

# **EXPERTISE IN ACTION**

**The real world impact of knowledge  
exchange funding at smaller and  
specialist institutions**

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

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*GuildHE is an officially recognised representative body for UK Higher Education, championing distinction and diversity in the sector. Our 60 members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions, representing over 150,000 students. Member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture and food; education; business and law, theology, the built environment; health and sports.*

# Foreword

We are delighted to launch our latest report on knowledge exchange at smaller and specialist providers, *Expertise in Action*. Small and specialist universities have a deep and long-held history of engaging with partners in their sectors, industries, places, global communities and the general public through practice-based knowledge exchange activities to deliver meaningful social, civic and cultural impacts. With recent national developments, such as the Knowledge Exchange Framework and the Knowledge Exchange Concordat, this function of university activity has moved firmly into the higher education policy mainstream. It is now considered as a vital way, alongside excellent teaching and research, of demonstrating the institutional value a provider has to its place, community, specialist sector and to wider society.



**Anthony McClaran**  
**Chair of GuildHE**  
Vice Chancellor  
St Mary's University  
Twickenham

For over 10 years, most smaller and specialist providers have not received flexible or sustained funding for knowledge exchange activities, which has restricted their capacity to deliver benefits for their communities. In 2021 and 2022, Research England introduced single-year grants for these universities as part of a UKRI wide priority to build back activity after the Covid-19 pandemic. This report showcases the types of partnerships, opportunities and outcomes that this funding supported GuildHE members to achieve through 10 case studies. We hope these will drive better recognition of the socioeconomic value these providers have to the UK's research and innovation ambitions. It also includes an experimental analysis of current funding methods, by scaling smaller and specialist contributions to the knowledge exchange system by student numbers, as a proxy for the size of the institutions. This demonstrates how effective the majority of these universities are at delivering KE, considering their capacity, resource, size and scale.

This report is the second in a series, following *Building the Jigsaw*, that evidences the expertise, knowledge and experience of smaller and specialist providers in driving economic and cultural prosperity that is currently unrealised by the funding system. We hope that this evidence will help to address the relevant barriers and impel recognition of the need to find a fair and inclusive system for measuring, analysing and funding knowledge exchange and innovation in the UK.

I would like to thank all the institutions that contributed to this report, for the case studies and all phases of the research process, as well as James Ransom, commissioned independent researcher, and Dana Gamble at GuildHE, for their work to deliver this report.

# Executive Summary

Knowledge exchange is the process of engagement between universities and local, national and international partners including businesses, charities and the public to create positive economic, social or cultural impact. This report demonstrates the real-world influence of funded knowledge exchange projects led by smaller and specialist institutions.

It presents case studies from a set of GuildHE members that received time-limited, one-off knowledge exchange funding alongside analysis of the impact of the projects. This funding was introduced for institutions that do not receive the flexible formula funding for knowledge exchange, Higher Education Investment Funding (HEIF). Institutions do not receive HEIF if their allocation, based on their knowledge exchange activity, would be below a £250,000 threshold. The stated motivation for this threshold is to incentivise and ensure good performance and effectiveness of knowledge exchange activity.

Through ten case studies, each centring around a university in receipt of the funding, we have built the start of an evidence base of the typologies of knowledge exchange that institutions used the funding for, and the impact made. We have also conducted an experimental analysis of the knowledge exchange activity of all GuildHE members, on a per-student basis. This analysis illustrates the consequences of considering a metric that indicates the size of institutions in funding allocations.

Knowledge exchange income at smaller and specialist institutions can be lower than at other universities, not because they are less effective but simply because they are small. Due to the consequential lower concentration of activity, they are therefore less likely to meet the threshold for regular, flexible, formula-based funding. It is important that the sector, funders and government recognise the immense value and transformative effect that funding smaller and specialist institutions has, and its subsequent impact on delivering outcomes such as skills development, research impact, innovation, community engagement, business partnerships and enterprise in under-served communities and specialisms.

## Key findings

### **Smaller and specialist institutions are critical for economic growth**

Knowledge exchange activity at smaller and specialist institutions is essential to meet growth ambitions across the whole country. These institutions "punch above their weight" when engaging with businesses and communities relative to their size. They are often located in areas and sectors that are underserved by public investment.

