



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences



College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2021-26

# Vision

CAHSS is a vibrant and diverse community of researchers, committed to producing outstanding research that enriches our culture and society, and enhances justice, well-being and sustainability across the globe.

We deliver this vision through an enabling approach, focused on inspiring and supporting staff in achieving ambitious goals for research and knowledge exchange. Increasingly, much of our most innovative research is delivered through structures that straddle Schools and Colleges, allowing our researchers to collaborate across disciplines to produce knowledge that helps address major societal and global challenges.

Our 2021-6 Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) strategy sets out our priorities and goals for the next 5 years, and the enablers that will support delivery of these goals.

## Celebrating the breadth and diversity of our research.

We are committed to supporting excellence in RKE across our Schools, disciplines and methodologies, valuing both blue skies and abstract research, through to highly applied research and co-produced knowledge.

## Enabling research without boundaries.

We embrace the University vision of developing porous structures that enable interdisciplinary research within and across Colleges, and with national and international partners.

## Supporting staff in realising ambitious goals.

We foster creativity and innovation through flexible, inclusive structures that inspire and enable staff at all career stages to achieve ambitious individual and collaborative research goals.

## Contributing to culture, society and the economy.

We aim to maximise the positive impact of our research, through sharing knowledge across policy, industry, practice and the public, with local communities and globally, and through research-led teaching.

## Fostering a strong and inclusive research culture.

Our goals, policies and guidance aim to instil a culture that is inclusive, promotes diversity and equality, and aspires to the highest standards of research integrity.

# The changing research environment

In order to realise our goals, we need to understand, adapt to, and where possible lead, broader trends in our research and knowledge exchange environment.

Four developments are of particular importance: research funding; research careers; equality, diversity and inclusion and Covid challenges.

## Research funding

Securing external grant funding for our research remains a vital goal of the College and the University. It provides the resources to underpin excellent research and impact, achieve career goals and recognition for staff, and create a flourishing and internationally leading research environment.

We have seen how success in external funding has launched individual staff and groups to international renown and impact, and how a culture of external grants in particular Schools and subject areas has underpinned expansion and driven up research quality and reputation.

However, major changes to both UK and EU funding have required us to adapt the way we support research groups and staff to win funding for their research.

These changes can be summarised as:

- Prioritising funding for larger, interdisciplinary and challenge-led research, as evidenced in GCRF, ISCF and EU Horizon funding, and underpinned by institutional changes to UKRI.
- Increased emphasis on engagement and impact beyond the academy, including with industry partners. This applies to both UK and EU funders, and the increasing value of impact case studies with the Research Excellence Framework.
- Changes in access to funding. The UK's departure from the EU may limit access to funding, including European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie schemes; and we also anticipate changes in UK Government Overseas Development Assistance-related funding.

## Research careers

Over the past two decades, academic roles have expanded to include not just teaching and research, but increasingly complex and diverse administrative and leadership roles within and beyond the university, as well as activities to generate impact from research.

Many of our colleagues find that time pressures and concerns about work/life balance are impeding them from fulfilling their research potential.

These challenges were exposed and exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The expansion in academic roles implies the need to rethink how we nurture and support diverse RKE careers across career stages, supporting staff to navigate the various demands of academic roles, and to prioritise and plan in a way that furthers their longer-term goals.

It also implies the need to encourage and support the creative design and delivery of research-led teaching as a symbiosis for enriching student learning and developing research excellence.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

The higher education sector is increasingly acknowledging the range of structural barriers faced by researchers and professional staff from different social and economic groups, and particularly those with protected characteristics.

There are now well-established processes for promoting women in research

(although still much work to be done); but universities have been slower at identifying and fully responding to the range of barriers faced by those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, the LGBTQ+ community, those with disabilities, as well as researchers from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

We are committed to addressing structural barriers to research and research support careers, and integrating these considerations into all aspects of research support and recognition.

## Covid-19 challenges

The 2021-2026 strategy was developed (and continues to be shaped) in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has placed our researchers and research support infrastructures under particular strain.

These pressures are being felt especially acutely by those with health issues and caring responsibilities, and clearly have important implications for equality, diversity and inclusion in research.

The need for physical distancing and remote working is also prompting us to rethink how we conduct research and knowledge exchange, with a re-orientation towards remote and digital approaches. And we anticipate that the new financial context and the constraints on recruitment may limit resources available to support research.

While these conditions may not be in place for the full life of this strategy, we

nonetheless need to adapt RKE activities to the new context.

