R & I

Research & Impact Strategy

2017 – 2022

Shaping your future
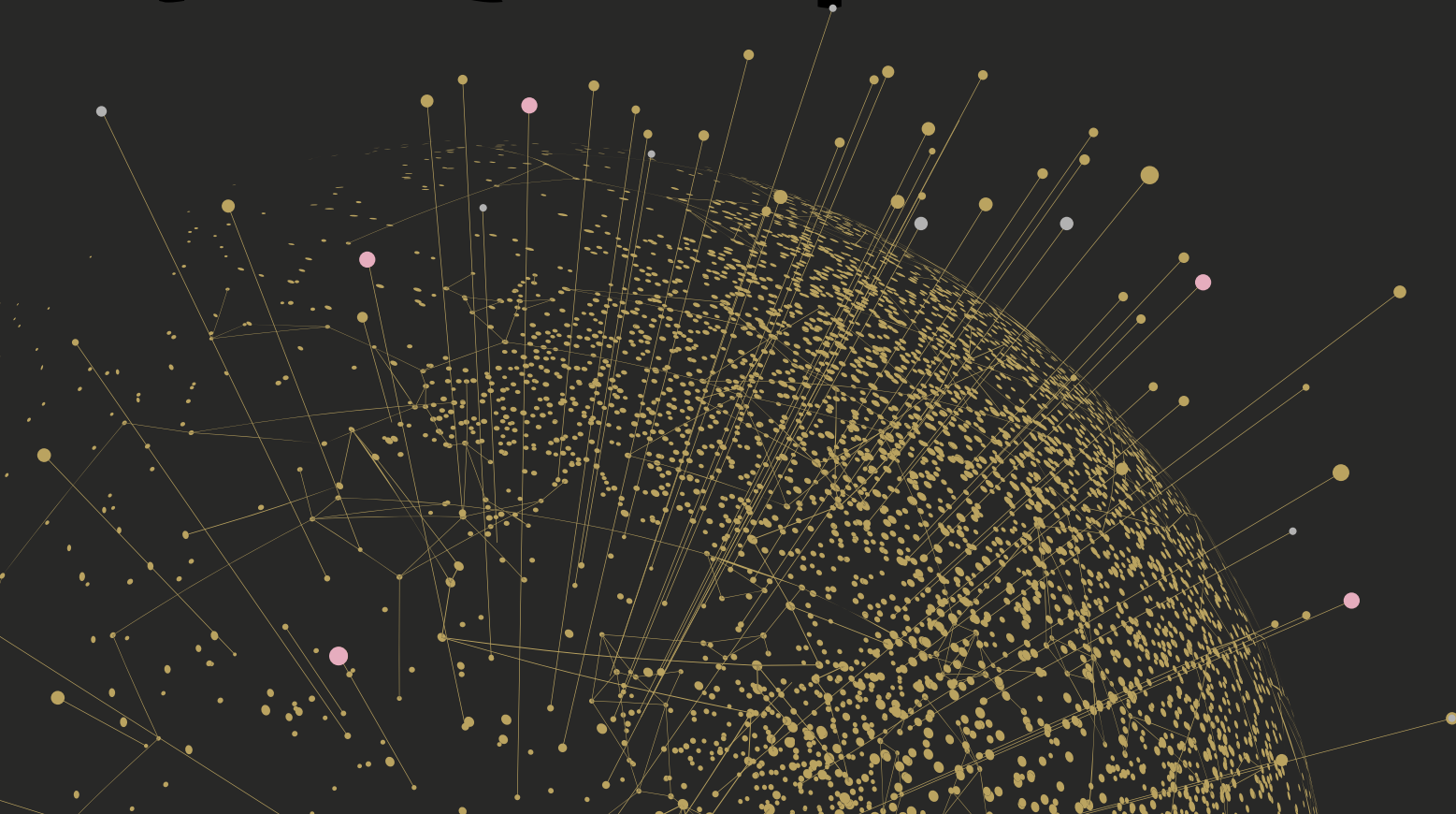
Our researchers
will work together to
address large-scale
multidisciplinary research
challenges and achieve
impact locally and
globally

Introduction

The Ulster University Research & Impact Strategy 2017-2022 will empower our people to undertake interdisciplinary research in a supportive environment to produce internationally excellent and world-leading outputs with transformative impact. It will support Ulster's vision to deliver globally significant research with local relevance and to make a positive contribution to society as a whole.

As a research-led university, Ulster will strive to be a nexus of learning where research permeates our operations and is the basis of its reputation and the foundation for continuous improvement. This will extend from the curiosity based, investigator-led basic research, to applied interdisciplinary research and developmental work. Ulster will promote excellence in research and education by ensuring that these activities are mutually dependent and that our research enhances the student experience.

As a civic university we will focus our efforts on global societal issues relevant to Northern Ireland and ensure that the outputs of our research have a positive impact on civic society. Ulster University will achieve international recognition for its excellence and leadership in distinctive research themes that have global significance and create local and international capability and societal value. In gaining leadership in areas that unite our strengths, our researchers will work together to address large-scale multidisciplinary research challenges and achieve impact locally and globally.

In our role as a civic university we will engage with the public to make the research process as accessible as possible for the benefit of wider society. We will partner with industry, government and the third sector to inform and develop impact. We will seek to bring to market the intellectual property arising from our work and we will pro-actively target businesses which align with our strategic research themes matching research expertise to address industry problems.

