



University
of Glasgow

RESEARCH STRATEGY

2020–2025

**WORLD
CHANGING
GLASGOW**



FOREWORD

We write this strategy in one of the most disruptive times that our University has experienced, when so many in our research community are adapting to new ways of working and facing uncertainties in the wake of COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the research sector is changing around us. More than ever, funders and government will be requiring us to work as teams – across specialties, job families, sectors and countries – to address the world’s biggest challenges.

This research strategy for 2020–25 acknowledges that things have changed, but in so doing it recognises that our core principles for research should stay the same: that we succeed as a university when individuals succeed in their careers, that we recognise the variety of contributions that are made to research, and that we value the quality of what we do over its quantity. These values have helped us through the pandemic, and it is by reinforcing these principles that our research will continue to make a difference to knowledge and to people’s lives.

The research strategy for 2020–2025 has a simple message: by working in teams, building on each other’s ideas and making Glasgow the best place to develop a career, our research transforms lives and changes the world.

Some of us might look at the direction of travel and not see ourselves reflected in it. If so, we should look again. The future is an inclusive one, and it will need all our skills: those of our research staff and students, of our technicians, and of our professional services staff.

The future requires looking beyond our boundaries and combining our ideas with those of others. Progress will come from new scientific technologies, but also from understanding people and societies, and how our knowledge of the past informs our expectations of the future.

We celebrate the fact that research is redefining itself in positive ways: progress is not made merely by being productive, but by making a genuine difference, whether that is creating new knowledge, improving society or, just as important, developing people.

Post-COVID, the future will look a bit different from the one we had in mind; the difference we can make is more needed and more important than ever. We will try new things and, working together, we will change the world.

Professor Chris Pearce
Vice-Principal for Research

Dr Tanita Casci
Head of Research Policy

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THE CHANGING EXTERNAL LANDSCAPE

Our ideas make a difference by advancing knowledge and transforming society for the better.

By combining our ideas with those of others, we can tackle important problems and, crucially, identify new questions. These defining aspects of the academic endeavour – those that make universities such a rewarding place to work and study – remain fundamental to our future. However, beyond these aspects, the context in which we do our research is shifting, placing different expectations

on our staff and students, and on universities themselves.

The UK Government's Research & Development Roadmap and an historic budget commitment in early 2020 set out a desire for the UK to become a global superpower in research and for universities to be an engine for rebalancing the UK's regional economic inequalities. This needs new ways of thinking and working – ways that will require us, even more than before, to combine our different skills to tackle pressing problems. There will be a renewed interest in the bold and ambitious ideas that shift

the way in which we live.

The Scottish Government is challenging universities to be “engines of knowledge and growth”. Major funders too are aligning their future funding to challenge-led programmes that are aimed at addressing industrial and societal needs.

COVID-19, as well as Brexit, bring uncertainty over research funding and will probably lead to new funding modalities. Moreover, the importance of collaborations, national and international, will inevitably grow, requiring new ways of both sustaining and building partnerships. We will, rightly, be challenged about our commitment to the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and, more locally, about the added value that our institutions bring to the economy and our community.

Finally, we are answerable not only for the research that we do and the difference that it makes, but also for the way in which we do that research: how we support colleagues in their career ambitions, how we acknowledge the many skills that contribute to a successful environment, and how we instil trust both in the outcomes of our research and in our working culture.

In this evolving landscape, we will succeed if we adapt.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic revealed both the transformative power of research and the ability of universities to marshal resources at unprecedented pace in response to the virus. At the University of Glasgow, we leveraged the breadth and critical mass of expertise in infectious disease biology and dynamics, and our collaborative networks across academia, the health service, and industry, to support testing, develop a greater understanding of the virus and its effects and patterns of disease transmission, and understand the health complications and the wider effects of the pandemic on society. Our local partnerships with, for example, the NHS, were critical to the University's contribution to the pandemic.

The recovery from COVID-19 will rely on us using our networks and ingenuity to drive innovation, international competitiveness, address global problems such as infectious diseases and lead the sector in tackling pre-COVID-19 problems, such as accelerating technological innovation and strengthening the economy.

