UHI | INVERNESS

Research and Innovation Strategy

2023 - 2027

Academic Years 2023/24 – 2026/27

How to use this Strategy

It is intended that this strategy will provide clear direction to the Board of Management, staff, and stakeholders of UHI Inverness on our strategic approaches to Research and Innovation.

Staff will make use of this strategy when creating their Enhancement Plans and setting team objectives.

It is recognized that the research strategy must be adaptive and flexible, particularly given the uncertainties surrounding the framework conditions for REF 2027. Consequently, this strategy will be subject to regular review and updated as required. The next review is scheduled for October 2023.

Context

The UHI Inverness Research and Innovation Strategy is aligned with the UHI Inverness Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the UHI Research, Impact, and Knowledge Exchange (KE) Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the UHI 2024 strategic process. It will support the achievement of these broader objectives.

The UHI Inverness Strategic plan 2021-2025 identified five strategic themes. Each theme has a strategic aim and objectives that will inform operational planning throughout the strategic plan cycle.

The five strategic themes are:

- Tertiary Education
- Organisational Development
- Research and Innovation
- Student Experience
- Finance and Sustainability

A suite of strategies underpins these themes to inform and drive policy, procedure, and practice. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy relates to the strategic aims and objectives under all five of the above themes as well as other UHI Inverness strategies.

Strategic aim

This Research and Innovation strategy for UHI Inverness aims to deliver innovative and impactful research that addresses global and local challenges and empowers communities. The strategy shares a vision with the Tertiary Education strategy of UHI Inverness. This shared vision inspires the way we will deliver an ambitious, bold, and creative research environment.
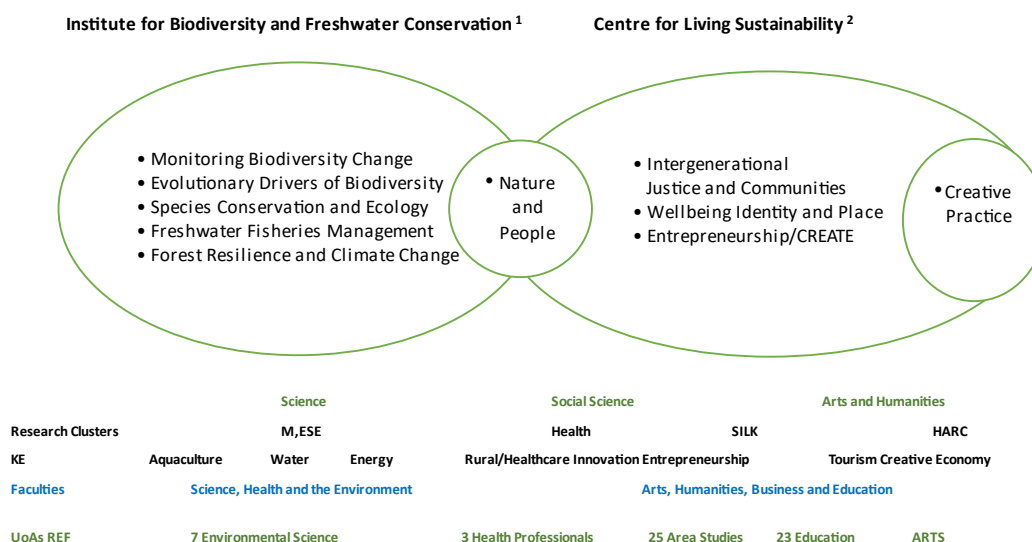
Vision for the Tertiary Education and Research Environment

We will be nationally and internationally recognised for impactful, interdisciplinary research and teaching in biodiversity, ecology, sustainability, culture, equity, and social justice that informs innovative tertiary education. This will deliver on sustainable development goals which address the biodiversity and climate emergencies and empower communities across our region.

Introduction to Research at UHI Inverness

The Institute for Biodiversity and Freshwater Conservation (IBFC)[1] and the Centre for Living Sustainability (CLS)[2] host research and innovation across UHI Inverness. We work in partnership with researchers and stakeholders across UHI, the region and internationally. Our research is embedded in the local communities that we serve, and we learn lessons from partners in the global north and south. The diagram below provides on overview of themes covered by the research centres. Full details can be found on the IBFC and CLS websites. The diagram also shows how the centres work across the UHI research clusters, KE groups, newly formed faculties, and feed into the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Units of Assessment.

Research at UHI Inverness

Institute for Biodiversity and Freshwater Conservation [1]   Centre for Living Sustainability [2]

- Monitoring Biodiversity Change
- Evolutionary Drivers of Biodiversity
- Species Conservation and Ecology
- Freshwater Fisheries Management
- Forest Resilience and Climate Change

- Nature and People

- Intergenerational Justice and Communities
- Wellbeing Identity and Place
- Entrepreneurship/CREATE

- Creative Practice

	Science	Social Science		Arts and Humanities
Research Clusters	M,ESE	Health	SILK	HARC
KE	Aquaculture Water Energy	Rural/Healthcare Innovation Entrepreneurship		Tourism Creative Economy
Faculties	Science, Health and the Environment	Arts, Humanities, Business and Education		
UoAs REF	7 Environmental Science	3 Health Professionals 25 Area Studies	23 Education	ARTS

The objectives that follow encompass how we are achieving research excellence, transformational impact, a vibrant research culture and capacity-building across academic staff and research students.