### **Funding this activity leads to transformative impact**

The knowledge exchange funding enabled institutions to leverage their deep expertise to create social impact through a diverse range of initiatives. The funding facilitated the development of sustainable projects, external engagement infrastructure, capacity-building and time that led to increased income. This paved the way for further collaboration and additional funding opportunities.

### **Losing this funding has long term risks**

The lack of predictable funding, and the lack of predictable funding streams, risks losing the benefits of long-term collaborations, hindering the longevity of partnerships and constraining networks and projects that have already shown transformative impact.

### **There is a clear need for a sustainable funding model**

A secure and sustainable funding stream is recommended to expand projects, build staff capacity, develop long-term partnerships, formulate effective strategies, and promote public engagement, innovation, and place-making.

### **Size does not equate to effectiveness**

There is a clear need to reconsider the notion of "effectiveness" in awarding knowledge exchange funding. Adjusting knowledge exchange activity based on student numbers highlights that smaller institutions perform exceptionally well in engaging with businesses, communities and the public. There is a bias inherent in the HEIF threshold which rewards size, not effectiveness.

## **Recommendations**

**1** **Research England** should provide sustainable funding for knowledge exchange activity at smaller and specialist institutions. Even a relatively modest amount can unlock the transformative potential of this activity. To ensure value, a competitive fund or conditions for renewal of grant funding (as long as they reflect knowledge exchange in its widest forms) may be necessary.

**2** **UKRI** should consult with GuildHE members and others to ensure specialist disciplines and smaller research and innovation teams are supported and included in future programme design as part of its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) commitments as a funder.

**3** **Government** – in particular the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – should work with GuildHE and others in the sector to recognise the contribution of smaller and specialist institutions, including their knowledge exchange activity, to broader government priorities. These include levelling up and the formation of innovation zones.

**4** **GuildHE** should continue to support the development of knowledge exchange activity in smaller and specialist institutions by convening networking sessions, and sharing case studies and examples of successful (and less successful) work. Mentoring for knowledge exchange staff has proved valuable, and GuildHE should work with partners – including Universities UK and through the Knowledge Exchange Concordat – to consider how this could be scaled up by bringing together staff from larger and smaller institutions.

# Methodology

We surveyed 28 GuildHE member institutions based in England between March and May 2023. Half of these received non-HEIF one-off knowledge exchange grants from Research England in 2021-22 and/or 2022-23. A quarter are in receipt of Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF), and the remaining quarter receive no knowledge exchange funding from Research England. We also interviewed staff at nine GuildHE member institutions, and conducted site visits at three institutions. A workshop session at the Knowledge Exchange, Innovation and Place Network meeting for GuildHE members in April 2023 also informed the research.

Approximately 30 higher education providers received non-HEIF knowledge exchange grants from Research England in 2021-22 and/or 2022-23; approximately 26 are GuildHE members. Most providers funded a range of activities; the case studies in this report represent a non-exhaustive sample of these activities.

Also included in this report is an experimental analysis of the knowledge exchange activity by GuildHE members, including their total contribution and their contribution scaled by student numbers. The student numbers at each provider included in the case studies are full-time equivalent figures from 2021/22 provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).<sup>1</sup>

Membership is correct as of March 2023. The term 'GuildHE members' is used throughout for simplicity: this includes 61 GuildHE members, 6 GuildHE Research-only members, 3 UKADIA-only members, and 1 member of both UKADIA and GuildHE Research (71 total). However, of these, 52 institutions provide data to HESA and thus form the basis of this analysis (all 19 of those not included are GuildHE members). One GuildHE member is based in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland, and one GuildHE Research-only member is based in Wales; the remainder are based in England. Statistical analysis is UK-wide. Data is provided by HESA, covering 2018-19 to 2020-21.<sup>2</sup>

[1] <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-2> The exception is Rambert School which is newly registered and the figures were taken from the 2019/20 Financial Report <https://www.rambertschool.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Rambert-School-Financial-Report-2019-20.pdf>