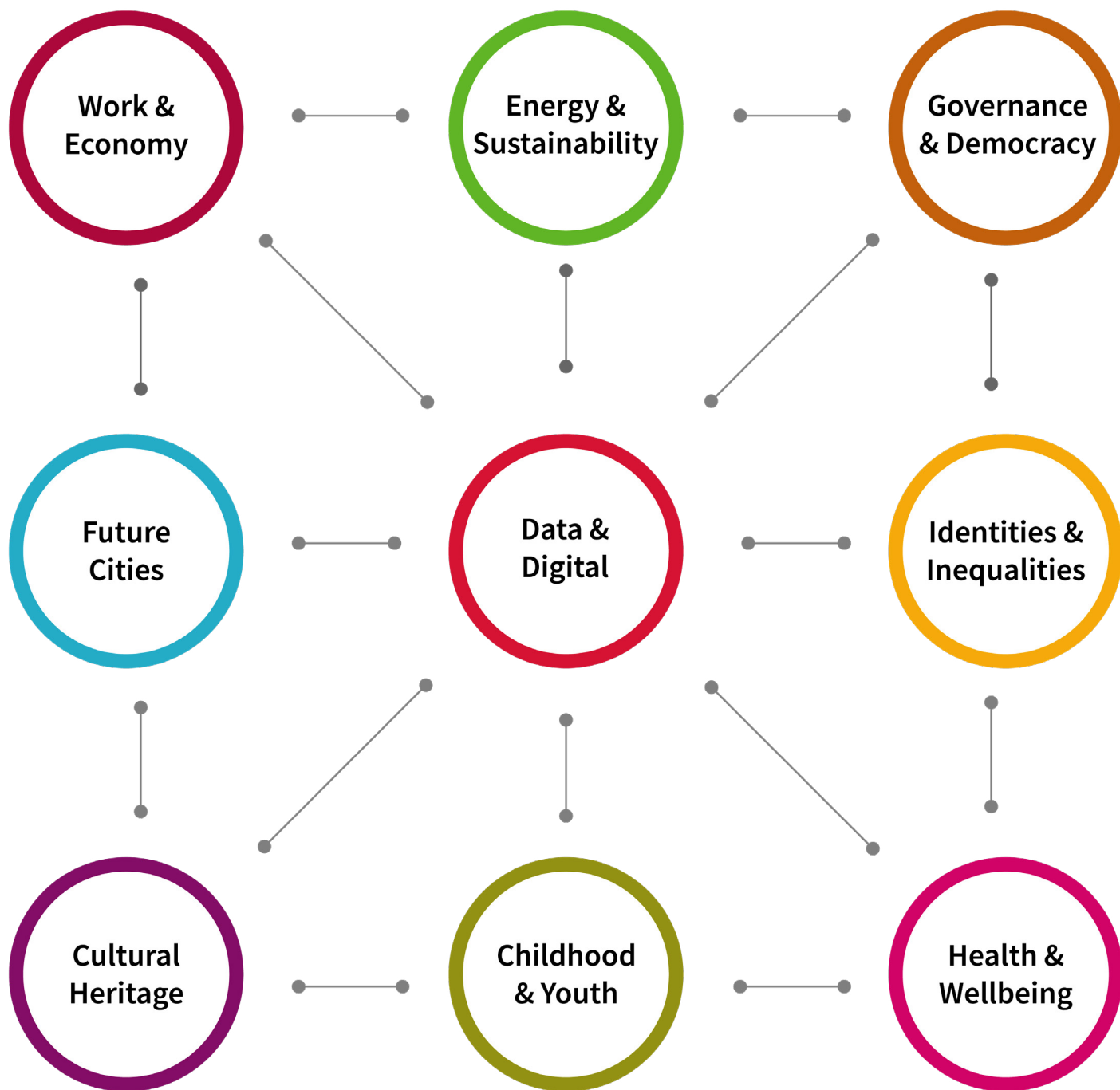
These adjustments also offer an opportunity to rethink some of our ways of working, promoting more sustainable research practices, catalysing new digital and internet-based methodologies and approaches, and requiring us to be smarter in how we deliver research support.

We are committed to providing inclusive structures and processes that can help us navigate this challenging environment, to continue to improve the quality, reputation and impact of our research.

# Research Themes

We support research collaborations across Schools, mobilising expertise across disciplines to produce new insights and address major societal challenges.

