



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
Edinburgh Research Office

# Growing your idea together

## 2019/20 activity



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**This year the University has seen outstanding success with European Research Council Starting Grants with 7 awards valued at £8.4m.**

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**Our teams worked together, under challenging circumstances, to enable the submission of many significant Covid-19 bids that have become high impact research projects.**

# Introduction

2019/20 has been an exceptional year for our University. Within Edinburgh Research Office, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic came at a time when we were embedding change, adapting to new structures and striving to deliver the best service for our researchers.

This year saw the submission of over 2800 research grant applications with a record value of almost £1.2bn and an increase of over 10% during the months of lockdown. We enabled the University to win £330.9m in research funding, including £39m in European Commission funding despite uncertainties created by Brexit, and to secure £296.1m (pre-audit) in research income.

We have welcomed many new staff through team mergers and recruitment. Their response to joining our team, having never met their colleagues face to face, has been heartening and testament to our culture.

As a team now at full strength, something we have not been able to say for two years, I can see the desire to improve our service to the academic community firmly at the heart of what we do. We have so much that we want to achieve in order to enable researchers to grow their ideas. Building on our progress and achievements in 2019/20, we will continue to strive to be better.

I am incredibly proud of the contribution of every member of Edinburgh Research Office to delivering our service to the research community. The exceptional challenges we have faced have demonstrated the commitment and hard work of every one of our colleagues.

**Lorna Thomson, Director**

## 2019/20 priorities

- A new brand: Growing your idea together - Ensuring we have trust in what we offer and our professional expertise.
- Adding value throughout the pipeline - Focusing on high quality service delivery and providing more comprehensive support for researchers.
- Adapting to change - Focusing on a responsive and flexible service to which adapts to changes in the external environment and delivers to internal strategy.
- Our culture - Working on a healthier culture of openness and ambition.

## 2019/20 in numbers

- Research awards: **£330.9m**
- Research income: **£296.1m** (pre-audit)
- Value of research funding applications submitted: **£1171.8m**
- Number of research funding applications submitted: **2,800**
- Active grants we support: **~2400**
- Organisations funding our research: **342**
- Position in the UK for research income: **6**

## Our offer to the research community

We work alongside researchers to grow ideas into fundable proposals. We provide expertise at all stages, from developing your idea and identifying funding to crafting your application and managing your award.

We work with research leaders to develop research strategies based on sound funder insights and intelligence. We offer expertise across UK, European and international funders.

We are enablers and connectors, networked across the University, able to provide the best advice to researchers and research leaders in all disciplines.



# Growing your idea together

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**We put the researcher at the centre of all that we do. We serve approximately 7600 researchers, at all career stages, across 31 disciplines. We work with around 230 research professional services colleagues, in 21 Schools, Centres and Institutes. In 2019/20 we continued work to build a professional, agile and responsive team, enabling high quality research and maximising opportunities.**

## Strengthening our researcher-focused culture

Our Research Community Engagement project (February to October 2019) allowed us to better understand researchers' needs, through research with 250 academic and professional services colleagues. Led by Laura Cockram, Communications Manager, this work created a foundation for us to build a more researcher-focused culture and articulate our service to researchers at all stages of their journey – from developing an idea and identifying funding, through crafting an application to managing an award. Our aim is to give a consistent, comprehensive, high-quality service to the research community, rooted in our values of integrity, expertise, community and collaboration.

## Building a comprehensive front-line service

In 2019/20 we have continued to focus on a comprehensive and seamless front-line service, from pre- to post-award.

We welcomed the Research Grants Team to Edinburgh Research Office in January 2020, increasing our size by 30%. Our people-focused approach to change resulted in a smooth transition with colleagues feeling engaged and excited by the opportunity to deliver a better service. Almost immediately, grants and funding colleagues identified an early win in the grant set-up process to minimise the back and forth required to resolve cost-challenges from a funder. Further synergies will be realised as the Research Grants Team continues to embed. We already see a more holistic approach to supporting our research community made possible by the new team structure.

We have concentrated on streamlining processes and improving knowledge sharing within and between funding, grants and contracts colleagues. We now have a funding knowledge resource (led by Siân Robson, Research Funding Specialist) and standardised research grant processes (led by Jennifer Mills, Training Accountant) to improve service consistency. We have redesigned the process for triage of new contracts requests and overhauled processes and internal tools so that repeat business is streamlined and decision-making by contracts specialists is clear, pragmatic, risk-based and expeditious.

In improving our services we seek to better support researchers to win research funding and to better enable the University to grow research income and reputation. Working in partnership is key to both.

We have identified ways to work more effectively with local research and finance offices in order to provide a more seamless service to researchers. In July, we refined our research funding portfolios following a 1-year review to allow Research Funding Specialists to provide an even more dedicated and consistent level of support that will enable the University to further increase the number and value of applications.

We reviewed the grant submission pathway to raise the quality of applications and improve the efficiency of research grant application management resulting in a new process which will be rolled out in 2020/21, initially in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

We are well on our way to transforming our contracting service. We implemented the Worktribe contracts module which will enhance consistency and which can provide greater visibility of the status of agreements for our researchers.

The consistent professionalism of our front-line colleagues has earned the respect of colleagues across the University. They report that much of their job satisfaction stems from working closely with academics to support them develop their idea and deliver their research.

Our work on service improvement continues. Our approach to change is agile, iterative and invites innovation and participation from all our colleagues in Edinburgh Research Office and the wider research community.

