

AECC

HEIF accountability statement

**Narrative return template for HEIF funding period
2023-24 to 2024-25**

Return date: January 2024

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Question 1 – Strategic objectives

Summarise the institutional strategic objectives that relate to knowledge exchange and guide your plans for HEIF.

We expect institutions' plans for HEIF to be guided by strategic objectives for knowledge exchange. However, there is no requirement for institutions to submit or maintain a standalone knowledge exchange strategy document.

We appreciate that KE objectives may be found in a specific KE strategy document or they may be contained as part of other strategic documents such as teaching, research or overarching institutional strategies.

Whatever form your knowledge exchange objectives are in, please provide a precis of the main objectives here so that we can see the strategic context that guides your plans for HEIF and forms the basis for your monitoring and delivery of intended benefits.

We welcome the inclusion of hyperlinks to published strategies and plans that may be referenced in the summary.

In answer to this question, you are free to use text or tabular format but please ensure that the question response is contained in no more than two pages of A4.

AECC University College (AECC UC) is a young small and specialist health sciences university. Alongside our educational provision, we deliver extensive clinical services supporting our local community, the NHS, the local authority, and private providers. Our vision is to be a leading specialist health sciences university providing excellent education, clinical care, and applied research. We aim to be recognised as an important anchor institution in our region and recognised nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence. Knowledge exchange (KE) is therefore integral to our Strategic Plan, [Fit for the Future \(2021-26\)](#), and features in four of our six strategic objectives:

- Objective #2: Support the expansion and development of the health workforce by providing demand-led high-quality education and training programmes – for example, by increasing the breadth and number of CPD programmes and short courses.
- Objective #3: Provide affordable patient-centred care through multidisciplinary clinical, rehabilitation and diagnostic services – for example, by working with partners across the [Dorset ICS](#) to support transformation of services and by

further developing our [Integrated Rehabilitation Centre](#) with a community rehabilitation facility.

- Objective #4: Position ourselves as a first-choice partner within specialisms for research and innovation in the health science community – for example, by increasing the number of research partnerships we have with the health and care sector and leveraging research and KE income.
- Objective #5: Establish ourselves as an anchor University for knowledge exchange and economic development within our local community – for example, by developing an engagement strategy which encompasses outreach, civic and business engagement and aligning our activities with local and regional priorities.

To achieve these objectives and deliver on our commitment to KE, we are investing significantly in building our research and KE culture, capacity and capability, and the supporting infrastructure. In 2023, for example, we invested in two full-time dedicated posts to lead and manage this work – Head of Research and Research & KE Manager – and we launched our new [Centre for Workforce & Systems Innovation](#) (CWSI), led by our Head of Academic Enterprise & Engagement. Work is underway to develop a targeted research and KE strategy and institutional development plan. In 2024, we will undertake our first self-assessment of AECC UC’s policies, processes, and practices against the KE Concordat to support our work to continuously improve our KE culture and performance.

We chose to participate in the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) for the first time in 2023. Within the STEM Specialists cluster, the KEF dashboard highlighted several areas of strength in our KE performance: research partnerships (measured through co-authorship with non-academic partners); local growth and regeneration; CPD provision; IP and commercialisation (measured as licensing income); and working with the public and third sector (measured as consultancy income). The dashboard also indicated several areas in which our performance was lower than the average for the cluster: research partnerships (measured as collaborative income); graduate start-ups; IP and commercialisation (measured in terms of spin outs); public and community engagement; working with business; and working with the public and third sector (measured as contract research income). The strengths identified in the dashboard highlight the importance of partnership working to AECC UC and the strength of our knowledge-based KE activity, whilst the identified weaknesses suggest that we need to invest in and grow our research-led KE. This aligns with the research and KE objectives in our strategic plan.

We have used the benchmarking information to inform our plan for investing our HEIF allocation, which we received for the first time in 2023/24. Our HEIF investment plan has been developed to enable the investment of funding in initiatives to drive KE performance

within a sustainable model, balanced against the uncertainty of receiving future HEIF funding. Key principles underpinning KE investment options are that there should be a return on investment in terms of one of more of the following:

- 1) Increased KE income generation, particularly in activities underpinned by our growing research base.
- 2) Acceleration and/or expansion of the benefits of research to society and the economy.
- 3) Sustainable growth in AECC UC's KE capacity/capability to undertake more and/or higher quality KE (that will subsequently result in points 1 and 2).