In 2019, following an extensive mapping and consultation exercise, CAHSS adopted 9 broad, interdisciplinary themes which capture key research strengths across our 11 Schools. The themes will allow us to communicate our research to external and internal audiences, foster new collaborations and partnerships across industry, policy and practice, and position ourselves to lead major new projects (see Funding).



Our research themes are interlinked and cross-college.

# Centres and Institutes

Centres and Institutes are often the incubators of our most cutting-edge and prestigious research, and many of them transcend disciplines and Schools in terms of their membership and the themes they address.

Our key priority is to ensure that ambitious and successful centres have appropriate support, guidance and governance structures to enable them to flourish.

## CAHSS centres strategy

Our centre guidance was revised and extended in 2018 to include new criteria for establishing centres to set a higher threshold for approving centres.

This was coupled with more rigorous review processes, to ensure that our many centres across CAHSS continue to achieve their goals. We are in the process of rolling this out to both new and existing centres, along with newly developed guidance on mechanisms for supporting and incentivising more ambitious grant applications in centres. Further development is planned, specifically for supporting centres in applying for external funding, and developing a tool for ensuring we recognise and reward successful activity. Both combine as a basis for incentivising and rewarding more ambitious grant applications in our centres.

Through a series of events with centre directors, we are identifying support, development and training needs of centre directors in setting more ambitious plans for grant capture and establishing peer support.

Together with the Edinburgh Research Office (ERO), we are promoting a model for planning and sequencing applications, which is being disseminated through individual guidance and support.



## Cross-College Institutes

We continue to work with existing CAHSS-wide institutes to provide opportunities for new collaborations across the arts, humanities and social sciences.

The Edinburgh Futures Institute will offer a space for methodological innovation, critical engagement and new partnerships in relation to data and society, straddling research and knowledge exchange in all of our schools.

The Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities (IASH) will continue to foster exchange across Schools and internationally in cutting edge areas of research, through its visiting fellows and post-doctoral fellowships, and its thematic initiatives.

IASH will continue to play a key role in the development of the CAHSS research themes, hosting events, supporting key areas such as the Medical and Environmental Humanities, GenderED and RACE.ED.



# Funding

We celebrate the breadth of research approaches, methods and themes across Schools and disciplines, and recognise that this implies the need for diverse forms of support.

## Enhancing support for grant applications

In partnership with our Schools, we developed a toolkit for enhancing academic-led grant support. This covered initiatives to help foster a grant culture in Schools, and more specific measures on awareness raising and guidance, peer review and mentoring, and training.

The challenges related to Covid-19 suggest the continued relevance of these measures, but have also created the need for some additional priorities. Our response to these challenges included ensuring support for those most affected by Covid, notably those with caring responsibilities, through

- priority access to research leave,
- protected research time,
- seed funding,
- professional support for grant applications.

We will be working with Schools to ensure that research support is targeted at ECRs and those at critical career junctures, those with protected characteristics, and those especially adversely affected by the pandemic.

We continue to work with, and encourage, our Schools to reflect on funding portfolios, encouraging staff to apply for schemes that match the strategic priorities of the School, meet the needs of ECRs and other researchers at critical career junctures, and offer appropriate levels of funding. Our aim is to use our CAHSS thematic groups as fora to build collaborations aimed at challenge-led and interdisciplinary funded research opportunities.

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## Scaling up grant proposals

We are launching a series of initiatives to enable our staff to understand, and succeed in, the new funding landscape. Part of this involves supporting themes and clusters to build capacity in areas of strength that are aligned with funder priorities.

Complementing this, we will train and support some of our researchers to develop larger, more ambitious proposals. We have welcomed Edinburgh Research Office (ERO)'s new Academic Talent Strategy, which sets out initiatives to support staff at all career stages in winning and implementing externally funded projects. We have also been actively involved in shaping and promoting the ERO's new Strategic Leadership in Research Programme, which supports mid-career researchers with a strong track record to scale up their ambition and lead large-scale funding bids.

We will also be conducting ongoing horizon-scanning with ERO and Schools, to identify areas for building capacity for future large grant opportunities. This will feed into ongoing adjustment of our priority themes and areas for cross-College collaboration.

We will target Challenge Investment Fund grants to support seed funding for ambitious collaborative grant applications.



# Enhancing knowledge exchange and impact

We want our research to benefit society, through enhancing knowledge and skills, producing evidence and technologies, and fostering critical reflection and debate.

