

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Social Science at the University of Glasgow has made great progress since the publication of the College's Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy in 2019. A new wave of talented researchers has joined our ranks, bringing fresh energy to our research portfolio, our long-standing areas of world class expertise continue to thrive, and we have responded to ongoing and new challenges. In doing this we have found innovative and exciting ways to work across disciplinary boundaries to bring social science expertise to bear on the world's most pressing issues.

This strategy document sets out the framework through which researchers at all stages of their careers across our College will work to achieve our vision for research and scholarship between now and 2024.

1.2 Vision

Our vision is to produce:

World-class social science research and scholarship that delivers positive impacts on societies and economies.

To deliver on this vision, we will focus our efforts on making Glasgow the best University in which to develop a research career in the social sciences; a University with a collegiate and collaborative research environment, excellent support for research income generation, research and scholarship outputs and innovative approaches to engagement with external stakeholders.

1.3 Values

For the University of Glasgow to produce world-class research and scholarship and be the best place to develop a research career in the social sciences we will build on the University's values in all we do. The University of Glasgow places the following values at the centre of its research practices:

- We value the quality of our research above its quantity
- The University succeeds when our researchers succeed
- How research is done is as important as what research is done.

Within the College of Social Science, we strive to embed these values in all aspects of our research and scholarship practice.

2. Context

Social science research and scholarship continues to explain and shape our societies and economies. Our research and scholarship are more important than ever as the world faces new and ongoing challenges. As we look forward, our strategy will enable us to be agile in response to the changing funding landscape, while keeping ambitious and excellent research and scholarship at the heart of what we do.

2.1 Challenge-led funding opportunities

Challenge-led approaches to the commissioning of research calls are now a firmly established feature of the funding environment, where researchers from diverse disciplines are asked to come together to co-create solutions to complex, multi-faceted problems.

This requires investing time in networking and working to understand how different methodologies and approaches can best complement one another. It also requires researchers to be able to develop personal skills and strategies that bring together the ability to engage in interdisciplinary coalitions, with the ability to make contributions to their own discipline. External engagement with partner organisations will also be crucial in co-creating new knowledge to address social and economic challenges.

The University of Glasgow remains one of the UK's best broad-based institutions, where opportunities to forge ambitious research, scholarship and knowledge exchange relationships abound, and professional expertise is in place to support researchers at all career stages to navigate new connections.

2.2 New Models of Research Funding

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

3. Achieving Our Vision

In pursuing these priorities, we – research students, early and mid-career researchers, local research leaders, senior leaders and professional staff - will work together to build a strong and ambitious College community, which works together through the three key pillars of research and scholarship activity: applying the intellectual strength of our disciplines; working within strong interdisciplinary partnerships; and deepening and widening our engagement with external stakeholders.

3.1. Strength and creativity in our disciplines

Creative engagement within our disciplines and subject areas is the backbone of our research and scholarship. Being confident and bold in the ways we apply our theories and develop new insights is important for our students, for the Research Excellence Framework, for ourselves and for society more widely. Interdisciplinary, challenge-led, research also requires strong, critical, theoretically rigorous disciplinary foundations.

To build strength in our disciplines, we must invest, value and recognise effort in our local research clusters, groups and subject areas, enabling local research leaders to work in partnership with professional research support staff to design and deliver bespoke activity programmes.

3.2 Strength and creativity in our interdisciplinary partnerships

Responding to the world's most pressing problems, and responding to the strategic drivers in our funding environment, requires respectful and innovative interdisciplinary research.

To build this we have created space and opportunities for people at all stages of their career to meet, learn, discuss, create and innovate across disciplines and build new research programmes by identifying five Interdisciplinary Research Themes at College level:

- Challenges in Changing Cities
- Digital Society and Economy
- Justice, Insecurity and Fair Decision Making
- Addressing Inequalities
- Sustainable Development

3.3 Strength and creativity in our external engagement

For our research and scholarship to deliver positive impacts on societies and economies we need to further strengthen our partnerships beyond higher education. While we continue to provide support to all researchers in building relationships with external stakeholders, we will focus our

knowledge exchange development activity on deepening a number of strategic relationships, and on brokering new collaborative relationships, in particular with the private sector and with socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, creating space for new research priorities to emerge from external engagement activity.