## Establishing online channels to support the delivery of our service

In 2019/20, we designed the online channels we need as a professional service.

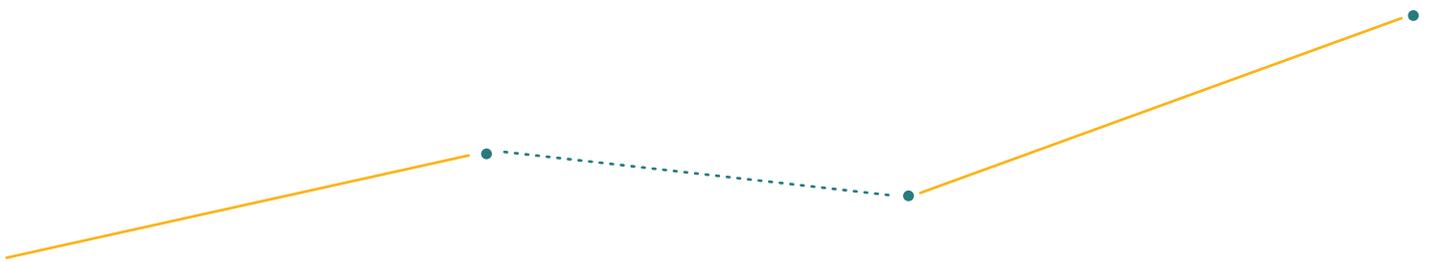
Our **website**, launched in October 2019, allows researchers to access information about our service at each stage of their journey as they grow their idea, identify funding, craft their application and manage their award. Our website has ~11,000 page views (~2500 users) per month.

The accompanying Insights and Intelligence site, providing research analytics and funder insights to research leaders and managers, has had ~35,000 page views in total since launch. Our Covid-19 and research content has had ~5500 views since March 19.

We use our **blog** to share expertise and insight with the research community and the sector; it averages ~1000 views per month. Posts cover topics such as learning from our researcher development events, reports, toolkits and guides we have published, and changes in the research funding landscape. We use Twitter **@growingyouridea** to share content and bespoke channels to share funding opportunities.



**The Knowledge Exchange and Impact Team have contributed, through advice and/or funding support, to the impact reported in 45 of the 93 case studies from CAHSS to be submitted to REF 2021.**



**My thanks for your efforts of the last couple of weeks. Compiling such a major multidisciplinary, multi-university bid was in itself a massive feat. Add to this the issues with interacting remotely with Teams and the complexities of interacting with a range of academics, financial and legal officers and I think you can all be proud of your contributions.**

**Andy Mount**, Dean of Research, College of Science and Engineering.



# Promoting a positive research culture

**During 2019/20, the Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group (REIRG) has moved to a more proactive position within the University, taking the lead on Research Integrity, Culture and Improvement as well as coordinating ethical review via implementation of a new ethics management system and workflows.**

Alan Campbell is a member of the University's Research Misconduct policy working group and, in May 2020, received approval for his paper outlining support for those affected by research misconduct. The University will coordinate a network of confidential advisors, provide letters of support for exonerated or innocent parties and potentially act as a funder of last resort.

REIRG, Edinburgh Research Office and the Institute for Academic Development are bringing together work on Research Culture. A survey in summer 2020 will inform the action plan for this area and will provide coordination across the University. Our Research Integrity Manager was a co-lead (with a colleague from the University of Dundee) in establishing the Scottish Research Integrity Network, which had a well-attended and successful inaugural meeting hosted by us.

## Responsible metrics

Louise Ker, our Research Business Intelligence Officer, is a key member of the Responsible Metrics Working Group. The University signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DoRA) in May 2019 and the working group is tasked with ensuring the embedding of DoRA's vision to 'advance practical and robust approaches to research assessment globally and across all scholarly disciplines'. Louise led on drafting the University's Responsible Metrics policy and co-ordinating a successful application for Wellcome Trust ISSF funding to support further work by the group.

## Supporting those impacted by misconduct cases

Research misconduct is an uncommon but potentially important threat to rigour and integrity. The University is committed to thoroughly investigating alleged misconduct but, equally, to ensuring the reputations of good faith whistle blowers, complainants and respondents who are exonerated following investigation. Alan Campbell is a member of the University's Research Misconduct policy working group and, in May 2020, received approval from Research Policy Group to coordinate a network of confidential advisors, provide letters of support for exonerated or innocent parties and potentially act as a funder of last resort.

**62% of researchers surveyed (~1500) feel the University sets the direction for their research and creates plans and systems to achieve it.**

Research culture survey, 2020

## Due diligence

Rosie Maccagnano, Research Funding Manager, led a review of research funding due diligence practice in light of the increasing complexity within our funding landscape. As we engage with new funders, institutions and partners, we must ensure their standards are in line with those of our own institution. We engaged with external organisations, including the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA), to identify necessary changes to meet with funder requirements. A new process for overseas partners will be implemented during 2020/21 that is risk based, project specific, and consistent with University process. This work was conducted in parallel with a review of University income due diligence.

## Export control

Considerable work has been undertaken to strengthen the University's approach to export control, a complex and often fast-changing area which increasingly impacts on research. We coordinated a full day training event which included content tailored to the requirements of Heads of Schools and Senior Managers, as well as researchers and professional services staff.