To release the potential benefits of research, we need to build in appropriate communication and engagement activities with relevant audiences and potential users from idea to impact, both locally and around the world. Over the past decade we have worked to ensure knowledge exchange is embedded in all our activities to support research. We have also supported targeted engagement with the purpose of research impact through the CAHSS Knowledge Exchange and Impact grant, and through the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account.



## Research making the world a better place

For research to make a positive difference, we need to support research engagement, collaboration and translation in the broadest sense, by developing people and supporting projects at different scales.

From this, we need to identify those projects or suites of projects, with prospects to make a big difference in the world. In other words, to maximise our research impact we must ensure core support is provided to everyone, acknowledging that the most promising prospects will need additional support in order to release the potential.

Schools, College and central units deliver elements of this support, sometimes in a hybrid way.

Together we build a culture where all researchers are encouraged to consider the potential impact of their research, and get access support at any stage of that process.

# Engaging with industry, publics, policy and practice

## Industry engagement

Our industry engagement activity includes working with private sector companies, social enterprises, trade bodies and regulatory bodies, ultimately contributing to the economy in sustainable and socially responsible ways.

Our industry engagement has developed considerably since our first strategy was put in place in 2018, supported through additional funding from the ESRC Business Boost. This has led to research from a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, history and politics, contributing to industry needs. It has also underpinned collaborations with industry partnerships in research applications and awards. We will continue to encourage this by working with Schools to identify potential areas that may contribute to business, active brokering of relationships, providing “business boost” seed funding, and promoting relevant funding opportunities including through Innovate UK.

Activity in this area has been boosted by the creation of a new CAHSS-facing industry engagement team, bringing together colleagues in the Knowledge Exchange and Impact (KE&I) team, EFI and Edinburgh Innovations to provide a joint approach to supporting industry engagement and enterprise, including consultancy, business led research (funded by partners or industry oriented and translational grants), and licensing of tools and technologies. Our industry engagement is underpinned by commitment to inclusive, sustainable and socially responsible innovation and growth (and due diligence in this regard), reflecting the college’s model of values-led research

## Public engagement

Our public engagement activity involves interacting with people outside academia in their capacity as citizens and members of communities of place or interest. We engage communities of interest by delivering exhibitions and events, young people through schools, and we engage people in need of and providing care through advocacy groups and service providers. We also engage people in local communities in Edinburgh and across the world wherever we conduct research. We are committed to ensuring we extend these activities to social and economic groups currently under-represented in engagement with the university as well as those with protected characteristics. We will also continue to work with the University’s community engagement and widening participation agendas, including by providing training and development and building strategic relationships with broker organisations.

Our location in Edinburgh is central to our engagement with the creative arts (local, national and international). We will continue to strengthen our partnerships with the city’s festivals, museums, exhibition spaces and performing arts institutions to foster researcher creativity and innovation in the design of public engagement activities.

## Policy engagement

Our policy engagement activity involves influencing decision-makers in local, national and international governments, elected and public bodies, often through collaborations with NGOs, advocacy organisations and other intermediaries.



We have strong connections to UK and devolved government and parliaments, as well as overseas governments and international governmental bodies and agencies. The KE&I team draw on the Universities Policy Engagement Network, the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange and the Scottish Parliament Academic Network to help broker opportunities for engagement, including bringing new colleagues into policy engagement.

## Practice

In the area of practice we have a successful record of extensive engagement with artists, museum curators, teachers, health and social care professionals and other service providers in the UK and overseas. We have co-produced research leading to implementation of guidance and toolkits, research informing continuous professional development and new tools and technologies improving performance. Through our research themes and the support of the IAA, we aim to bring together new and existing relationships of academic and professional practice to add further value both to the research and the impact it may achieve.

# Research careers

We are strongly committed to supporting our early career researchers (ECRs) in building the skills, research profile, and contacts they need to establish and consolidate successful research careers.

This commitment is more important than ever, given the particular challenges ECRs and those at critical junctures in their careers face in sustaining research activity and building research careers as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

CAHSS has been leading the University's response to ECR support during and after Covid, developing a plan to support ECRs, focused on:

- enhanced research support for those affected by the pandemic, including where caring responsibilities or health issues have disrupted research. This includes prioritised access to resources such as research leave, research in workload allocation, seed funding, access to grant support and training schemes.
- developing a template to recognise the disruption to research caused by the pandemic, for inclusion in promotion, annual review and job application materials.
- supporting employability for those on fixed-term contracts, including support for skills development, industry and government engagement, and relevant ECR/postdoctoral funding opportunities (such as UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships).
- encouraging Schools to replace fixed-term contracts with open-ended positions where possible. One positive initiative in this area has been the use of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Covid-related grant to fund 16 Chancellor's Fellows posts in CAHSS, prioritising those already employed on fixed term contracts, and significantly exceeding the University targets of recruiting at least 50% female and 20% BAME Fellows.