Question 2 – Use of HEIF

How do you intend to use your 2023-24 to 2024-25 HEIF allocations?

In this accountability statement return we would like to know about your plans for HEIF for the remainder of the funding period 2023-24 to 2024-25. Please include indication of the planned timescale of the activity e.g. 2023-24 only; ongoing or 2023-24 onwards.

Please use the response layout grid provided overleaf, to provide the following information:

- a) Describe the key activities supported by your HEIF allocation.
- b) Include specific reference to how you expect HEIF to support these activities – i.e. specific expenditures: funded posts, academic staff buy out, internal competitive projects; and the proportion of the activity that is supported by HEIF (e.g. x1 business development post 50% HEIF funded).
- c) How these activities relate to the government priorities and RE-OfS strategic objectives outlined in paragraphs 9 and 10 of RE-P-2020-03. Where student benefits are achieved, please include an indication of the number of students benefiting.
- d) Which strategic KE objective, as outlined in question 1, does each activity relate to.
- e) Indication of the timescale for each activity (e.g. 2023-24 only, ongoing or to be confirmed)

In answer to this question, please use the response grid provided and ensure that the entire question response is contained in no more than six pages of A4 or A3.

Question 2: Use of HEIF

(Max 6 pages of A4 or A3)

| <p>Planned areas of HEIF supported KE activity</p> <p>Please provide an overview of planned KE activities or projects that will be supported by your 2023-24 and onwards HEIF allocations.</p> | <p>HEIF support</p> <p>How HEIF will be used to support the project?</p> | <p>HEIF priorities</p> <p>How does this relate to govt priorities and RE-OfS strategic objectives? (Including note of scale where student benefits are achieved.)</p> | <p>Strategic objectives</p> <p>Which institutional strategic KE objective does this relate to?</p> | <p>Indication of timescales</p> |
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| <p>Contribution to the Centre for Workforce Systems & Innovation.</p> <p>The Centre aims to drive positive change in healthcare systems through research, innovation and KE.</p> | <p>Head of Academic Enterprise & Engagement (1fte, 25% HEIF funded).</p> <p>Senior Lecturer – Workforce Development (1fte, 25% HEIF funded).</p> | <p>Supports ‘place’, ‘people’, ‘ideas’ and ‘business environment’ foundations of IS by aligning strategies to support external partners (including the NHS) to address workforce challenges, such as the recruitment and retention of their workforce and enabling them to achieve growth and transformation.</p> | <p>Objectives 2 and 5.</p> | <p>2023/24 onwards.</p> |
| <p>Contribution to Clinical & Rehabilitation Services.</p> <p>The Clinic harnesses AECC UC’s expertise in clinical care and rehabilitation to help improve people’s health, wellbeing, and quality of life. This includes contracts with the NHS, charities and private partners to deliver expert services, such as clinical imaging and primary care.</p> | <p>Director of Clinical & Rehabilitation Services (1fte, 20% HEIF funded).</p> | <p>Supports ‘place’ and ‘business environment’ foundations of IS and the Levelling Up agenda by working with external partners (including the NHS) to reduce waiting times, address health inequalities, and improve patient experiences and outcomes.</p> | <p>Objectives 3 and 5.</p> | <p>2023/24 onwards.</p> |
| <p>Invest in dedicated KE staff.</p> <p>The Strategic Partnerships Adviser is a new post and the postholder will have a remit to optimise relationships with external partners that lead to options for further KE activities such as contract research, consultancy, facilities and equipment hire, KTPs, and CPD.</p> | <p>Strategic Partnerships Adviser (SPA) (0.4fte, 100% HEIF funded).</p> <p>Research & KE Manager (1fte, 60% HEIF funded).</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’, ‘people’, ‘ideas’ and ‘business environment’ foundations of IS by encouraging innovation through new partnerships and projects and aligning institutional, regional and national strategies.</p> | <p>Objectives 2 and 5.</p> | <p>SPA – 2023/24 and 2024/25 only.</p> |