THE GLASGOW CONTEXT

The University of Glasgow is well placed to prosper in this changing environment.

Now, as in the University's history, our researchers show curiosity, openness, a strong social commitment and a willingness to challenge the status quo. Our Research Beacons illustrate the breadth and depth of our expertise, our ability to work together to address global goals and our commitment to deliver economic and societal change, both locally and internationally.

In adapting to the changing sector, we will adhere to the principles developed in the 2015–2020 strategic cycle.

- **We value the quality of our research over its quantity.** Regardless of its form, we celebrate all research that makes a difference and stands the test of time. This was reinforced by the external research reviews of each academic unit, which strengthened the disciplinary-level understanding of the significance and rigour of our work. This emphasis on quality over quantity is central to our recruitment, promotion and annual appraisals.
- **The University succeeds when our individual researchers succeed.** Since 2015, we have greatly strengthened research support and embedded this expertise alongside researchers themselves. We have supported around 130 early and independent research careers through our £18m Lord Kelvin/Adam Smith fellowship scheme. Our support for open access has resulted in one of the most successful projects in the world, ensuring that our work is visible to our peers and future collaborators.
- **How research is done is as important as what research is done.** Researchers succeed in an environment that is fair and supportive. We have started to update our research culture, for example by embedding collegiality in our promotions criteria, and have published our culture action plan for 2020–2025.

Research principles @UofG

The 2020–2025 research strategy will adhere to our existing principles for research.

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

We will continue to invest in centrally based expertise and resources that further these principles, and we will focus our reward and recognition processes accordingly.

Initiatives in colleges, schools and research institutes will align to these priorities, in line with the norms for individual disciplines.



Developing a field-based laboratory in Uganda to identify sources of human infections. Photo: Mary Ryan.

PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH 2020–2025



Our vision for the University of Glasgow for the next strategic cycle:
By working in teams, building on each other's ideas, and making Glasgow the best place to develop a career, our research transforms lives and changes the world.

To fulfil this vision, we will focus on three priorities.

- **Collaboration** – the importance of collaboration for addressing important challenges.
- **Creativity** – the fundamental role of creativity in academia.
- **Careers** – the need to recruit and support students and staff, at any stage, to develop skills and fulfil their career ambitions.

These priorities have been shaped by developments in the sector, our consultations with schools and research institutes in 2019, and the feedback obtained from the 2019 survey on research culture.

Researchers and students examine pieces from our collections in Kelvin Hall. Photo: Andrew Lee.

PRIORITIES

COLLABORATION WORKING TOGETHER TO TACKLE BIGGER CHALLENGES

We will address urgent problems in our society and the biggest gaps in our knowledge by working together. The timeline from underpinning academic research to societal impact can take years or even decades.

We will make collaboration easy – across disciplines, institutions, industries, sectors, entrepreneurs and government. We will remove barriers, such as procedural or financial ones, and invest in the mechanisms, expertise and leadership needed both to initiate and sustain collaborations.

Successful partnerships depend on recognising the different, specialist contributions that are made to the research and innovation endeavours, and so we will reflect the importance of partnership in our investments.

We will create both physical and virtual spaces in which to collaborate and enable connectivity to enhance our reach, influence and profile.

CREATIVITY REAFFIRMING THE CENTRALITY OF IDEAS

Great research starts with great ideas, but we also know that this creativity takes time and requires the right conditions. The quality of our research outputs and impact will continue to drive the reputation and careers of our researchers, and that rests crucially on the ideas that we develop.

We will support creativity by developing the opportunities in which new ideas can emerge. Our development programmes will focus on where ideas come from and how we foster them in others, and we'll use new forms of engagement to open up different ways of thinking. We will therefore create the conditions in which ideas can be widely shared and improved, and so more likely to make a difference to knowledge and make a positive difference to society.

To give researchers the opportunity to think imaginatively about the future, we will ensure that they experience trust, flexibility and autonomy.