We are now working with IAD, ERO and across College to deliver this support. Over the coming five years, we will the following main priorities:

- Together with ERO, we will devise and launch a new scheme targeted at supporting ECRs and mid-career researchers whose research has been disrupted by Covid, with a particular emphasis on EDI considerations.
- We will continue to work with IAD to establish a Postdoctoral College to coordinate and enhance support for research staff, including in the areas of skills and career development and employability.
- We will continue to work with Schools to promote more secure forms of employment, including where new posts are created to 'backfill' grant buyouts.



# Research integrity

We support our researchers to adhere to the highest standards of research integrity, and effectively meet the challenges of an increasingly complex research environment.

We are committed to ensuring that research ethics, integrity and governance and are firmly embedded in our ethos and culture.

## Ethics and integrity

Our College is integral to the ongoing development and implementation of a new University online ethics application system, which remains a priority, with a planned roll-out for 2022.

We will continue to develop Cross-College Collaboration in supporting and informing ethical review procedures. We will also continue to support our CAHSS School ethics leads through strategically enhancing the supportive community nature of the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC), facilitating training opportunities for ethics leads, and developing and contributing to resources to support ethics practice needs in Schools.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the growth of online research, we have strategically prioritised the development of resources to support the ethical implementation of such research. We are committed to expanding this initial work, and through collaboration with Digital Research Services will develop further ethics guidance.

Consistent with embedding a culture of research integrity, we are committed to having a robust process to deal with any concerns regarding research misconduct. While instances of research misconduct are relatively rare, where they do occur they can pose a significant threat to the rigour and integrity of our research.



## Research ethics and integrity

Building on the University Research Misconduct Policy, we will continue to develop robust, transparent, proportionate and considerate procedures to fairly manage and record the incidence of any potential and confirmed cases of research misconduct.

- We will continue to contribute to University and College initiatives to enhance research culture and integrity, and to strengthen and raise the profile of the CAHSS research ethics community.
- We will lead and input to activities and strategy to support ethical practices and processes in Schools, including through providing support for skills and professional development of research managers involved in supporting and guiding research.
- We will prioritise developing resources to support the ethical implementation of online research.
- We will continue to develop and improve procedures for managing allegations of research misconduct.

### Open research

The University and our College is in many respects a pioneer in Open Research, with outstanding infrastructure and support for data sharing, and an ambitious approach to Open Access. We are committed to ensuring our findings are data are open where possible, and closed where necessary. We aim to promote a 'FAIR' approach to data sharing:

- Findable,
- Accessible,
- Interoperable, and
- Re-usable.

Many of our disciplines face challenges in relation to Open Research, for a range of ethical and practical reasons. To help identify and overcome the various challenges across Schools, we developed a College strategy for engaging and supporting colleagues in promoting open research, which is now being brought forward through bespoke School plans. The School strategies address a range of Open Research issues faced across different disciplines and Schools. One of the key issues faced by academics involved in Open Research is the dynamic and fast-moving landscape of funders' requirements. Plan S and new REF Open Access policies will present new challenges to our disciplines, as monographs and chapters will fall under the scope for compliance.

We will continue to explore the potential of online workflow and collaboration tools, such as RSpace Notebooks and protocols, to enable the effective sharing of methods and materials and open up new research possibilities. We are committed to sustaining this constructive approach to Open Research, and to strengthening our mechanisms for coordinating support across Schools.

- We will continue to oversee School activities and ensure we have the right resources/structures in place to maximise engagement with the Open Research agenda.
- We will work with Schools and IS to ensure that we are at the vanguard of good practice in data-sharing and continue to promote FAIR principles for data sharing
- We will establish a coordinating group of Open Research/Open Access academic and professional support leads to ensure we effectively coordinate and adapt guidance and support for OR through the research lifecycle?, and in order to feed into evolving plans in the wider sector.
- We will provide guidance and training for researchers appropriate to their disciplinary setting, including advice on sharing data and funder policies as well as support for sustainable Open Access options.
- We will continue to explore platforms to support research collaboration.

# International collaborations

Much of our research and knowledge exchange activity focuses on addressing global challenges, and we are strongly committed to deepening and extending our international collaborations and partnerships to co-deliver these goals.