The Research & Impact Strategy 2017-22 defines our ambitions for our research activities and outcomes. It provides direction and sets out a plan for our research and its impact over the next 5 years. It builds upon core strategies to develop our people, our research outputs and our impact. Ulster's research ambitions will be realised through strategic focus, interdisciplinarity, research informed teaching, research development, the enhancement of our research environment, good governance and integrity in the conduct of our research, and by monitoring, benchmarking and refining our performance measures. In summary our strategy provides the roadmap to help us make a lasting contribution to society as a whole.

Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Impact)
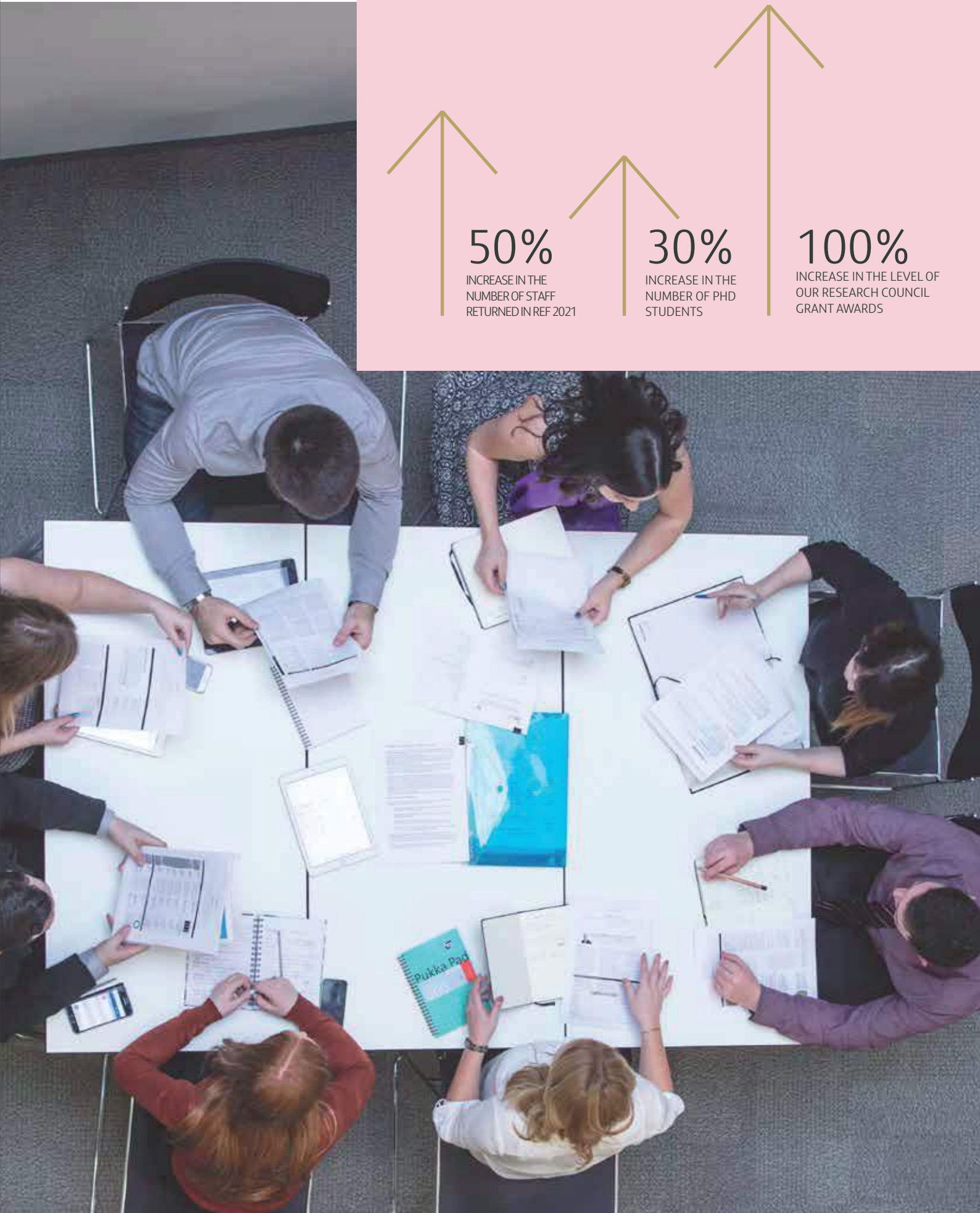
Strategic Commitments

By 2022, Ulster will commit to:

– Increase the number of staff returned in REF by 50% over the course of this Strategy;

– Increase the level of our overall research grant awards by 50%;

– Increase the level of our Research Council UK grant awards by 100%;

– Increase the numbers of PhD students at Ulster by 30%;

– Increase the number of research partnerships with business by 25%;

– Increase the level of Knowledge Exchange Income by 20%;

– Improve our positioning within the top 25% of UK Universities within the next REF assessment for research power; and

– Improve our positioning within the top 20% of UK Universities within the 2021 HESA Higher Education Business & Community Interaction Survey league for its HEIF-determining metrics.

