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, related to development issues as well as climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and system resilience.

This theme brings together Glasgow researchers working across disciplines to focus on capacity strengthening of research, innovation and knowledge exchange between the UK and low and middle income countries through partnership and seeks to provide an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.