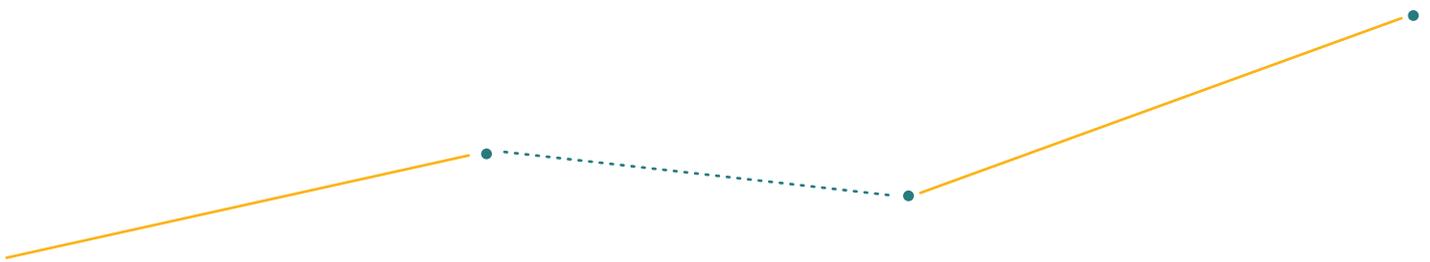
**Information and resources** have been developed to ensure all academics have the information they need about legal restrictions surrounding the export of goods, technology, software and knowledge from the UK.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

Isobel Marr, International Development Research Officer, leads on enabling researchers to meet the requirements of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) gender equality statement, introduced as a requirement for UKRI GCRF grants in 2018/19. We used Scottish Funding Council funding in 2019/20 to initiate a project with GenderEd to address the underlying challenges of undertaking research in low and middle income countries in a gender conscious manner. A **toolkit and briefing guides** have been developed to support researchers to integrate gender equality considerations into projects. The project has been hugely influential internally, across our sector and in UK Government.

Lorna Thomson, Director, and Sara Shinton, Head of Researcher Development, IAD are leading on the creation of a development programme specifically for female academics and research professional services staff. We held a series of workshops in March 2020 to understand how best to support women working within research which identified barriers such as increased administrative responsibilities, self-nomination for key opportunities and lack of recognition. This work will feed into a 2020/21 project, funded by the Scottish Funding Council Covid-19 support fund, to address equality and diversity issues for women and black and ethnic minority groups. The funding will help with networking, skills development, coaching and small project start-up funds.

**Our Research Business Intelligence team have responded to 428 unique enquiries relating to research data and analysis from across the University, and provided the complex analysis required to support the Covid-19 response.**



**REIRG, Edinburgh Research Office and the Institute for Academic Development are bringing together work on Research Culture. A survey in summer 2020 will inform the action plan for this area and will provide coordination across the University.**



# Increasing research application activity and quality

## Finding opportunities

Sourcing and communicating funding opportunities is a key service offered by Edinburgh Research Office. Our academics apply to around 380 different funders each year all of which are monitored for opportunities. This year, Nicholas Duvall and Al Innes, Research Development Officers, have expanded the approach to communicating funding opportunities, ensuring consistency of service but differentiation of opportunity to Colleges, Schools, DDI institutes, research groups and academics. We provide regular e-bulletins (both College specific and specialist), an online funding calendar, direct contact, events, meetings and support for Research Professional. In addition colleagues across Edinburgh Research Office target specific opportunities to individuals and groups.

## Enabling applications to specialised funding calls

In 2019/20, the University achieved a high success rate in the prestigious UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF) Scheme – 23.5% in Round 2 (c.f. 14% nationally) and 42.9% in Round 3 (c.f. 25% nationally).

Rosie Maccagnano, Research Funding Manager, the Deans of Research and Edinburgh Innovations colleagues have established themselves as experts in the FLF scheme. They have supported applicants through the internal selection process, providing key insights on the scheme and organising mock interview panels. This enabled colleagues in Schools and Centres to understand and engage better with the scheme and contributed to the University's high success rates.

## Demand management

In 2019/20, 18 calls required demand management processes, double the number of 3 years ago. This growth reflects an increase in both directive and challenge funding where processes have to be designed

to suit a one-off call. Previously, responsive mode calls drove demand management with clear funder limits and established protocols that were simply followed each year. Demand management is an area of increasing complexity for everyone involved across the University. In discussion with the Deans and the College Research Officers we continue to work to make this as smooth as possible operationally.

## Mock interviews

Mock interviews play an increasingly large part in enabling academics to win research funding. Based on feedback from mock interview panellists that interviewees were unprepared for their mocks, the Research Funding Team offered pre-mocks. This has led to an improved experience for the interviewees at their mocks and allows the Research Funding Team to have a more valuable input into the process. Many of the mock interviews we organised are targeted at specific schemes such as the European Research Council Consolidator Grants and the Future Leaders Fellowship.

## Specialist teams for success

### EU & international funding

European Commission funding constitutes approximately 12% of University research income. Our EU and international funding experts make complex EC proposal development more accessible to individual academics. This year the University has seen outstanding success with European Research Council Starting Grants with 7 awards valued at £8.4m. We provided a full proposal review service to 5 of these thanks to the sustained commitment and effort of the whole team. Our team enabled the University to submit 226 applications to Horizon 2020 in 2019/20.