To enable Ulster's enhanced performance we will ensure that we:

– Undertake globally significant research in our chosen research themes;

– Demonstrate impact upon teaching, the economy and civic society;

– Focus on increasing our internationally co-created and co-authored research outputs;

– Provide support, incentives and leadership for researchers to undertake interdisciplinary research of global excellence funded by the most prestigious grant awarding bodies;

– Strongly embed within our research environment Ulster's chosen interdisciplinary research themes of creativity and culture, healthy communities, sustainability and social renewal, underpinned by investment from Ulster;

– Make 50 new strategic researcher appointments in the period to REF 2021;

– Give greater clarity around what it means to be a great Ulster researcher so that each colleague understands the personal expectations of everyone, which will enable us to realise our strategic ambitions;

– Ensure that all of our research students have an enhanced experience during their time at Ulster through the establishment of a new Doctoral College. The College will bring together existing research support functions from across a range of areas within the university, providing an enriching and supportive development environment for our research students and early career researchers;

– Enhance the institutional support for developing impact pathways, creating value within the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia; and

– Integrate the Research & Impact Strategy 2017-2022 to Ulster's Education and Global Engagement Strategies, ensuring collective measures to realise the vision for Ulster University set out in our University's Five & Fifty Strategy.

50%
INCREASE IN THE
NUMBER OF STAFF
RETURNED IN REF 2021

30%
INCREASE IN THE
NUMBER OF PHD
STUDENTS

100%
INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF
OUR RESEARCH COUNCIL
GRANT AWARDS

TOP 10

FOR BUILT ENVIRONMENT, BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES, ART AND DESIGN AND NURSING RESEARCH

RESEARCH POWER: REF 2014

TOP 5

FOR **WORLD-LEADING** RESEARCH IN LAW, BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES, NURSING AND ART AND DESIGN

RESEARCH OUTPUTS: REF 2014

TOP 10

FOR AN INTERNATIONALLY EXCELLENT, WORLD-LEADING RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT IN NURSING & HEALTH SCIENCES, BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES, ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, LAW, ART & DESIGN

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT: REF 2014

TOP 10

OF UK UNIVERSITIES FOR ITS NUMBER OF INTERACTIONS WITH SMES

HEBCI 2014/15

TOP 23%

OF UK UNIVERSITIES FOR THE TOTAL INCOME GENERATED FROM ITS INTERACTIONS WITH BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY

HEBCI 2014/15

6

Ulster University's
international reputation
for research excellence
has received worldwide
recognition

Ulster's Achievements

Ulster University's international reputation for research excellence has received worldwide recognition from the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). Ulster University is currently in the top 25% of UK Universities for research power. 72% of our research activity is judged to be world-leading and internationally excellent, an increase from 49% in RAE 2008.

The REF 2014 exercise demonstrated that Ulster University is now:

– One of the top five universities in the UK for world-leading research in Law, Biomedical Sciences, Nursing and Art and Design;

– One of the top 10 universities in the UK for an internationally excellent, world-leading research environment in Nursing & Health Sciences, Biomedical Sciences, Architecture and the Built Environment, Law, Art & Design;

– One of the top 5 universities in the UK for outstanding research impact in terms of reach and significance in Law, Art & Design and Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts;

– One of the top 10 universities in the UK in terms of research power for Built Environment, Biomedical Sciences, Art and Design and Nursing research; and

– Northern Ireland's leading academic institution for research impact, with 44% judged to be world-leading.

Ulster University is dedicated to driving innovation across industry, supporting businesses to access the knowledge that will help them to develop their global competitiveness. HESA's Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) Survey measures Ulster's innovation performance and in the 2014/15 assessment Ulster University is:

– In the top 23% of UK Universities for the total income that is generated from its interactions with business and the community;

– In the top 10% of UK universities for its number of interactions with SMEs;

– In the top 21% of UK universities for its spin outs performance;

– In the top 5% of Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) providers across the UK.

These results demonstrate our influence, the relevance of our research and our impact in areas as diverse as health, the economy, the creative industries and social policy. Our performance reflects the quality, commitment and leadership of our research staff and students, our investment in research, the strength of our partnerships and our worldwide contribution.

Building on these achievements, through our Research & Impact Strategy 2017-2022, our research outputs will advance the way we see the world in our chosen research themes and ensure impact through technological, creative and social innovation.

Our People

Strategic Intent

The success of Ulster University, and its Research & Impact Strategy, is dependent on the quality, performance and support of its people. To ensure that the ambitions of our staff and students are realised, we will recruit, retain and reward the very best people in terms of their ability and potential, and we will provide a world class research environment in which our people can flourish. We will enhance their skills and provide them with the tools and flexibility needed to respond to the opportunities and demands of a globally engaged research-led university.

Objectives

By 2022 we will increase the number of enrolling PhD students by 30% and engage in a process of further capacity building to increase the number of Ulster staff returned to REF by 50%. We will develop strategic approaches, including targeted investment, that will make these objectives achievable.

What it means to be a great Ulster Researcher

The Ulster researcher will demonstrate leadership in their subject, will strive to international standards of excellence, will collaborate globally, will nurture the development of both early career researchers and research students, will attract grant funding greater than their benchmark peers, will contribute to Ulster's interdisciplinary strategic research themes, and will ensure impact from their research through at least one high quality research output each year, as well as through teaching, commercialisation, and knowledge exchange with business, public sector and the wider community.

Supporting Actions

– **Researcher Recruitment**
- To increase Ulster's REF performance, we will appoint **50 new researchers** in the period to REF 2021, and will continue to provide mentoring and support to enable current staff, PhD students and early career researchers to become research active.

– **Staff Support**
- Newly appointed staff, especially early career researchers, will be provided with **start-up research funding packages**. Professional services staff from the Department for Research & Impact will be aligned to each faculty to provide support for their grant applications and subsequent project management, as well as their research impact, publicity and public engagement. A **Distinguished Research Impact Award scheme** has been introduced and a **Research Partner Recognition Awards scheme** will be introduced to complement our long established **Distinguished/Senior Distinguished Research Fellowship Award scheme**.