CAREERS HELPING EACH OTHER TO SUCCEED

Glasgow succeeds when its people succeed. We will make Glasgow the best place in which to pursue a career, whether at the University or in the city, by creating an environment in which colleagues are supported to fulfil their ambition, in which expectations are clear at every career stage, and in which measures of quality, progression and opportunity are easy to understand.

We will create an environment that recruits, supports and rewards a broad range of skills, talents, and contributions, and in which we support each other to succeed. We recognise that many who embark on a research career will ultimately take up other careers outside universities: these post-academic careers have an important impact, both economic and societal, that universities enable.

To increase visibility, we will reinforce the relationship between transparency and rigour in developing trust and thus reputation.



Research culture @UofG

At Glasgow, our positive research culture promotes a healthy research environment – in the way we evaluate, support and reward quality, how we recognise contributions to a research activity, how we support careers, and how we are building an environment in which individuals collaborate in an atmosphere of openness and trust.

Culture is the foundation of what we do. Therefore, our ambitions for culture are not described separately in this strategy but are embedded across the pillars of the strategy and its underlying actions. Our future work will build on the aligned series of policies and actions to enhance research culture that we began in 2015.

A Lab for Academic Culture

In 2020, we established a Lab for Academic Culture in order to consolidate our actions to support culture, to identify the shared priorities of research and teaching activities, and to coordinate these actions with the wider sector. Future actions to further our research culture, including support for careers, will be delivered by this lab.

Our research culture programme has received external recognition, including from the Royal Society, the UK Research Integrity Office and the Academy of Medical Sciences.

Action plan

Our 2020–2025 action plan for research culture details future actions to support career development, assess research quality and improve collaboration and visibility.

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Our strategy is a tight partnership between colleges, schools and research institutes. As has been the case in the 2015–2020 cycle, the strategy will be implemented via a central framework of values, support, expertise and projects, which will be delivered locally as relevant to the individual disciplinary context.

We will align our actions and investments to meet the following aims:

1
REVIEW OUR RESEARCH STRENGTHS ON AN ONGOING BASIS IN ORDER TO INVEST IN CREATING CRITICAL MASS OF EXPERTISE, MATCH OUR STRENGTHS TO EXTERNAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND IDENTIFY THE RESEARCH BEACONS OF TOMORROW.

2
GROW OUR RESEARCH TALENT THROUGH OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT BY RESTARTING THE LORD KELVIN / ADAM SMITH SCHEME AND BY ESTABLISHING A TALENT LAB TO DEVELOP SKILLS AT EACH CAREER STAGE.

3
ADVANCE OUR RESEARCH CULTURE BY IMPLEMENTING THE 2020–2025 CULTURE ACTION PLAN VIA THE LAB FOR ACADEMIC CULTURE, TO SUPPORT CREATIVITY, CAREER DEVELOPMENT, FAIR EVALUATION OF RESEARCH QUALITY, ACADEMIC RIGOUR AND REWARD VARIED CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH.

4
MAKE COLLABORATION EASY WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY BY REMOVING UNNECESSARY BARRIERS, EXPANDING RESEARCH LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND INVESTING IN SUPPORT BOTH FOR LARGE-SCALE COLLABORATIVE PROPOSALS AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENTS.

5
DELIVER A RESEARCH HUB THAT SERVES THE WHOLE UNIVERSITY BY SUPPORTING COLLABORATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR NEXT GENERATION OF RESEARCHERS.

6
EMBED RESEARCH IMPACT AS A CORE COMPONENT OF RESEARCH, AND ALIGN INCENTIVES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS ACCORDINGLY.