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| <p>The Research & KE Manager is a new post and the postholder started in May 2023. The postholder is responsible for managing our KE portfolio, including measuring and evaluating impact, assisting in preparations for the next KEF, and supporting colleagues to increase KE income.</p> | | | | <p>RKE Manager – from 2024/25.</p> |
| <p>External KE consultancy. We will contract an external consultant to undertake some evaluation and strategy work to help to position AECC UC to create a stronger KE culture that could lead to increased KE work and income.</p> | <p>100% HEIF funded.</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’, ‘people’ and ‘ideas’ foundations of IS by encouraging innovation through new partnerships and projects and benefiting our communities.</p> | <p>Objectives 4 and 5.</p> | <p>2023/24 only.</p> |
| <p>Introduce a programme of external-facing KE activities. The programme of activities will include specialist masterclasses and short courses, events for the professions we represent, public and community engagement events (such as our Neighbourhood Festival), networking sessions, media engagement, and a programme of profile-raising activities for AECC UC’s specialist facilities and equipment.</p> | <p>100% HEIF funded.</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’, ‘people’ and ‘ideas’ foundations of IS by encouraging innovation through new partnerships and projects and benefiting our communities. Students will have the opportunity to be involved in these KE activities.</p> | <p>Objectives 2 and 5.</p> | <p>2023/24 onwards.</p> |
| <p>Innovation vouchers. We will pilot of innovation vouchers scheme to allow SMEs to access academic skills and expertise to improve the innovation capability of their business and strengthen links with AECC UC. This will support our work to establish new partnerships with SMEs and will provide a rapid flow of knowledge from AECC UC into practice,</p> | <p>100% HEIF funded.</p> | <p>Supports ‘ideas’ and ‘business environment’ foundations of IS by enabling SMEs to access our expertise and knowledge and access our specialist facilities and equipment, thus enabling SME innovation, productivity and business growth. Depending on where the</p> | <p>Objectives 4 and 5.</p> | <p>2023/24 onwards.</p> |

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| <p>thus creating opportunities for income generation through further partnership working.</p> | | <p>SMEs are based, this has the potential to also support the Levelling Up agenda.</p> | | |
| <p>Invest in the strategic development and delivery of our public and community engagement work. As part of AECC UC signing up to the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement’s (NCCPE) <i>Manifesto for Public Engagement</i>, the NCCPE have offered to provide us with expert advice on our strategic direction and implementation with our research and KE plans. We will supplement this by contracting the NCCPE to conduct the EDGE survey at AECC UC. This will provide a baseline on how AECC UC currently supports and enables public engagement and identify areas for improvement. As we move forward with implementing our public engagement programme, HEIF will be used to support the delivery of activities.</p> | <p>100% HEIF funded.</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’ and ‘ideas’ foundations of IS by ensuring our public and community engagement work benefits our communities and enabling meaningful two-way engagement to shape research and KE ideas and activities. Students will have the opportunity to be involved in these KE activities.</p> | <p>Objective 5.</p> | <p>EDGE survey: 2023/24 only. Support for public engagement: 2023/24 onwards.</p> |
| <p>Proof of concept and seedcorn funding. We will continue to invest in a portfolio of small KE projects to test new ideas and familiarise our staff with a new stream of KE activity (this work was initially funded through KESM).</p> | <p>100% HEIF funded.</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’, ‘people’ and ‘ideas’ foundations of IS by encouraging innovation through new partnerships and projects. Students will have the opportunity to be involved in these KE activities.</p> | <p>Objective 4.</p> | <p>2023/24 onwards.</p> |

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| <p>KE training and development for academic and KE staff.</p> <p>We will initiate a programme of opportunities for KE training and development for our staff, with the aim of enabling more effective engagement with external organisations and a better flow of knowledge from AECC UC into the wider world. We will also support staff with a KE remit to participate at the annual PraxisAuril KE Conference.</p> | <p>100% HEIF funded.</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’, ‘people’ and ‘ideas’ foundations of IS by encouraging innovation through new partnerships and projects.</p> | <p>Objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5.</p> | <p>2023/24 onwards.</p> |
| <p>Investment in developing the infrastructure to expand our CPD provision.</p> <p>CPD is a significant KE income stream for AECC UC, which we plan to grow and develop. To support this growth, we will invest in our systems, policies, processes, and resources to support and enable CPD provision.</p> | <p>100% HEIF funded.</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’, ‘people’ and ‘ideas’ foundations of IS by encouraging innovation through new partnerships and projects.</p> | <p>Objectives 2 and 4.</p> | <p>2023/24 onwards.</p> |
| <p>Contribution to a new specialist health sciences centre/institute.</p> <p>We are at the early stages of planning a new specialist health sciences centre/institute that will have a specific remit to undertake research-led KE and a target to secure external funding for research, consultancy, and CPD. The new unit will also have expectations to design and undertake high-quality patient and public involvement and engagement.</p> | <p>In development. Estimate HEIF will make a contribution of c.20%,</p> | <p>Supports the ‘place’, ‘people’ and ‘ideas’ foundations of IS by encouraging innovation through new partnerships and projects.</p> | <p>Objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5.</p> | <p>Summer 2024 onwards. Partially dependent on future HEIF funding.</p> |

Question 3 – Monitoring success

How do you manage your HEIF funding and monitor the success of your activities against the strategic objectives set out in question 1, and in line with delivering Government priorities?