– **Sabbaticals**
- A sabbatical policy will be introduced for research staff which constitutes at least one sabbatical period per Research Institute core member within a REF cycle, subject to approval by Faculty Executive.

– **Internationalisation**
- Ulster University will work to attract the very best and most talented academics in order to advance its global positioning. Our collaborative research, international co-authorship, and internationally cited research outputs provide critical leverage in international markets and contribute to Ulster's internationalisation strategy. We will include an international approach to the recruitment of all new academic staff. Excellence attracts excellence and Ulster can serve as an international beacon, signalling the capabilities and contributions of Northern Ireland to a global cohort of researchers.

– **Interdisciplinary Research**
- Researchers will be incentivised to work across the research themes and develop

The Senior Distinguished Research Fellowship Award 2016 was made to Professor Chris Nugent (Computing & Engineering) and Professor Fionnuala Ni Aolin (TJI) and the Distinguished Research Fellowship Award 2016 was made to Dr Leanne McCormick (Arts) and Dr Kongfatt Wong-Lin (Computing and Engineering). The first ever Distinguished Research Impact Award 2016 was made to Professor Jim McLaughlin (Computing and Engineering).

insights into the work of other disciplines through the organisation of regular sandpits and town hall meetings across all campuses, and through the allocation of internal **Research Challenge Funds** and interdisciplinary PhD studentship awards.

Researcher Training and Development – A training and grant development programme, **Research Income and Grant Opportunities for Ulster Researchers (RIGOUR)**, is being delivered to provide researchers with support to enhance and improve the success rate of grant applications. A similar training and development programme, focused on the **Significance and Originality of Academic Research: Interpreting New Guidance (SOARING)** will be delivered to increase the quality and REFability of research outputs and publications. **Research Communication training** will be provided to develop the skills of researchers in communicating the purpose, meaning and impact of their research.

– **Research Students** -The University is committed to ensuring that the quality of research training at Ulster is at the highest international level. Our aim is to develop each individual to their fullest potential to produce creative and rigorous researchers for careers both in academia

both in academia and industry. Ulster's research structures support over 1,000 doctoral and MRes students annually. We intend to increase this number by 30% over the period to 2021. This will be achieved through traditional Department for the Economy (DfE) and Vice-Chancellor Research Scholarships (VCRS) PhDs, as well as an increase in the number of PhDs costed to external grant applications, professional PhDs in industry, PhD by published work and through taught Doctorates in bespoke areas.

The University's commitment to equality is articulated in its Equality Scheme and Equal Opportunities Policy. Gender and race are two areas that we specifically focus upon. Ulster University is highly committed to the principles that underpin the **Athena SWAN Charter**, which recognises and celebrates good employment practice for women working in higher education and research. All departments are committed to achieving Bronze awards, and to subsequent progression to Silver Award. The University will continue to fund staff to participate in the **Aurora leadership development programme**, a programme specifically designed to encourage women to think of themselves as future leaders and actively engage in developing their leadership potential, with 8 people participating in 2016/17. The University is a member of Equality Challenge Unit's Race Equality Charter, which aims to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. The University is currently preparing to apply for a Bronze award. Ulster University holds the **HR Excellence in Research Award** for its commitment to improving the working conditions and career development of its research staff and a new HR Excellence in Research Action Plan has been developed and will be implemented over the period 2017-19.

Our Outputs

Our research outputs will advance the way we see the world in our chosen research themes and ensure impact through technological, creative and social innovation

Strategic Intent

Ulster University will undertake internationally excellent and world-leading research, leveraging funding from prestigious sources and ensuring transformative experiences for our research staff, students and collaborators. We will make certain that Ulster's research outputs showcase the excellence of our research, ensuring that our outputs are of the highest quality and are cited and recognised worldwide.

Objectives

We will increase the level of our research grant awards by 50% during the course of this strategy. We will provide a support platform to stimulate the transformation of our research outputs so that they reflect the significance, originality and novelty of our research. We will ensure that Ulster University is at the leading edge of national and international peer-review processes and that this knowledge of world-leading research outputs permeates our research community. We will use targeted resources to increase the number of internationally co-created and co-authored research outputs. We will enhance our research informed teaching and ensure a valued contribution to Ulster's policies and strategies for the Teaching Excellence Framework.
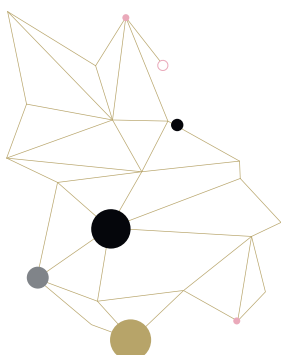
Supporting Actions

– **Quality** - We will provide the support, incentives and leadership necessary for our academic community to develop their internationally excellent and world-leading research. We will establish a uniform process of peer review for research outputs to which all RIs/UoAs must adhere. We will support RIs/UoAs, augmenting this process, to ensure our researchers' outputs can be maximised. We will develop resources to assist our researchers in understanding the nature of citation indices and the factors which influence their positive accrual and a dedicated support team will be established to provide professional support and guidance to our staff. We will tailor workshops, panels and other training sessions to our researchers' needs to further strengthen the quality of our outputs, using for example the SOARING programme to deliver these supporting activities.