Edinburgh Research Office has had significant involvement in UNA Europa network, including sitting on the Research and Innovation Task Force, chairing the Research Cluster Group, and leading the successful

UNA Europa H2020 project for €2m, the overall aim of which is to explore ways to enable barrier free research and innovation collaboration between all researchers in the Una Europa Alliance.

### GCRF & Official Development Assistance funding

Given the scale and complexity of GCRF funding, we put a specialist team in place. Our International Development Research Hub provides specialist support on bid development, call support, network building and supporting policy into practice enabling the University to win £92.7m in Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding (including GCRF) since 2016.

In 2019/20, the University secured £20.1m in ODA funding, of which the GCRF Collective Calls funding constituted almost £10m. Six of these awards were above £1m (ranging from £1.8m to £3.1m). Our experts were significantly involved with four of the bids and have provided bid development support and a University-wide event series to support interdisciplinary call response and networking. We manage the Scottish Funding Council GCRF grant (£3.8m in 2019/20), which has awarded 110 academics pump-priming grants over the last two years. 30% of these researchers have now led external ODA bids, showing the importance of this initial seed funding. Finally, this year we have shown great agility in realigning the SFC GCRF to a Covid-19 Urgency Grant which had led to £1.4m investment in projects.

### Covid-19 response

To support the University's rapid response to Covid-19, we pulled together a team to provide expertise on:

- **Research funding applications:** Angus Moodycliffe (UK Research Funding Manager), Covid-19 Committee member and lead for the Research Funding Team
- **Funding calls & funder policy:** Paul Reay (Head of Research Funding) and Áine Ryan (EU and International Research Funding Manager) identifying policy and news updates; Nicholas Duvall & Al Innes (Research Development Officers) sourcing, collating and communicating funding opportunities.
- **Research contracts:** Alan Shanks (Senior Contracts Manager), ensured expedited triage and contracting processes for incoming Covid-19 projects.
- **Key contact & reporting:** Jonathan Rans (Strategic Research Executive), key contact role with Edinburgh Infectious Diseases and lead on activity reporting to the College Deans of Research.
- **Financial modelling:** Louise Ker (Research Business Intelligence Officer), provided vital forecasting and funding modelling to inform senior decision making.
- **Communications:** Laura Cockram (Communications Manager), worked with the College Research Offices to develop a dedicated Covid-19 and Research site and is providing communications expertise to the Adaptation and Renewal Research and Innovation workstream.
- **Knowledge exchange and Impact:** Shonagh McEwen (impact and KE and Impact Advisor) and Mara Goetz (KE Administrator) developed resources on how to collaborate, engage and run events during physical distancing, as part of the Support for Research during Covid-19 Hub.

Our teams worked together, under challenging circumstances, to enable the submission of many significant bids that have become high impact research projects. These calls included the MRC Covid-19 Rapid Response call awarded (£4.8m) to Kenneth Baillie to carry out the ISARIC4C study involving 16,700 Covid-19 patients, the results of which drastically improved our understanding of the characteristics of people who are most severely affected by Covid-19. Additionally, we supported applications to the NHS Chief Scientific Office (CSO) Rapid Research in Covid-19 (RARC-19) programme call, winning 8 projects worth a total of £602,500.

We pivoted the ESRC IAA and CAHSS Knowledge Exchange and Impact grants to a Rapid Response call. In just a few weeks, we awarded and started 11 small projects worth £71,000 conducted in partnership with external organisations addressing the Covid-19 emergency both locally and internationally.

## Major bids

To support major bids, we pull together specialist teams with expertise on Research Funding, Research Contracts and Knowledge Exchange and Impact, with a senior member of the office providing overall leadership. Proposals supported in this way in 2019/20 include:

- **Josephine Pemberton (Biological Sciences)**, NERC, Edinburgh Environmental Omics Facility, **£12.5m**.
- **Stefano Brandani (Chemistry)**, BBSRC SPF Greenhouse Gas Removal Demonstrators, The UK Direct Air Capture and Carbon Storage Demonstrator, **£4.4m**.

- Ian Underwood (Engineering with 7 Schools and 2 partners), EPSRC Programme Grant, OPTIMIST: Optimised Personal Treatment & Intervention: Microsystems, Implanted Sensors and Therapy, **£8.6m**.
- Kenneth Baillie (Roslin), MRC, nCoV: COVID-19: ISARIC Coronavirus Clinical Characterisation Consortium (ISARIC-4C), **£5m**.
- Bruce Guthrie (Usher), Legal and General, The Advanced Care Research Centre, **£20m**.
- Andy Mount (Chemistry with 6 partners), NNL bid, **£1.2m**.
- Liz Baggs (Roslin with 8 Scottish partners, 8 governmental/NGO partners, and the support of over 20 Industry partners), BBSRC SPF CDT in Food Systems, FOODSTERS, **£5.5m**.
- Margaret Graham (GeoSciences with Heriot Watt and support from over 40 Industry partners), NERC CDT in Managing Chemical Risks in the Environment, Centre for Emerging Contaminant Behaviour and Managing Environmental Risks (ECO-MER). **£2.2m**.
- Chris Speed (ECA), EPSRC Next Stage Digital Economy Centre for the Decentralised Digital Economy (DECaDE), led by University of Surrey with Digital Catapult, **£860k** awarded to Edinburgh, plus in kind support from 8 industry partners.

## Industry funding

This year the Research Funding Team and Edinburgh Innovations have worked together to improve our combined service in order to increase the success rate of translational applications in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM). Colleagues are now collaborating earlier on grant applications with translational potential. The main focus schemes are the Medical Research Council (MRC) DPFS, Cancer Research UK, National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) HTA and EME, and Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) Follow-on Fund. We are monitoring the efficacy of this pilot and will provide a report during 2020/21.