Describe the policies, procedures and approach you have in place in the context of your strategic objectives to:

- i. manage your HEIF spending
- ii. measure progress
- iii. evaluate outcomes and
- iv. identify lessons learned.

In answer to this question, you are free to use text or tabular format but please ensure that the entire question response is contained in no more than four pages of A4.

As 2023/24 is the first year in which AECC UC has received a HEIF allocation, our processes for managing and monitoring HEIF funding are new and in development. To ensure these are robust and fit for purpose, we will review our processes and communication channels for HEIF on a regular basis and enhance these where needed. As part of our first self-assessment of the KE Concordat (KEC) in 2024, we will assess our HEIF monitoring arrangements against principles 7 (continuous improvement) and 8 (evaluating success) to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Our HEIF investment plan was developed by the Head of Research, Head of Academic Enterprise & Engagement, and Research & KE Manager. The draft plan was presented to the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor to discuss ideas and ensure alignment with AECC UC's strategic plan, business objectives, and financial forecast. The final plan was approved by our Executive Team.

Our central Research & Innovation Committee (RIC), chaired by the Head of Research, meets at least three times a year and has oversight of AECC UC's research and innovation activity, productivity and governance aligned to our strategic objectives and targets. This includes institutional oversight of progress with the implementation of the HEIF investment plan. The RIC also has oversight of and coordinates preparations for the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and has responsibility for ensuring AECC UC's alignment to the KEC principles. As such, the RIC considers our performance in the HE-Business & Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey and will receive the results of our first self-assessment against the KEC in 2024. The Committee therefore has oversight of all aspects of KE culture, capacity, capability, and performance, and understands how

HEIF, HE-BCI, KEF and KEC work together to support a healthy and sustainable KE ecosystem. The minutes from the RIC are shared with our Academic Board and the Head of Research provides a verbal update at each Academic Board meeting.

HEIF is set up as a discrete area in our financial system so we can monitor spend and financial progress. The implementation of our HEIF plan is the responsibility of the Head of Research, with the management of the HEIF spending delegated to the RKE Manager, who is supported by Finance. Monthly meetings take place between the RKE Manager and Business Accountant to review HEIF spend and resolve any concerns, such as operational inefficiencies. The RKE Manager has an important role in monitoring the success of KE activity, including the HEIF-funded activities and projects, and is supported by the Head of Research to ensure projects are delivered as agreed and in a timely manner.

All HEIF-funded activities have outcome measures agreed as part of the initial design. These are specific to each activity and are monitored during the activity as well as after the activity ends. Where HEIF funding is allocated through an open competitive process (for example, the proof of concept and seedcorn funding), a panel reviews applications using robust and transparent criteria. When applying for funding, applicants must propose success measures to evaluate the impact of their project (these must be quantifiable wherever possible). The success measures must align to AECC UC's KE objectives and HEIF priorities. The proposed success measures are reviewed by the panel and amendments made where necessary prior to an award being confirmed. A condition of award is that those in receipt of funding engage in our HEIF monitoring processes, including the collection of evidence in accordance with their success measures, and providing interim and final reports.

We monitor the outputs and impact of all our HEIF-funded activities via regular project evaluations and monitoring reports. The evidence of impact will be collated centrally and used for external reporting, including our next submission to the KEF. In addition, we will use the HE-BCI survey to review institutional performance, benchmarked against a selection of similar institutions. We undertook this exercise for the first time in 2023/24, with our initial findings informing our HEIF investment plan and directing our focus to investing in activities to enable research-led KE.

In 2024, we plan to use our Research & Innovation Committee, regular financial monitoring meetings, self-assessment against the KEC, HE-BCI return, and feedback from staff, students, and external collaborators to help us to identify lessons learned. This will enable us to make improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of future HEIF investment and the delivery of KE.