## Addressing global challenges

Aligned with the University's commitment to delivering global impact, we continue to support research and impact activities that address the specific challenges faced by low and middle income countries.

Over the past five years, we have worked with the Edinburgh Research Office to support CAHSS researchers in extending their engagement with ODA-related research, building on our expertise in area studies focused on Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, as well as world-leading research on conflict and peace settlements, forced displacement, energy, education and human rights.

Our focus has been on

- extending the scope of researchers involved in ODA-related research and KEI, including through engaging with our area studies centres;
- and scaling up the ambition and activities of those already engaged.

This has resulted in a significant expansion of activity, including through Global Challenges Strategy funding and projects for the Department for International Development (DfID), with CAHSS winning £8.5m GCRF awards in 2019-2020. A key enabler of this success has been Scottish Funding Council (SFC) investment, which has financed a series of internal schemes to develop new collaborations, pilot projects, and knowledge exchange and engagement activities. SFC funds have also enabled the University and College to invest in early career researchers (ECRs), through the appointment of eight Global Challenges Chancellor's Fellows (of which four are hosted by CAHSS), as well as four CAHSS postdoctoral fellows appointed in 2020.

However, we anticipate substantial changes to GCRF through the next spending review, and following the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with DfID, and will need to closely track and adapt to changing opportunities. In particular, we anticipate a shift away from UKRI and other funders' ODA focus, towards an international strategy that incorporates a wider range of strategic partnerships. We will need to work with researchers who have built an ODA-oriented profile to identify alternative sources of funding; and in some cases, support researchers in pivoting their research to align with the UK Government and UKRI's evolving international strategy.

- We will continue to support clusters working in areas of energy, forced displacement, conflict and peace-building, education and children, including through identifying new sources of funding.
- We will also explore new research agendas and funding sources with the the Al Waleed Centre and our area studies centres working on Africa, South Asia, and Latin America.
- We will seek new opportunities to expand and diversify our ODA portfolio beyond GCRF and monitor changing FCDO/DfID priorities to identify potential new institutional funding opportunities.

## EU partnerships

Strengthening our EU partnerships remains a priority.

We will continue to foster and support research collaborations with the University's five main EU partners, universities of

- Amsterdam,
- Copenhagen,

- KU Leuven,
- Leiden,
- and University College Dublin.

These partnerships are now being supported through seed funding and joint PhD fellowships. Alongside these partnerships, our participation in UNA Europa opens up collaboration with a wider range of European universities, including the Free University of Berlin, Pantheon Sorbonne, the University of Bologna, and Complutense Madrid.

We will continue to scope and exploit opportunities for collaboration with our five EU partner Universities.

We will contribute actively to UNA Europa, including supporting new collaborative funding bids to Horizon programmes.

We will prioritise support for collaboration in European consortia and networks, including societal challenge projects funded through the new Horizon programme.

## Travel and sustainability

While strongly supporting international collaborations, we are also keen to ensure we sustain connections while reducing our carbon footprint.

College Research Committee has confirmed its support for the Travel and Aviation Working Group's approach to encouraging climate-conscious travel. This includes a presumption against air travel within the UK (building in exceptions on EDI grounds), and improved information on climate conscious options when staff book travel. This approach is supported by growing awareness that opportunities for international travel and networking are not equally available to all ECRs, raising EDI issues.

Covid-related restrictions have identified new opportunities for digital connections, which in many contexts can replace air travel. As Covid-related restrictions on travel are eased, we therefore have an opportunity to 'build back better', rethinking how we support international connections for research and develop opportunities with key partners. We are keen to prioritise the needs of early career researchers (ECRs), who are at a stage in their careers where international connections are especially important for developing their RKE.

Through discussions with ECRs across the University, we have identified two crucial aspects of travel for career development not covered by existing provisions:

- research mentoring,
- and research visits.

These two types of connection are challenging for ECRs to set up on their own, as they rely on approaching and negotiating with senior colleagues in other institutions, and often involve partners beyond academia. By contrast, the University is well placed to brokerage such connections, given our existing close institutional partnership with a number of universities.

We will work with Social Responsibility and Sustainability to encourage staff to limit their air travel, consistent with EDI issues.

We will work with Schools to encourage staff to use less CO2-intensive forms of travel for RKE, and support the use of alternative digital tools for collaboration.

We will work with Edinburgh Global to scope and develop possible schemes for digital mentoring and virtual visiting fellowships, to allow staff, and especially ECRs, to build international connections while reducing air travel.



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