Lorna Thomson, Director, is working with colleagues in Edinburgh Innovations and Finance to develop policy to incentivise industry funded research. Alongside her role on the CMVM Translational and Industry Research Committee and the Wellcome Trust Institutional Translational Partnership Board, this links our fundamental research into other funding pathways.

The Knowledge Exchange and Impact Team have focused on business engagement and enterprise in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, working alongside colleagues in the Edinburgh Futures Institute and Edinburgh Innovations. The team also secured an Accelerating Business Collaboration award from the Economic and Social Research Council. (see page 22 for details).

## Sustained support for a major bid

Since the earliest proposal stages of the GeoSciences GCRF Risk Hub - Tomorrow's Cities in spring 2017, we have been deeply involved in supporting the development of the proposal right through to its successful award and we continue to support post-award. This year we have developed an advanced process for due diligence assessments on overseas research partners, including establishing primary organisational contact information, collating and translating financial and reporting documentation, and providing reports so that the Hub Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators are able to ensure compliance with UKRI requirements.



# Enabling the University to win interdisciplinary research funding

**Our funding environment has seen radical growth in challenge-led funding. In 2019/20 we have continued to develop our services in this area, building on the 2018 review 'The Nature and Extent of Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Edinburgh' by Kirsty Collinge, Strategic Research Executive.**

## Fostering research collaborations

Being more agile in our ability to support interdisciplinary research was a key driver of our structural change in 2018/19. Through our knowledge of Schools and relationships with individual researchers, we actively seek to broker new relationships.

Nicholas Duvall, Research Development Officer, Fiona King, Research Funding Specialist and Jenny Loukes, Senior Research Funding Specialist supported researchers from the School of Mathematics and the Usher Institute to collaborate on a £1.56m submission to the EPSRC 'Hubs for Mathematical Sciences in Healthcare' call.

Events focused on specific funding calls are an important way of introducing researchers from across the University to one another and we know they are highly valued by participants and do lay the foundation for new research collaborations. The events are often co-designed with College Deans of Research or academic leads. Examples of these kinds of events include the February 2020 event on the 'UKRI Transforming the UK food system for healthy people and a healthy environment' call and the April 2020 'UKRI Adolescence, Mental Health and the Developing Mind' call information event. Online events were well attended and a key part of the work done by Clare Sowney, Business Development Manager, to support researchers from the Schools of Social and Political Science, Informatics and Business to enable 3 applications to the ISCF Healthy Ageing Call.

## Supporting interdisciplinary centres and networks

Enabling research centres to adopt a strategic, sustainable approach to research funding is vital to ensure not just research advancement but the retention of academic and professional services staff. Work has followed two strands. First, to provide general information about how to use research funding as a tool for planning and, second, we have undertaken dedicated work with research centres in the Colleges of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) and Science and Engineering (CSE). This included meetings, consultations and in some cases a detailed, bespoke report on funding strategy development, with:

1. Centre for Business and Climate Change (CBCC)
2. Physical Activity and Health Research Centre (PAHRC)
3. Edinburgh Centre for Research into the Experience of Dementia (ECRED)
4. Centre for Early Childhood
5. Scottish Animation Network
6. Applied Fire Safety Design Network
7. Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research
8. Centre for Statistics
9. Centre for Environmental Change

Participant feedback tells us these events provide a vital way of enabling academics to meet with those from different disciplines over a common purpose, with a view to winning research funding.

## Strategic themes

Working with the Deans of Research and Edinburgh Innovations, we supported the development of key themes, which received dedicated support, led by Jonathan Rans, Strategic Research Executive. The work (on Energy, Future Cities, Future Health, Food Security and Mental health) positioned us well to embrace the new, interlinked Research & Innovation focus areas which the University will champion in 2020 and beyond. Our approach to targeted theme development included:

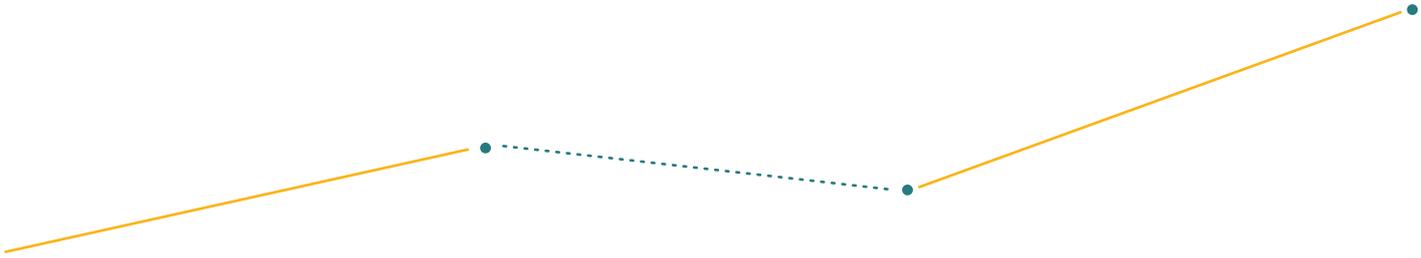
- Supporting the development of strategy papers and planning documents
- Shaping and facilitating events
- Input into proposals
- Identifying academics with relevant research interests to expand the theme community
- Enabling the development of online resources.