– **Research Funding** - We will establish a new team in the Department for Research & Impact to build our capacity for horizon scanning. The team will strengthen our ability to identify the most appropriate, prestigious funding opportunities for Ulster researchers and support our researchers in submitting successful research bids. We will operationalise the team using a hub and spoke model, embedding key appointments within the faculties to identify funding opportunities, provide practical support to scope, develop and draft funding applications and to manage research contracts. We will diversify our research funding sources and increase the level of funding from prestigious sources such as Research Councils, European and international funding bodies, NIHR (UK), NIH (US), and from major charities including Wellcome, Leverhulme Trust, Nuffield and Rowntree. We will build a Research Development portal to promote strategically aligned internal and external funding opportunities and provide guidelines on how to successfully apply for access to these opportunities.

Human nutrition research at Ulster is led by the globally recognised Northern Ireland Centre for Food and Health (NICHE), which has been extremely successful in building its capability by targeting and securing funding from Research Councils such as the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Institute (BBSRC).

– **Research Partnerships** - We will seek to work with the very best by developing partnerships with national and international centres of research excellence. We will target resources to exploit these partnerships and we will build on our existing successful initiatives such as the Research Challenge Fund, Dublin City University and University of Maryland collaborative funding support schemes, to establish new visiting and exchange programmes. We will encourage our researchers to engage in partnerships and we will provide support to these interactions. We will seek to use our partnerships to increase the breadth and depth of our research collaborations with the goal of increasing the number of internationally co-created and co-authored research outputs produced by our academic community.

– **Mentoring and Support** - An improved and more formalized mentoring system will be put in place. Best practice will be established and rolled out to all areas at Ulster.

Our Impact

Strategic Intent

Ulster University will build upon our internationally excellent and world-leading impact arising from the translation of our research into value for the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment and/or quality of life, beyond academia. We will ensure that our research is leveraged by the university to advance the student experience and conduct of our international and civic business. This will be achieved with our partners through the co-creation of knowledge and collaborative exploitation, and for the public good through economic, social, cultural, health care, public policy or services and environmental impact. Ulster's researchers will be supported to identify pathways to impact at the earliest stage in the research process and partner strategically with those individuals and organisations that are essential for ensuring impact is realised.

Objectives

Ulster University will improve its positioning within the top 25% of UK Universities within the next REF assessment for 4* and 3* research impact and in the top 20% of UK Universities within the 2021 HESA Higher Education- Business & Community Interaction Survey league for its HEIF-determining metrics.

Supporting Actions

– **Associate Deans for Research & Impact** – The new Faculty Associate Deans for Research & Impact will be impact champions, advocating for its importance, linking impact to strategy, sign-posting impact opportunities, providing visibility of potential impact case studies, and participating in rigorous and systematic review of research impact. The Associate Deans for Research & Impact will develop and deliver research and impact performance targets and metrics and will be responsible for the leadership of the strategic research themes and ensuring the alignment of research within the faculty to these themes.

– **Management Support** - Associate Deans for Research & Impact will include a summary of their Faculty impact strategies as a key element of their annual research delivery plans. A Department for R&I Impact Coordinator will be spoked to each faculty to support the research impact agenda. An impact tracker tool will be used to plan for, and report, social, economic and environmental impact.

– **Targets and Incentives** - Promotion pathways will be reviewed to ensure that impact is suitably incentivised. Maximising the impact of their work will form part of the individual expectations agreed with each of our researchers.

– **Strategic Partnerships** - We will identify and develop beneficial relationships with external partners in industry, government and the public and charitable sectors to inform and develop impact from our research, innovation and impact activities.

– **Public Engagement** - We will engage with the public throughout the research process gaining insight into user needs and disseminating results for the benefit of the wider society. A new marketing & communications programme will be delivered to communicate Ulster's research & impact opportunities and results internally and externally through events, email communications, digital social media and on-line promotion.

Ulster University's Cognitive Analytics Research Lab (CARL) is an exciting new cutting edge research centre that brings together businesses, government and advanced research expertise. It is unique in that it is conceived and built from the ground up through collaborative consultation with our industry and civic stakeholders with a strong focus on economic and societal impact. The new Cognitive Analytics Research Lab will deliver world-class cognitive analytics research capability, attracting significant local and international industry engagement as well as Foreign Direct Investment to the region.

The Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) is a world-leading law-led multidisciplinary research centre focusing on transitional justice - how societies deal with the transition from conflict or oppression - human rights, international law, peace and conflict. TJI scholars advance cutting-edge research and practice in multiple conflicted and transitional societies including Chile, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Israel-Palestine and Colombia and bring human rights and international law expertise to bear on a range of complex issues. As well as working on the Northern Irish transition, TJI plays a leading role in examining and transferring the applicability of the lessons and models used in NI's transition for other transitional states and has established research partnerships with a range of organisations including Christian Aid, Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ), UN Women and Hebrew University.

– **Knowledge Exchange Strategy** – We will implement Ulster's Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2016-19, which governs Ulster's innovation actions as funded through the Department for the Economy's Higher Education Innovation Fund. The aims of the Knowledge Exchange Strategy are to maximise the impact of Ulster's research, to deliver civic contribution and to ensure a return on the public investment in research.

– **Connected 3** – We will continue to play a key role in the Connected programme, a Department for the Economy funded programme promoting a joined up approach for higher and further education in relation to knowledge exchange. Through this initiative, we will actively seek to generate impact through sector specific projects, internal knowledge transfer, Competitive Fund and promotion of the role knowledge providers play in the generation of economic growth.