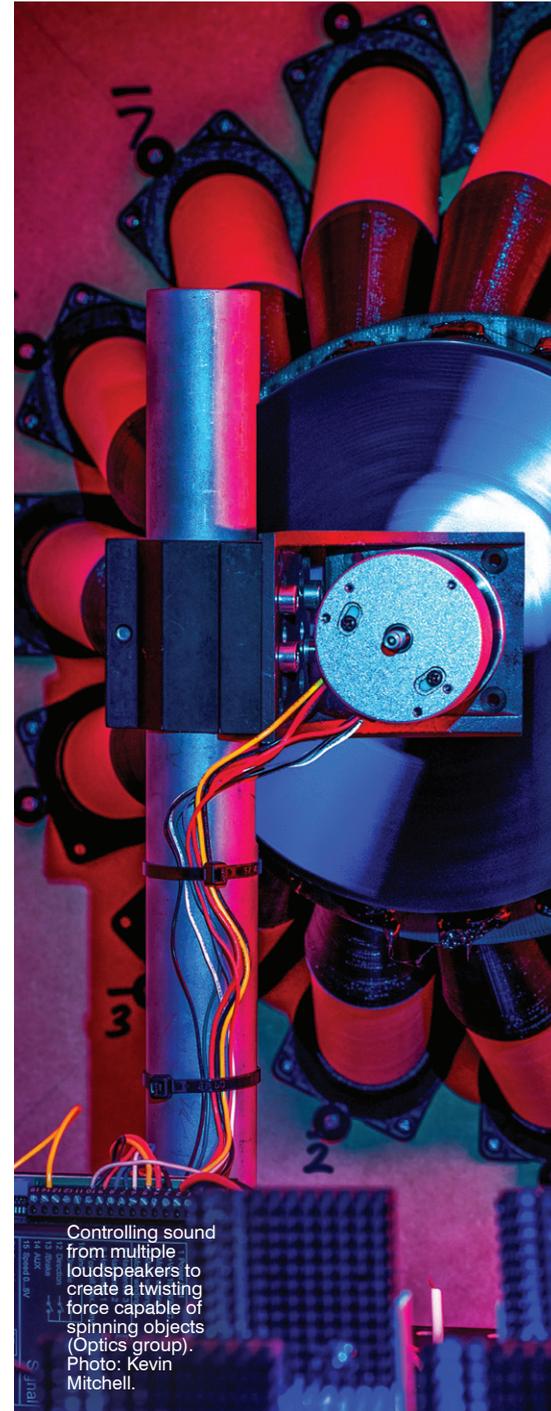
7
ENGAGE MORE STAFF IN INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING TO ENSURE BETTER PLANNING, BUILD LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND GENERALLY DRIVE MORE HORIZONTAL INTERACTIONS ACROSS DISCIPLINES, STRUCTURES AND JOB FAMILIES.

8
SUPPORT THE CONSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY ACROSS OUR ORGANISATIONAL UNITS: COLLEGES, SCHOOLS AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES.

Examples of delivery projects

Examples of how we will channel our initiatives and investments to meet our three key priorities include:

- **Identify and invest in the Research Beacons of tomorrow**
We will strengthen our support for ambitious, large-scale collaborative funding proposals, develop critical mass around areas that have attracted external investment, and stimulate partnerships between the medical, life, and physical sciences and the arts, humanities, and social sciences to deliver ideas that change the world.
- **Recruit global talent and nurture career paths**
We will use our Lord Kelvin/Adam Smith scheme to recruit the best global talent, from postgraduate researchers to professors, and introduce a Talent Academy to develop future leaders. Implementation of the Careers Concordat will ensure that early-stage researchers are supported towards academic and post-academic careers.
- **Raise our profile**
We will make it easy for researchers to share their work with the broadest audience by supporting open research practices, enhancing their digital footprint, and by investing in opportunities for physical and virtual networking.
- **Use the Research Hub to facilitate new ways of working**
The £113m Research Hub will provide an inclusive space in which to both initiate and grow research collaborations, engage as a community about how we wish research to be done, act as an incubator for new ideas, and support the participation and development of the next generation of researchers. It will also house a new Lab for Academic Culture, through which we will implement actions to nurture curiosity and discovery, advance our own working environment, and drive sector policy.



We want to make Glasgow the best place in which to pursue a career.

We will achieve this by creating a culture in which colleagues are supported to realise their potential to change the world.



Opening in 2022, the Research Hub will provide a unique opportunity for researchers across the University to interact and develop new ideas. Photo: HOK.