## Data driven innovation

As with the strategic themes, we provide dedicated support to the Data Driven Innovation (DDI) programme through the Edinburgh Futures Institute, the Bayes Centre, the Usher Institute and the DDI team. Members of the team are integral to Institute Research Groups, we provide targeted funding information, support network development and work, with EFI in particular, on industry engagement.

**We welcomed the Research Grants Team to Edinburgh Research Office in January 2020, increasing our size by 30%. Our people-focused approach to change resulted in a smooth transition.**



## **Thank you messages shared by colleagues**

**Always calm and helpful. Thank you for being the core of the whole team!**

**Thank you for being so supportive.**

**Thank you for all your support this year, and wise, calm counsel.**

**Superb leadership, patience and support. Much, much appreciated.**

**Thank you for doing a great job managing the team.**



# Enabling research impact

The mainly CAHSS funded and focused Knowledge Exchange and Impact team works with researchers from the 'developing your idea' stage to identify potential impact and engage with industry, policy, practice or the public. We have contributed, through advice and/or funding support, to the impact reported in 45 of the 93 case studies from CAHSS to be submitted to REF 2021.

## ESRC Impact Acceleration Account

The Knowledge Exchange and Impact team led on securing a new Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account (2019- 23), and in the first year we were able to report 3 secondments, 15 projects and engagement with 57 external partner organisations. We supported 17 events, including 9 public events as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science, with 1207 attendees. In addition to supporting researchers delivering impact based on existing partnerships, we are taking a challenge led approach to brokering new partnerships between social science researchers and the private, public and third sectors. Delivery of the ESRC IAA is a team effort, led by Madeleine Beveridge, Knowledge Exchange and Impact Coordinator.

From spring 2020, additional funding from ESRC was awarded for the Accelerating Business Collaboration award, where we are working with the Scottish Graduate School for Social Science and Glasgow University to broker relationships with industry and develop capacity for business engagement focusing on early career researchers. This is led by Clare Sowney, Business Development Manager.

## Enhancing business engagement and enterprise in CAHSS

Since the spring 2019 we have worked with the Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) and Edinburgh Innovations (EI) to connect the 15 business engagement colleagues supporting CAHSS or areas with strong CAHSS presence to ensure a joined up approach. Outcomes include joint work supporting Chris Speed in his EPSRC Digital Economy centre bids, the Circular Economy Innovation hub led by Social Responsibility

and Sustainability, and activities in the Travel and Tourism sector post Covid-19. In summer 2020, this approach evolved into a more formal relationship between EI, EFI and ourselves – the CAHSS Industry Engagement Team. We are working together on a strategy for supporting industry engagement and enterprise from 2020/21.

## Public engagement

Anne Sofie Laegran, Head of Knowledge Exchange and Impact took over chairing the University's Public Engagement Strategy Coordination Group in 2019, following a decision by the Research Policy Group that the public engagement team would move from the Institute for Academic Development to Edinburgh Research Office from August 2020.

This move is designed to embed public engagement further into the research culture across the University. The team will be working in partnership with public engagement professionals in Colleges, Schools and Institutes to develop training and guidance, deliver engagement platforms including through the Edinburgh Festivals, support funding bids and lead on data collation and evaluation for statutory reports.



# Growing our researcher development offer

**We are committed to supporting researchers develop the skills, knowledge and expertise they need to be successful in obtaining research funding, advance their research vision and ultimately their careers.**

During 2019/20 we have delivered 47 events for researchers and professional services colleagues, from workshops to build application crafting skills to peer learning sessions on knowledge exchange to understanding business intelligence data. We are continuing to deliver events during the Covid-19 pandemic, redesigning them for online delivery.

## Strategic Leadership in Research Programme

The Strategic Leadership in Research Programme, now in its second year, equips experienced researchers with the leadership skills, knowledge and behaviours required to win large-scale strategic funding. The 2019/20 programme runs from April to October 2020 and this year's cohort is 24 researchers from across the University. The programme comprises five workshops followed by an Ideas Summit at which participants pitch their research idea to potential collaborators, funders and senior leaders from across the University. It offers wraparound support such as coaching, mentoring and action-based learning sets. We have adapted to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic by making the Programme online to ensure continuation of this service.

**Overall the course has really increased my confidence and encouraged me to think bigger and aim higher.**

Strategic Leadership in Research Programme participant

**I very much appreciated the opportunity to share new ideas with other colleagues.**

Strategic Leadership in Research Programme participant

## Academic talent strategy for research funding

The Academic Talent Strategy for Research Funding developed in 2019/20 will offer a refreshed programme of events carefully tailored to career stage underpinned by a brand new competency framework. The competency framework for research funding provides vital architecture to our programme and is unique to both the University and our sector. It was the result of wide consultation about career stage and research skills. It has been well received by EPSRC and ESRC. We are currently designing the learning content to support researchers with colleagues from the Institute for Academic Development and Edinburgh Innovations.



# Informing and delivering strategy

Colleagues from Edinburgh Research Office lend their expertise across the University but also nationally and internationally within the sector. We provide insight, intelligence and exert influence in close partnership with our academic leadership and other professional service groups. This work informs and supports the services we provide, School research plans, College research strategies and University policy.

## Analysing the research environment

The University of Edinburgh has a broad and strong research base. Nonetheless, we must continue to review our performance and challenge ourselves to improve. Combining internal review and external investigation, colleagues from across the office contribute to ongoing analysis, fore-sighting and planning to inform how we position ourselves to respond to our fast-changing environment.