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[1] Formerly Rivers and Lochs Institute and Forestry Conservation Group
[2] Formerly Centre for Remote and Rural Studies

There are four key objectives to achieve our vision and strategic aim:

Strategic Objective 1: To continue to grow our centres of research, their excellence and transformational impact.

Strategic objective 2: To maximise opportunities for innovation and knowledge exchange (KE), ensuring that our research has relevance and a positive impact on communities.

Strategic objective 3: To provide an accessible, engaging and thriving research environment for our students and researcher community.

Strategic objective 4: To provide opportunities and a supportive environment for academic teaching staff to develop their research and scholarship activity.

Strategic Objective 1: To continue to grow our centres of research, their excellence and transformational impact.

Subobjectives

1.1 Enhance research infrastructure including investment capital and human resources

1.2 Grow and diversify our research income

1.3 Maximise the number and quality of research outputs

1.4 Grow our postgraduate researcher (PGR) student numbers and building capacity in supervision.

Activities and enablers

1.1 Enhance research infrastructure including investment capital and human resources

- Review existing environments and identifying spaces and resources through regular consultation exercises including all Centre for Living Sustainability (CLS) and Institute for Biodiversity and Freshwater Conservation (IBFC) research staff, covering the following facilities:
  - Molecular lab
  - Field equipment and specialised equipment
  - Creative and community lab
  - Research hub, meeting rooms, office space
  - Vehicles
- Identify new infrastructure and equipment needs and related funding mechanisms through systematic scanning for capital investment grants using the Research Professional platform
- Target investment in strategic capital projects and additional staff positions.

1.2 Grow and diversify our research income

- Systematic scanning of research income opportunities led by research facilitators
- Time planning and peer review of grant proposals
- Liaison with UHI Executive Office (EO)/clusters/faculties and regularly update the Research Operational Group (ROG). This must include different types of funders – including

international, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), government, philanthropic, co-operate and internal, and those appropriate to the research of the centres

- Ensure that all researchers are signed onto Research Professional
- Plan sandpits on writing funding proposals, including allocation of time, proposal review, identification of partners and funders and funding processes
- Disseminate funding opportunities more widely at ROG, centre meetings and through centre Teams spaces
- Identify appropriate tenders and consultancies and develop policies and processes for this
- Maintain and develop existing industry and stakeholders' partnerships.

1.3 Maximise the number and quality of research outputs

- Map staff by unit of assessment for next Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2027 and as potential for following REF.
- Support writing activity through establishing writing retreats and systems for peer review
- Set clear targets for individual research outputs focusing on quality rather than quantity as part of the Professional Review & Development (PRD)
- Increase research collaborations that provide opportunities for co-authorship on high profile publications
- Encourage researchers to join the UHI mentoring scheme and training opportunities.

1.4 Grow our PGR student numbers and building capacity in supervision

- Development facilitators to scan for funding opportunities
- Apply for UHI funded doctoral and other postgraduate opportunities (alert through Research Development Committee (RDC) attendance)
- Encourage fuller participation in national Doctoral Training Programmes (DTP) to increase our visibility and gain funded PhDs
- Develop supervisor capacity within the centres and ensure that they can access UHI supervisor training
- Work with Executive Management Team (EMT) and TELs to ensure a full recognition of the time commitment for supervision of PGRs
- Include Early Career Researchers (ECRs) onto supervisory teams with experienced Directors of Studies (DoS)
- Highlight progression opportunities from undergraduate and Masters programmes to research degrees
- Highlight progression opportunities for PGRs.

Strategic objective 2: To maximise opportunities for innovation and knowledge exchange (KE), ensuring that our research has relevance and a positive impact on our communities.

Subobjectives

2.1 Focus on development and delivery of impactful research

2.2 Communication and profiling of research and KE

2.3 Increase KE funding

Activities and enablers

2.1 Focus on development and delivery of impactful research

- Grow our knowledge transfer activity through continuing to work closely in partnership with our stakeholders and communities, locally and globally
- Interact with stakeholder advisory groups to develop projects with real world relevance
- Ensure our research is underpinned by recognised standards of ethical principles and practice
- Develop REF impact case studies and mechanisms/resources for measuring impact for future REFs.

2.2 Communication and profiling of research and KE

- Hold staff and stakeholder engagement events
- Systematically collect case studies to profile our work and disseminating these through websites and social media
- Delivery of the flagship Business Competition each year across Highlands and Islands hosted by UHI Inverness

2.3 Increase KE funding

- Capture Innovation Vouchers, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) and opportunities identified with UHI Research and Innovation team at UHI
- Strategic engagement and development of the KE strategy/groups/themes
- Staff training and information exchange within the UHI research community regarding issues of intellectual property and commercialisation of our research and knowledge exchange outputs
- Development Facilitators and CREATE team to attend relevant industry and funders' events and trade shows to build community and business links and identify potential partners for KE funded projects.