Our Research Focus

Strategic Intent

Ulster University will achieve international recognition for its excellence and leadership in distinctive research themes that create local and international capability and societal value and have global relevance. We will provide resources to build our research capacity, international reach and significance and will work together to address large-scale interdisciplinary societal challenges, aligning these endeavours with major funding opportunities.

Objectives

To strongly embed Ulster's chosen interdisciplinary research themes of creativity and culture, healthy communities, sustainability and social renewal within our research environment, underpinned by targeted investment from Ulster. Ulster's strategic research themes will become the focal point for the university's investment in research development. These will encompass big societal challenges to which the University will make a global contribution; while other discipline-specific research topics will continue to be supported within the Faculties.

Supporting Actions

Associate Deans for Research & Impact – Each strategic research theme will be aligned to one of Ulster's 4 Faculties. The newly appointed Associate Dean for Research & Impact within each faculty will provide leadership for the development of its structure, research development and impact management, while promoting opportunities for greater interdisciplinary research collaborations across the faculties, as well as with external partners and with international collaborators. The Department for Research & Impact will ensure that each theme is resourced to ensure rapid advancement and an effective contribution to their respective domain.

Research Funding - Ulster will provide a new, dedicated Research Challenge Fund aligned to these strategic research themes to enable academics to develop collaborative partnerships, and to enhance the research capacity and the capability to secure prestigious external grant income in pursuit of the development of interdisciplinary research across these areas. This fund will be launched in 2017 and will be available on an annual basis. The University will provide a Strategic Research Theme PhD Fund, to be allocated by the Associate Deans for Research & Impact, for PhD studentships aligned to each theme.

Research Partnerships - We will seek to work with the very best through developing partnerships with national and international centres of research excellence. The BBC R&D Partnership and the new Cognitive Analytics Research Lab (CARL) are examples of recent partnerships established at Ulster.

The 4 strategic research themes will be as follows:

Social Renewal, with a strong focus on Peace, Conflict and Transition, Educational Attainment, Social and Economic Policy, Entrepreneurship;

Sustainability, with a strong focus on Urban Renewal, Energy, Environmental Sustainability, Infrastructure, Digital Futures, Computing, Engineering, Composites;

Healthy Communities, with a strong focus on Health Innovation and Policy, Mental Health, Physical Activity and Exercise, Smart Aging and Smart Homes; and

Creativity and Culture, with a strong focus on the Creative economy, Cultural diversity, the business of creativity.

14

Ulster University has recently formed a partnership with the BBC to explore a range of mutually beneficial projects, which will change the way users consume the BBC's content. This partnership will involve projects across a range of themes, including how consumers access content, how the BBC use data and new innovative technology for use to enhance the BBC user experience.

Ulster University will achieve international recognition for its excellence and leadership in distinctive research themes
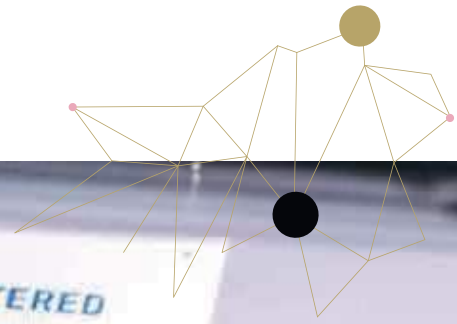
Our Research Environment

Strategic Intent

World-class professional services and infrastructure are needed to support and enable the research and impact ambitions of Ulster's researchers. Ulster is committed to enhancing the environment for research staff and research students at Ulster as a catalyst for improving the quality and volume of staff research outcomes, productive collaborations, impact arising from research, an optimum doctoral experience with strong post doctoral employability and increasing the generation of grant income across the institution.

Objectives

To provide a supportive research environment to produce internationally excellent and world- leading outputs and transformative impact.

Supporting Actions:

– **Research Administrative and Support Staff** - Researchers will be supported within the faculties by dedicated administrative and support staff for research and impact. Additionally, professional services staff from the Department for R&I will be made available within the faculties by the Department for R&I to support research and impact. Using the hub and spoke model, Department for R&I staff will be embedded within the faculties to identify funding opportunities and to provide practical support to scope, develop and draft funding applications, to manage research contracts and to support the research impact agenda.

– **Research Staff** - Enhancement of the research staff experience will be achieved through a range of measures including the introduction of a robust sabbatical policy, the reintroduction of the Research Challenge Fund, the establishment of a Researcher Development Portal, an international approach taken to the recruitment of all new academic staff at all levels and the introduction of a Distinguished Research Impact Awards Scheme, all of which have been referred to previously within the strategy.

– **Research Students** – Primarily, the enhancement of the research student experience will be achieved through the establishment of a single cross-university Doctoral College to oversee both research student administration and to form an Executive with the four Associate Deans for Research & Impact who will in turn have dedicated faculty and departmental support. Additionally, there will be:

  – An enhanced online portal for all PhD students and prospective students will be developed and an annual university wide PhD Student Conference established.

  – A University-wide Doctoral Forum tied to the conference will be established to build research leadership and provide an opportunity for student feedback.

  – Dedicated social spaces for PhD students will be established on all campuses to improve cross fertilization of ideas;

  – A University Distinguished PhD Thesis Award and a University Best Student Paper in a conference or a Peer Reviewed Journal Award will be introduced.