Our Strategic Research Development Team, led by Catherine Burns, has delivered a range of reports and briefings this year in response to sectoral or policy developments including an 'Edinburgh lens' on UKRI infrastructure priorities to 2030 and a summary of David Willets' 'The road to 2.4%: Transforming Britain's R&D Performance' report.

Paul Reay, Head of Research Funding, has considered the characteristics of high performing research organisations and the research environment to maximise research income in his paper, 'Promoting Grant Application Activity and Increasing Awards: The Research Environment at Edinburgh'. The next steps in this work will engage our community in identifying what we currently do well, what is needed to bring about a significant enhancement in research culture, and the actions that will deliver that change.

## Building sector and funder relationships

As part of improving the University's research position we must take a more proactive coordinated approach in engaging with those who fund our research. As an institution, we need to demonstrate the breadth

of our strengths to funders to attract new funding beyond individual or discipline level, and share and communicate opportunities across the University.

A key role for us, which we maintained through 2019/20, is engaging with funders and their networks, and coordinating visits and events. We led or contributed to almost 20 events during 2019/20 across many of our major funders. These events allow us to demonstrate the research being funded at the University and the impact it is generating. They also give the academic community (importantly early career researchers) and our Research Funding Team an opportunity to engage with funder representatives and improve the quality of research grant applications.

In late 2019/20 (continuing into 2020/21), our Research Funding Team began to review how we engage with our major funders, aiming to deliver a more effective communications and engagement strategy to improve our interaction, visibility, and influence, to be seen as a positive and engaged contributor, and to understand the ways in which our funders operate in order to align ourselves.

Edinburgh Research Office colleagues represent the University on national and international sectoral policy and operational groups. Alan Campbell, Research Integrity Manager, co-led the establishment of the Scottish Research Integrity Network this year. In the UK, we are active participants in a number of Russell Group and UUK groups. At a European level we are involved in the UKRO and LERU, building relationships and contributing to policy submission statements, as well as contributing significantly to the University's Brexit no-deal planning and communications. Áine Ryan, EU & International Research Funding Manager, has played a key role in establishing the University position in the UNA Europa grouping this year.

## Research insights and intelligence

In 2019/20 we launched our Insights & Intelligence service. This links seamlessly with the website, and is currently registering ~200 site visits/day (over 35,000 visits in total since the website launched in October 2019). The monthly Research Key Performance Indicator Reports regularly register 500-1000+ views.

The self-service data reporting tools provide live data directly from Worktribe. To encourage uptake and build understanding of these tools in Schools, Roy Woolley, Research Business Intelligence Officer ran 4 training workshops 'Introduction to Business Intelligence Data from Edinburgh Research Office' which were attended by 60 colleagues from Colleges and Schools.

Our Research Business Intelligence team have responded to 428 unique enquiries relating to research data and analysis from across the University, and provided the complex analysis required to support the Covid-19 response.

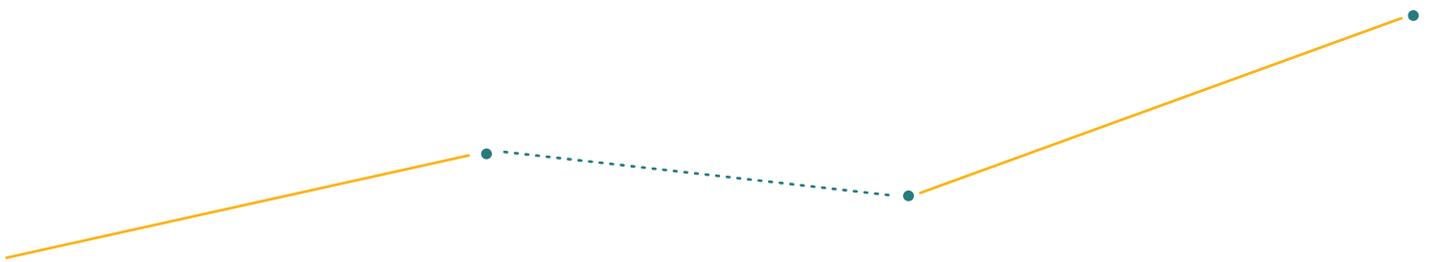
## Provision of expertise to the Scottish Funding Council

This year the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has twice called on expertise from within Edinburgh Research Office to support their work. Firstly, Kirsty Collinge, Strategic Research Executive, provided an analytical report that was used as vital evidence to inform the findings of the Advisory Panel of the Independent Review of Scotland's Research Pooling Initiative. Secondly, SFC initiated a short-life project to explore ways of modelling future Research Excellence Framework (REF) cycles. To support this work they called on the expertise of Louise Ker, Research Business Intelligence Officer to provide complex analyses for which she undertook a three month secondment. These two projects in combination equate to approximately 5 months of consultancy time from Edinburgh Research Office to SFC.

## External peer review and assessment panels

ESRC has drawn on the expertise of the knowledge exchange and impact team by appointing members on the assessment panels for the ESRC Impact Prize (Shonagh McEwen, Knowledge Exchange and Impact Advisor), Scottish Graduate School for Social Science/ ESRC DTP Impact prize (Madeleine Beveridge, Knowledge Exchange and Impact Coordinator), and the ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships managed by SGSSS (Anne Sofie Laegran, Head of Knowledge Exchange and Impact). Madeleine Beveridge has been peer reviewer for the Scottish University Insight Institute and Anne Sofie Laegran represented the University on their governance board and assessment panel.