[2] <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/business-community>



# Introduction

The definition of knowledge exchange, favoured by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), describes the activity as ‘universities and other higher education institutions exchanging knowledge with the wider world in a way that contributes to society and the economy’.<sup>3</sup> The social value of this activity, and its impact on the places that institutions are based in, is a key reason knowledge exchange is so transformative. It is a central pillar of university activity that demonstrates the civic value of higher education across economic, cultural and social dimensions. Funding unleashes capability to develop knowledge exchange professionals and therefore recognise the immense potential knowledge exchange has to stimulate economic growth and social change. Smaller and specialist institutions are often working in ‘left behind’ places with deep links to their local communities or uniquely contributing to the advancement of specialist sectors. It is institutions like these that are often excluded from knowledge exchange funding, based on the current metrics used to measure performance and effectiveness.

In towns, cities, regions, and rural and coastal areas across the UK, you will find the work of smaller and specialist providers. There is an innovative vertical crop farm addressing food insecurity, a mental health and wellbeing counselling service, a community healthcare clinic addressing an ageing population, a dye garden and a 40-foot haulage truck equipped with an internal travelator. Over the past three years (2018-2021), despite challenging funding circumstances, GuildHE member institutions have contributed £137,808,000 worth of knowledge exchange activity - this report will take you on a journey to showcase their valuable contributions.

## One-off grants for knowledge exchange

In 2021, Research England announced a single-year grant for institutions that are eligible for, but do not meet the threshold of, HEIF. This money was available for new or existing external partnerships that, one, fulfil the institution’s knowledge exchange aims, and, two, boost capacity to ‘build back better’ in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding was not available for other models of knowledge exchange (without external partners) or partnerships with other higher education institutions. This grant was repeated in 2022-23, with a few more institutions eligible, but was not extended beyond July 2023.

The two tranches of £6 million – around £200,000 per year to around 30 institutions – has provided a welcome recognition of the contribution these providers play in society and the economy. But the end of this funding, which is approximately 0.075 percent of the UKRI budget, will block promising new partnerships, activities and stifle positive economic, social and cultural impact.<sup>4</sup>

[3] <https://www.ukri.org/councils/research-england/our-funds-for-research-and-knowledge-exchange/>

[4] The UKRI budget was £7,904 million in 2022/23 <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/UKRI-090822-BudgetAllocationExplainer-2022To2023-2023To2024-2024To2025.pdf>

This funding unlocked a stream of transformational knowledge exchange projects in smaller and specialist institutions, with the potential for long-term, real-world impact. Although the focus here is on these grants, the relevance of the findings and recommendations in this report is much broader. The work of smaller and specialist institutions is critical to meet the growth ambitions of this country, under this government and any future one, in towns, cities and communities across the UK.

## Size versus effectiveness

Our findings make a strong case for a reconsideration of the notion of 'effectiveness' in the methodology for awarding knowledge exchange funding. There is an ongoing government priority for HEIF funding to be only accessible to providers that are deemed 'effective' knowledge exchange performers. Research England implements this priority by applying a threshold to HEIF allocations so that a provider needs to achieve an income of £250,000 from knowledge exchange activity allocation to receive funding.

However, if we consider student numbers to be a proxy for the size of a university, we can adjust knowledge exchange activity on a per-student basis to better understand the intensity of knowledge exchange across both large and small institutions. Student numbers indicate the wider levels of capacity, resource, funding streams and broader income that an institution has access to. This perspective also provides an insight into the value knowledge exchange activity will have on the students enrolled: a key concept when considering university value.

In other words, we can assess whether smaller institutions 'punch above their weight' when engaging in work with businesses and communities. This is important to understand as many GuildHE members are located in areas typically without, or impacted very differently by, larger higher education institutions or are leading providers in innovative and pioneering specialisms in the UK - such as arts, design, performance, agriculture, food, tech, business, education, law and health.