  – PhD funding will encourage interdisciplinary research proposals and there will be remodelling of how PhDs are allocated to faculties and UOAs.

  – **Research Data** - Researchers, schools and faculties will be provided with a wide array of data on all research KPIs using external sources such as SCIVAL and Scopus, and internal sources such as PURE. Ulster will provide digital repositories and research information systems that facilitate both Open Access and the collection, storage and analysis of research data.

The Clinical Translational Research and Innovation Centre (C-TRIC) is a unique facility promoting and facilitating translational and clinical research, the primary objective of which is to reduce both the time to market and the costs associated with research and development of innovative health technologies, medical devices and therapeutics. This focused activity creates commercial opportunities to develop and exploit partnerships between academic researcher, clinical practitioners and industry. C-TRIC has facilitated a range of clinical trials and evaluations sponsored by both industry and government including the Trinity Ulster Department of Agriculture (TUDA) study, which examined the link between diet, genetics and health and recruited 6000 participants with a range of conditions including hypertension, osteoporosis and cognitive decline.

– **Research Spaces** – Researchers are best able to perform high quality interdisciplinary research when they share the same space, the same research problem and develop trust. Research, Innovation and Incubation spaces, managed by the Department for Research & Impact, will be provided on each campus to bring together researchers, innovators and those staff and students with validated ideas worthy of support for research activity and startup incubation.

– **Affiliate Researchers** - A University Affiliate Membership initiative will be introduced, which is designed to offer Research Groups, Centres, and Institutes the opportunity to foster a more flexible and responsive membership profile. It will grant affiliate membership to external colleagues who can contribute to the impact and environment narratives for REF and increase the number of co-authored outputs and co-created funding bids. The initiative will also increase the University's international reach, by allowing researchers working abroad to feed their research into our research communities and increase the reach and significance of our institution's impact.
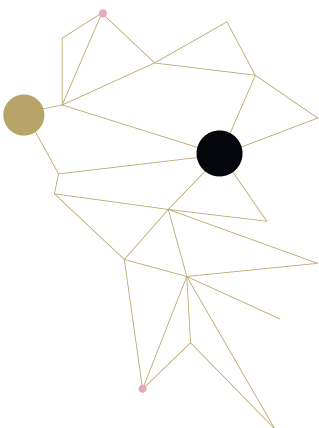
Research Governance and Ethics

The University seeks to promote and disseminate good research practice, emphasising integrity and rigour in research.
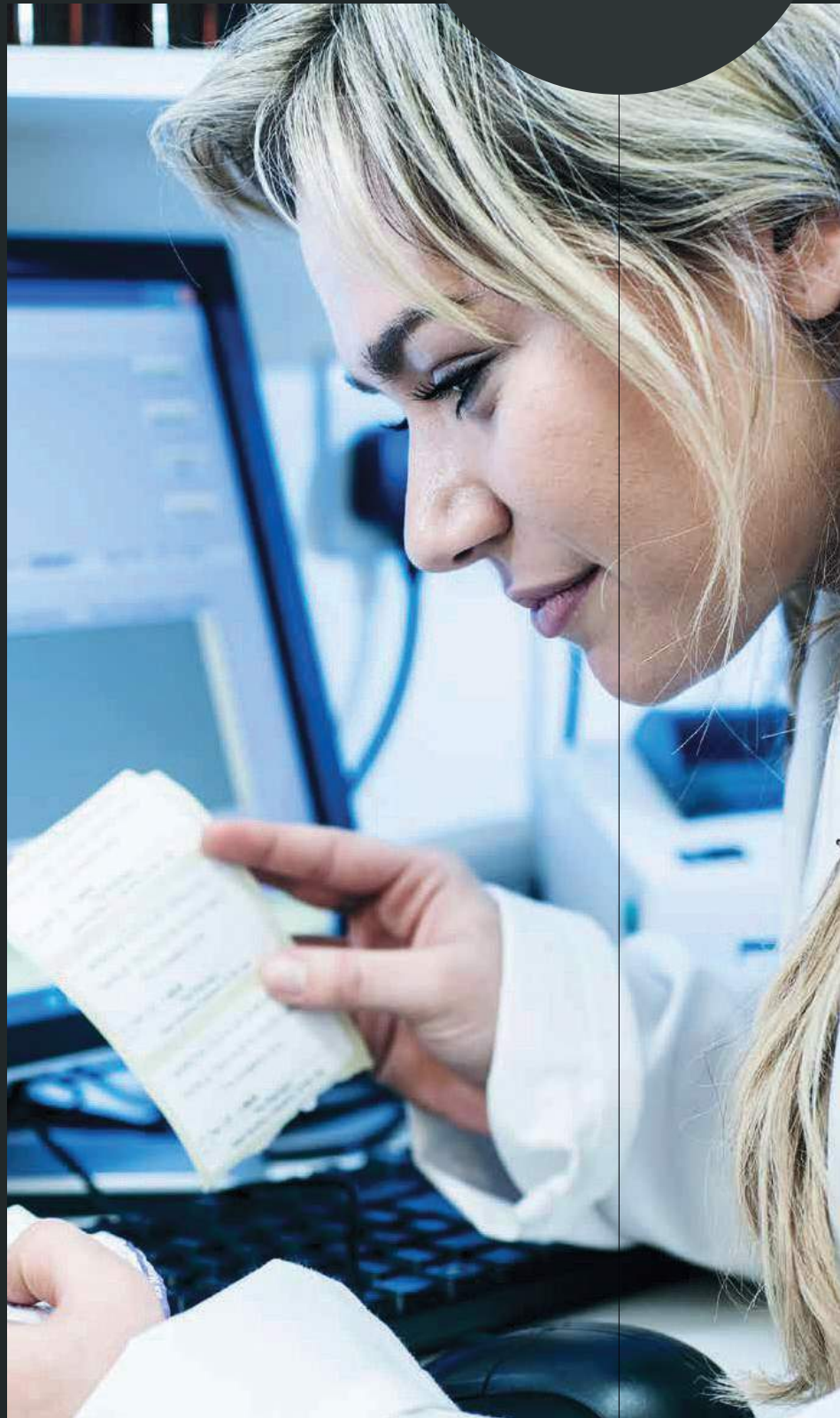
Strategic Intent