Strategic objective 3: To provide an accessible, engaging and thriving research environment for our students and researcher community.

Subobjectives

3.1 Provide a supportive and stimulating research experience for our researchers including early career researchers (ECRs) and PGRs

3.2 Ensure the quality of our student supervision is of an excellent standard through consistent review and monitoring along with providing supervisor training and support

3.3 Facilitate interdisciplinary research

3.4 Enhance the profile of our research through effective communication

3.5 Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion principles are implemented in all aspects of the Research Environment.

Activities and enablers

3.1 Provide a supportive and stimulating research experience for our researchers including our ECRs and PGRs

- Increase awareness of the Researcher Concordat and ensure the principles are implemented across our research environment (https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/)
- Implement stepwise opportunities and progression routes for staff engaging in research and scholarship
- Share updates and strategic decisions across the UHI Inverness research community
- Develop opportunities for research exchange through seminars, discussion forums and workshops.

3.2 Ensure the quality of our student supervision is of an excellent standard through consistent review and monitoring along with providing supervisor training and support

- Establish a student led PG committee at UHI Inverness
- Gather and respond to feedback through PG committee and exit interviews
- Develop a strategy for enhancing PGR student experience through monitoring and action planning
- Provide supervisory support and mentoring on standard PhD and practise PhD routes.

3.3 Facilitate interdisciplinary research

- Work across CLS and IBFC on interdisciplinary theme of Nature and People
- Engagement in the research clusters – Society, Identity, Landscape and Knowledge (SILK)/Humanities and Arts Research Cluster (HARC)/Marine, Environmental Science and Engineering (MESE)/Health as relevant to researchers and thematic emphasis in the centres
- Schedule strategic/information exchange meetings in each centre in advance for inclusion of all associated research staff – regular meetings in diary for CLS and IBFC
- Work with key staff from the other centres on interdisciplinary research
- Set up a research events across the centres and UHI partners
- Submit interdisciplinary grant applications.

3.4 Enhance the profile of our research through effective communication

- Construct and update websites with themes, projects, and profiled people
- Develop social media strategies

3.5: Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion principles are implemented in all aspects of the Research Environment

- Specific activities will be developed alongside the emerging UHI level plan on that issue.

Strategic objective 4: To provide opportunities and a supportive environment for academic teaching staff to develop their research and scholarship activity.

Subobjectives

4.1 Facilitate our staff to engage in research and scholarship to further inform our pedagogy and disciplinary knowledge

4.2 Diversify our sources of research and scholarship income, to ensure innovation is embedded across our tertiary curriculum

4.3 Ensure our research centres positively influence learning and teaching across the depth and breadth of our tertiary education curriculum.

Activities and enablers

4.1 Facilitate our staff to engage in research and scholarship to further inform our pedagogy and disciplinary knowledge

- Create opportunities, pathways, and targeted support and training for UHI Inverness staff to engage in research and scholarship activity as part of their ongoing professional development
- Support capacity building in research skills to enhance research informed teaching
- Increase student involvement in research e.g. through CREATE business competition, dissertation opportunities and internships into research programmes and the molecular lab
- Involve staff in celebrations of research/posters/presentations of research e.g. SILK research roadshow, PGR, and staff conferences.

4.2 Diversify our sources of research and scholarship income, to ensure innovation is embedded across our tertiary provision

- Provide support in grant writing, budgeting, ethics applications, methodology, fieldwork protocols, data collection and management, write-up and monitoring of outcomes.
- Encourage staff to apply for seed funding grants such as the Research and Scholarship Scheme (RSS), Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA), KE challenge funds.

<u>4.3 Ensure our research centres positively influence learning and teaching across the depth and breadth of our tertiary education curriculum</u>

- Identify areas across the curriculum where research-teaching linkages can be enhanced – mapping to be done by end of 2023 – with TELs in quarterly meetings
- Develop taught Masters by research, taught Masters, professional doctorates, and practice-based doctorates to provide progression in teaching and learning
- Establish how research informed teaching can enhance experience for Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) students
- Recognition that research forms an integral part of professional development and meets The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GCTS) standards
- Delivery of entrepreneurial skills for research and academic teaching staff through enterprising researcher/educator programmes.

Key Performance Indicators

Our institutional key performance indicators are set annually and monitored against profiled targets on a monthly basis. KPI reports are accessible to all staff and are reviewed regularly by relevant Board committees, as a mechanism for monitoring progress against our strategies.

KPI Measures
UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) - Research Excellence Framework (REF)
Post Graduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)
Proposals to major competitive funding calls
Timely submissions of PhDs
PhD student numbers and supervisory capacity
Engage with UHI research clusters and KE groups
Engage with Innovate UK
Engage in interdisciplinary seminars and research events
Strengthen partnerships with SMEs/ businesses, charities, government agencies
Communicate research activities
Progress academic staff into research