A ranking from highest to lowest allocation is symptomatic of the HEIF formula across eligible institutions. Adjusted to consider student numbers, GuildHE members see significant jumps in these rankings for their partnerships with business, industry and public engagement. For example, when adjusted to reflect their size London Academy of Music Dramatic Art moves from 12th place to 1st, the best in the country, for consultancy services for SMEs. This equates to a value of over £21,000 per student. For the same services, Harper Adams University jumps from 70th place to 32nd (2nd within the West Midlands). Arts University Bournemouth from 79th to 41st, and Hartpury University from 102nd to 46th. These vast changes in rankings transform the landscape of knowledge exchange in higher education; illustrating the real value smaller and specialist institutions have stimulating UK businesses and SMEs.

This report argues that current methodologies are biased towards size rather than effectiveness, and as a result contribute to slowing economic and social growth in 'left-behind' areas, innovation and entrepreneurialism, and participation in practice-based education and research. As Edward Venning has persuasively argued in a report for the



Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), smaller providers are an essential part of a dynamic and diverse higher education system, and we need to 'release our chokehold on their ambitions and ability to operate'.<sup>5</sup>

## The policy context

Although knowledge exchange activity has long been on the radar of higher education providers, the introduction of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) in 2019 and the Knowledge Exchange Concordat 'development year' in 2021 launched this activity into the higher education policy mainstream. Whilst these activities have presented providers with a substantial workload, they have also helped institutions to establish infrastructure for knowledge exchange, and helped raise the profile of this activity within their institutions.

Research England's review of knowledge exchange funding in 2022/23 confirmed plans to tie the KEF more closely to HEIF allocations.<sup>6</sup> This will require better data, metrics and evidence, and therefore a significant work programme to implement changes. Research England has committed to developing these metrics in order to broaden the types of knowledge exchange activity we capture as a sector. This will build on the ongoing review of the Higher Education Business and Community Interactions (HE-BCI) survey, the main dataset underpinning the KEF and HEIF.<sup>7</sup> The review also committed Research England to consider the appropriateness of the £250,000 allocation threshold to receive HEIF and whether this is aligned to broader government priorities. The criteria for eligibility for HEIF and all knowledge exchange funding was also reviewed in 2023. Eligibility for HEIF has a new requirement where institutions must meet 1% of the mean average of income for at least one of the elements of the HEIF formula. As it stands, this new requirement does not exclude any institutions but it has introduced another barrier to funding that could affect particular institutions in the future if sufficient funding is not realised.

More broadly, Research England's 2022-25 Strategic Delivery Plan has a focus on supporting the government's growth agenda, aligning activity with priorities in the Innovation Strategy and Levelling Up White Paper.<sup>8</sup> Given their presence in rural areas and coastal communities as well as major cities and leading specialist, technical and practice-based education, smaller and specialist institutions play a vital role in these efforts. These institutions will be vital to ensure the success of other related initiatives. For example, the Spring 2023 Budget announced 12 Investment Zones across the UK, and the creative industries have been flagged as one of five priority sectors on which to build world-leading clusters.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Research England's Strategic Delivery Plan reiterated support for the development of a more diverse and inclusive research and knowledge exchange system. The UKRI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy sets the direction for change alongside

[5] <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2023/04/27/size-is-everything-what-small-specialist-and-practice-based-providers-tell-us-about-the-higher-education-sector/>

[6] <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/RE-100523-REKERReviewDecisions.pdf>

[7] <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/records/reviews/he-bci-major-review>