The University expects the highest standards to be observed by its researchers, and recognises integrity as an essential aspect of research quality. The University will promote and disseminate good research practice, emphasising integrity and rigour in research.

Objectives

To create a culture in which adherence to the principles and procedures of research governance and ethics is encouraged and valued, reflecting the increasing demands of government, funders and our research partners, supported by a clear and accessible framework of policies, procedures and guidance, summarised and illustrated in the Code of Practice for Professional Integrity, which will keep pace with changing sector-wide requirements.

Supporting Actions:

– We will provide training for our researchers in the overarching precepts of integrity and the ethics of research and, in collaboration with Research Integrity Co-ordinators and research leaders, introduce discipline-specific activities to complement the University's online integrity course.

– Our researchers will be supported in navigating the specifics of an increasingly regulated environment.

– We will develop systems to streamline the research approval process.

– We will assure compliance through appropriate review processes, events and audits.

Our Performance & Delivery

Strategic Intent

Successful implementation of Ulster's Research & Impact Strategy is dependent on our researchers having a clear understanding of what it is that makes a good researcher, having the data to hand which demonstrates this and mapping everyone's achievements over the course of the strategy. We will have ambitious expectations set and agreed for the institution as a whole, for every Unit of Assessment to be submitted in REF 2021 within the institution, and for every researcher working towards that submission. The University will ensure reliable, accurate and timely reporting and monitoring of research and impact performance against the appropriate indicators.

> The University will ensure reliable, accurate and timely reporting and monitoring of research and impact performance against the appropriate indicators.

Objectives

To ensure that we all understand what it means to be a great researcher and how this will enable us to realise our strategic ambitions as articulated in the Five & Fifty Strategic Plan. More specifically, Ulster University will achieve its year 1, 3 and 5 targets for our Research Student Experience; Research Student Completion Rates; PhD Student/Staff Ratio; Number of Staff Returned to REF; Number of Staff Collaborating Internationally; Number of Citations; Value of Research Grant Awards; Value of RCUK Research Grant Awards; Value of International Research Grant Awards; Number of Collaborative Research Projects with Business; Value of Knowledge Exchange Income (Contract Research, Consultancy, KTP & IP Income); and Number of Live Impact Projects.

Supporting Actions:

– **Expectations and Targets** - Appropriate targets will be agreed at individual, REF unit of assessment and institutional levels and performance against these targets will be monitored on a regular basis. At an individual level, targets will be agreed annually for research funding, research outputs, research impact as well as PhD supervision and completions. The expectations of each staff member will take into account benchmarked comparisons and will vary according to discipline, staff circumstances and career level.

– **Benchmarking** - The University's research and impact performance will be benchmarked against national competitors on an annual basis.

– **Research Information** - The University has procured a new central research information system, PURE, which will assist in the effective reporting across all Research Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets. The PURE system will provide a live feed from existing Research & Impact systems, which will facilitate dashboard reports on all the relevant KPIs. The system will also ensure that the University manages effectively the full range of outputs for REF 2021 and meets all requirements in relation to research data management. The SCIVAL research intelligence tool will facilitate benchmarking Ulster's performance against comparator institutions.

– **Research & Impact Strategy Review** – Performance against plan will be reported to the Research & Impact Committee and the Senior Leadership Team on a quarterly basis, and the Research & Impact Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as required.

In Summary

Strategic intent

Excellence in research at Ulster envisions an internationally-engaged, research-led university, where both disciplinary excellence and impactful interdisciplinary research are undertaken across our strategic themes of social renewal, sustainability, healthy communities, and creativity and culture. The outcomes will have global relevance and contribute to the social, economic and cultural advancement of Northern Ireland and will also play a critical role in fulfilling our civic commitment and informing student learning.

The Research & Impact Strategy 2017-22 defines the ambitions for our research activities and outcomes. It provides direction and sets out a plan for our research and its impact over the next 5 years. It builds upon core strategies to develop our people, research outputs and impact. Ulster's research ambitions will be realised through strategic focus, interdisciplinarity, research informed teaching, research development, enhancement of our research environment, good governance and integrity in the conduct of our research, and by monitoring, benchmarking and refining our performance measures.

Objectives

Through delivery of the Research & Impact Strategy 2017-22 we will realise the scale of ambition set out in Five and Fifty. We will achieve the objectives of delivering research with impact and development of Ulster's researchers. The success of the strategy will be measured by Key Performance Indicators, each contributing to Ulster University's vision to deliver outstanding research and teaching that encourages the innovation, leadership and vision needed to help our community thrive.

Supporting Actions

A Balanced Scorecard and annual Faculty implementation plan will be developed to include performance metrics, benchmarks and actions which are time-bound, with clear ownership and outputs.

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