**In 2019/20, the University secured £20.1m in ODA funding, of which the GCRF Collective Calls funding constituted almost £10m.**



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# Developing our people and organisation

We place great importance on being a professional service. In 2019/20 we have made significant strides in recruiting and inducting new colleagues, learning and development within the team and building confidence in our expertise and the service we offer.

## Nurturing a culture of openness and ambition

This year we centred our attention on strengthening the culture in Edinburgh Research Office and building a sense of shared purpose, in which every colleague can see their contribution. Led by Laura Cockram, Communications Manager, our work on culture included a people-focused approach to change. This was vital as we welcomed new colleagues in the Research Grants Team. As part of this, we co-created our values and started building a sense of our broader community at our away day in February 2020 and subsequently embedded our values in all our processes. We are committed to celebrating success, reflecting on and recognising our achievements and, on a daily basis, thanking and commending colleagues via our Teams [#youstar](#) channel. We have focused on maintaining our sense of community, collaborative working practices and our connection to our purpose during remote working – all of which contribute to the quality of service to researchers.

## Welcoming new colleagues

We have an induction programme for all colleagues that we regularly revisit and improve based on feedback. In 2019/20 we focused on ensuring effective induction and welcome for colleagues joining us during remote working. New colleagues have fed back that the ready availability of information and the welcome and support from team members across the office helped with starting a new role virtually.

## Our values

The University values of excellence, accessible and ambitious are particularly relevant to our service. Together, we created an articulation of our values, and what these look, feel and sound like, in early 2020.

### Integrity

- I aim to do the right thing
- I am respectful of others and take the time to understand their perspective
- I am honest and transparent in all my dealings

### Expertise

- I apply my knowledge appropriately and for the benefit of the research community
- I am open and approachable in sharing my knowledge
- I maintain and develop my knowledge

### Community

- I share resources, knowledge, time and networks
- I seek to understand other people's point of view
- I offer and seek support

### Collaboration

- I share my knowledge, skills and time
- I listen and respect others' ideas, perspectives and responsibilities
- I clearly understand and communicate what I need and what I can offer in my role

## Providing learning, development and career progression

We support every member of Edinburgh Research Office to develop professionally. In 2019/20 we developed a Learning and Development Framework which both signposts to existing learning and provides bespoke content developed by our own colleagues. Topics focus on upskilling on specific responsibilities and ensuring understanding of the wider research environment at the University.

In 2019/20 the programme has included:

1. Introduction to Research Contracts
2. Clinical Costings
3. Research Funding
4. Budget Development for Research Funding
5. Communication and Engagement with the Research Community
6. Research Funding in the Context of University Finance
7. Data: What we Produce and How to Run Reports
8. Being a Line Manager in Edinburgh Research Office.

In 2019/20 we invested in externally provided learning including project management, conference attendance and coaching. We support membership for the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA). We set up cross-team working groups that enable colleagues to share their expertise and learn from others. Examples include research community engagement, online events for researchers and digital content owners.

We were delighted to promote four colleagues to new positions in the office, welcome six colleagues from other parts of the University and to see six colleagues move to exciting new roles within the University.

## Seeking feedback and insight

Our staff survey in February 2020, showed that we maintained our strengths in integrity and community. 92% of colleagues feel that 'interactions within Edinburgh Research Office are open, respectful and professional' and 90% feel 'there is a good level of mutual support within my team'. Areas in which we improved included 'taking the time to appreciate what we do well', 'understanding what is required of me to enable high quality research' and 'reflecting as a team on what we are doing and how we can more effectively enable high quality research'.

## Defining organisational governance

We invested in improving the effectiveness of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and we set up a new Organisational Management Team (OMT). The purpose of SLT is to provide the vision, direction and leadership to enable colleagues to deliver world-leading research. The purpose of OMT is to identify and respond to issues and opportunities and implement solutions so that Edinburgh Research Office is a collaborative and effective organisation enabling the delivery of world-leading research. Our work on governance, combined with our work on culture and change, invites all colleagues to bring their ideas, enthusiasm and solutions to the challenges of creating a service which puts the researcher at the centre.

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# Growing research together

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**Producing a report for the first time allows us to reflect on the journey we are on to establish ourselves as a responsive, agile and expert professional service. We see this as an opportunity to mark what we have achieved in 2019/20 and to thank our staff, past and present, for their commitment to our team, to their work and to our researchers.**

We still have room to grow and develop our provision and we remain committed to our work on service improvement. In 2020/21 we will continue to build on our successes and look critically at where we can improve. The world needs the University's research more than ever. Getting the enablers right is critical. We will reach out to the wider research community to sow, nurture and grow the environment and service which enables researchers and research management professionals to reach their full potential.

## **Thank you messages shared by colleagues**

**Thanks for being so positive.**

**You have made such a difference!**

**Thank you for being brilliant colleagues and for all your ideas.**

**You are amazing, I couldn't have done it without you!**

**Many thanks for sharing your knowledge and expertise, motivating and encouraging me.**

**Thanks for welcoming me to the team.**



website | [www.ed.ac.uk/research-office](http://www.ed.ac.uk/research-office)

blog | [blogs.ed.ac.uk/research-office](http://blogs.ed.ac.uk/research-office)

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