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126 higher education providers commit to developing their knowledge exchange activity to help drive economic, social, and cultural recovery and growth.

In October 2020, Universities UK and GuildHE publicly invited higher education providers (HEPs) in the UK to sign up to the principles of the KE concordat and participate in the development year for England. To date, 126 HEPs have formally signed up to the KE concordat; 113 of which have chosen to participate in the development year. The development year for England has UK-wide participation and support, although the devolved nations will be developing their own processes.

The KE concordat will facilitate the development, enhancement and transparency of the wide range of knowledge exchange activities performed by HEPs and support the partnerships integral to their success. It is a significant and positive commitment from such a large number of institutions that demonstrates their dedication to working with partners and employers to bring real benefits to communities, businesses and individuals. The KE concordat process is designed to encourage a self-critical approach to future knowledge exchange plans supported by a range of expert feedback and advice and the sharing of innovative and good practice.

Signatories to the eight principles of the KE concordat are expected to:

- publicly commit to the KE concordat
- adopt the eight principles outlined in the KE concordat as a framework for effective KE
- actively engage with the KE concordat through forums and webinars and share good practice
- following the development year, participate in an evaluation process during which a HEP will carry out a self-evaluation and produce an action plan.

In addition to the above, signatories to the development year are expected to:

- make it clear to staff, students and partners what they will do and how they expect to work with their partners
- conduct a self-evaluation of their strategy for KE and practices, using the KE concordat principles as a framework
- submit an action plan that identifies the areas where improvement is needed, the top five priority actions for the HEP across the eight principles, and innovative practice that can be shared as good practice
- consider and respond to feedback and advice from the evaluation panel.

UUK and GuildHE have been working in partnership with Research England, NCUB and PraxisAuril to develop the process of institutional self-evaluation and submission of action plans.



This process has been guided by a programme of webinars, in collaboration with NCCPE and others, to guide HEPs in their approach to the development year for England. Participating HEPs continue to be supported by UUK and GuildHE, and others, on an individual level.

Working in partnership

Alistair Jarvis, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said: “University knowledge exchange, innovation and research will play an important role in supporting economic and social recovery. The new Knowledge Exchange Concordat will support universities to further increase the impact of their knowledge exchange activities and receive feedback to strengthen and develop their activity to drive economic growth. I welcome the fact that so many institutions have become signatories to the Concordat.”

Gordon McKenzie, Chief Executive of GuildHE, said: "I'm greatly encouraged to see that a wide range of universities and higher education providers, including many smaller and specialist providers, have signed up to the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. This gives a strong message about the crucial role of knowledge exchange between the sector and our partners, something that will be increasingly important as we collectively drive the economic, social and cultural recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic."

David Sweeney, Chief Executive of Research England, said: “The diverse range of UK institutions that have signed up to the principles and development year show the real promise of the KE Concordat to shape widespread and innovative good practice. This also reflects the approach taken to develop the Concordat and reasserts the value of sector led collaboration and the importance of working across all four UK funding bodies.”

Joe Marshall, Chief Executive of the National Centre for Universities and Business, said: “It is encouraging to see so many institutions, up and down the country, signing up to the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. We warmly welcome their commitment to further enhancing knowledge exchange practices. Now more than ever, this commitment is to be celebrated – this type of activity will undoubtedly play a key role in rebuilding our economy and societies as we recover from Covid-19.”

Dr Iain Thomas, Chair of PraxisAuril, Head of Life Sciences Cambridge Enterprise, said: “We are delighted to see so many universities signing-up to the KE Concordat in its formative year. Sharing ambitious practice and raising standards is at the heart of PraxisAuril’s mission to develop, promote and connect KE professionals and help them and their many partners realise the potential of our research and innovation system.”

Dr David Blaney, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, said: “All Welsh higher education institutions have committed to the principles of the Knowledge



Exchange Concordat through their published Research Wales Innovation Fund Strategies. The Concordat sets out good practice, and guiding principles for effective, transparent, and ethical engagement in knowledge exchange activities, and we very much welcome this. It will also encourage best practice innovation and engagement environments, supporting HEFCW's Vision for Research and Innovation.”

Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary Skills and Education Group, Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, said: “The Department for the Economy Northern Ireland (DfE NI) welcomes participation from the NI Higher Education sector in the development year of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. The development year provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on Knowledge Exchange practice in Northern Ireland and to share in the experience and insights of our partners across the UK. In considering the future approach to HEIF in Northern Ireland, the Department will consider the results of the development year and, going forward, how the KEC will interact with our approach to supporting effective and high-quality Knowledge Exchange aligned with the needs and interests of the region.”

Dr Stuart Fancey, Research and Innovation, Scottish Funding Council, said: “The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) welcomes the KE Concordat as a positive contribution to furthering good practice in effective knowledge exchange. We are pleased to see that many of our universities have chosen to sign-up formally to the Concordat and we know others are actively considering how to introduce it into their KE strategies. We are currently conducting a ‘review of coherent provision and sustainability’ and are considering the role of the Concordat in supporting our strategy for KE and innovation within that context. We will look forward, therefore, to learning from this first year of operation.”