We will refresh our communication strategy to facilitate our conversations, knowledge exchange and impact with external stakeholders, while encouraging researchers to engage with them through investing in impact initiatives and building stronger relationships through partnerships such as [Aspect](#).

4. Our Priorities

Reflecting the priorities articulated in the University of Glasgow [Research Strategy 2020-2025](#), we will focus on three priorities; collaboration, creativity and careers

Priority 1: Collaboration

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

- *Strength and creativity in our disciplines*

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

- *Strength and creativity in our interdisciplinary partnerships*

We will continue to develop and deliver open-event programmes aligned to the College IRTs to encourage within and cross-College networking and activity for the development of ambitious new research agendas. Activities will be focused on interdisciplinary insight and specific challenges including, for example, seminars, skills development and support to write large, interdisciplinary grant applications and related outputs.

We will carry out regular theme reviews to create space for new research priorities to emerge from our collaborative activities.

- *Strength and creativity in our external engagement partnerships*

We will identify key strategic external engagement partners within each IRT and support the development of deeper collaborations with for mutual benefit.

We will continue to promote a working culture in which relationships with external partners are nurtured, developed and shared to allow broad constituencies of research students and staff to engage with wider communities and external partners to understand challenges and priorities, and to co-create new, ambitious research agendas, impact and outputs.

We will innovate in our approaches to external engagement, creating new pathways for social scientists to collaborate with external stakeholders and policy makers.

Priority 2: Creativity

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

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

- *Strength and creativity in our disciplines*

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

- *Strength and creativity in our interdisciplinary partnerships*

We will focus our research development activity on our Interdisciplinary Research Themes as key areas of opportunity for the growth of our research income, developing bespoke plans, including a focus on new research funders for each theme, in partnership between theme leaders and research development staff.

We will develop and deliver dedicated governance and operational structures to conduct sustainability and investment planning for major externally funded Centres, planning for continued success.

- *Strength and creativity in our external engagement partnerships*

We will grow and deepen our external engagement partnership with key sectors and organisations in areas of maximum mutual opportunity, developing in particular, deeper private sector research and impact relationships.

We will invest in refreshed communications and events support to showcase what we do and provide a platform to strengthen our existing and future relationships with external stakeholders.

We will focus on making it easier for researchers to develop stronger relationships with existing and new stakeholders.

Priority 3: Careers

Central to our research strategy is supporting each other to succeed. We will continue to facilitate and strengthen links within Schools, Colleges, around the University and with wider stakeholders to support the research careers of our staff and students. We know researchers do their best work when they feel supported and valued.

- *Strength and creativity in our disciplines*

We will continue to support and develop individual researchers to develop creative and ambitious plans for their research agendas.

We will work to ensure researchers at all stages feel supported and valued, allowing them to build and engage in the most ambitious and internationally recognised research careers. We will recommit to our work around the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

We will reward all areas of research excellence – outputs, income, impact, postgraduate supervision, leadership and engagement – through our promotions process.

- *Strength and creativity in our interdisciplinary partnerships*

We will continue to encourage researchers in the College to engage with the interdisciplinary research themes as appropriate, providing training and support where needed to expand on disciplinary excellence.

- *Strength and creativity in our external engagement*

We will continue to encourage and support researchers in building external relationships that will facilitate their research and scholarship ambitions and showcase the excellent social science research happening around the College.

Our Interdisciplinary Research Themes

Challenges in Changing Cities

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

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

Digital Society & Economy

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

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

Justice, Insecurity & Fair Decision Making

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

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

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

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

Addressing Inequalities

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

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

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

Sustainability

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

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

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