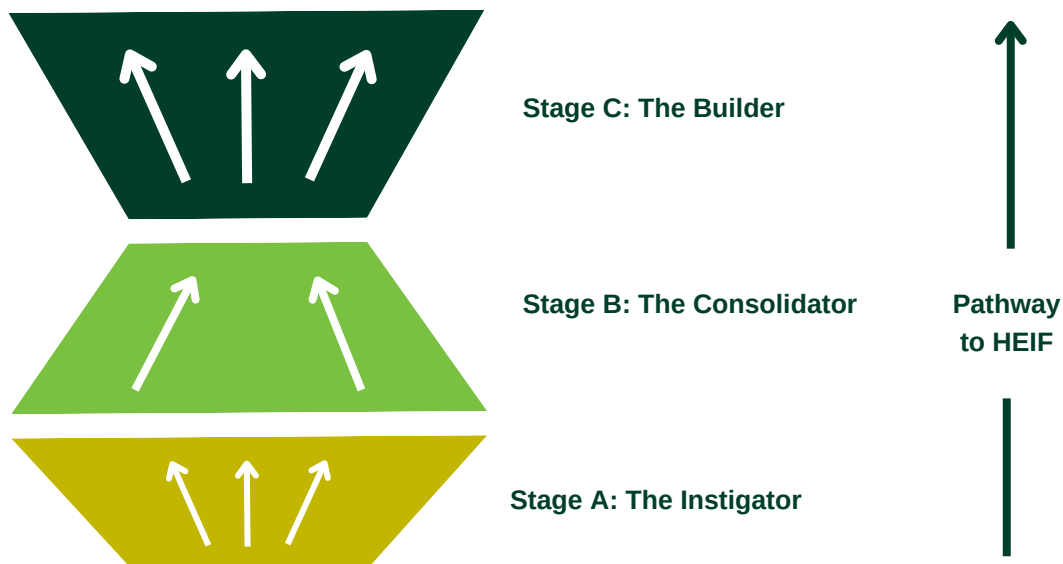
[8] <https://www.ukri.org/publications/research-england-strategic-delivery-plan/>

[9] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/investment-zones/investment-zones-policy-prospectus#introduction>

action plans designed by councils of UKRI. Research England intends to diversify the organisations and people it engages with, employs and funds, to develop funding streams, activities and programmes that reflect its aim to pave the way for a significantly more equal and inclusive research culture<sup>10</sup> Underfunding, or excluding, smaller and specialist institutions is an EDI concern. It is to these institutions, and the real-world impact of their knowledge exchange activities, that we showcase and analyse here.

[10] <https://www.ukri.org/news/ukri-publishes-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy/#:-:text=The%20EDI%20strategy%27s%20objectives%20are,through%20our%20funding%20and%20partnerships>

# Understanding the knowledge exchange process



**Chart 1: The development of programmes of knowledge exchange in smaller and specialist institutions**

Smaller and specialist institutions who received the knowledge exchange grants have used this funding to develop their activity and to build capacity – with an eye on reaching the threshold for regular HEIF funding for knowledge exchange in the future.

Figure 1 is a model of the development of programmes of knowledge exchange in smaller and specialist institutions. It simply captures the pathway to receiving HEIF funding, and the role of grant funding in propelling institutions towards this goal. Depending on the size, history and type of provider, institutions begin the process at different stages – the size of each trapezoid represents the scale of knowledge exchange activity.

## The Instigator

Many providers begin at Stage A. The funding allowed them to become an instigator of knowledge exchange activity. Often with a single member of staff operating to lead knowledge exchange projects, in addition to a range of other duties, managed a bidding process in which staff were encouraged to put forward ideas for activity to be supported. A wide range of activities were then supported, often allocated about £10,000 each, alongside some funding for capacity building. The result is a portfolio approach, testing new ideas and familiarising staff with a new stream of externally facing activity.

## The Consolidator

For providers in Stage B, a process of consolidation and curation begins. Ideas and activities that have proven to have strong impact, capture the interest of businesses, communities or other organisations, and complement the ongoing research and teaching activities of staff, are given further, more substantial, support. There are likely fewer activities in total, representing a sharpening of focus. Alongside this, the provider may have a dedicated knowledge exchange strategy, there may be a staff member with official responsibility for leading on this (rather than ad-hoc responsibility shared across existing roles), and knowledge exchange is on the radar of the senior leadership team. Infrastructure to support and capture knowledge exchange activity is developed. A provider may receive HEIF during this stage if the activities are of sufficient scale.

## The Builder

Stage C is the builder institution. Here, there is a track record of successful, high-impact knowledge exchange activity presenting a foundation for growth and experimentation. Partnerships with external organisations and communities are strong. Funding is leveraged from other sources, further enhancing social or economic outcomes, or strengthening research work, or leading to national and international impact. There is the opportunity to branch out into tangential areas, expand work into new places or with new people, and to bring in other disciplines or other providers. Knowledge exchange is embedded in the institution, and staff have the confidence and security to plan longer term knowledge exchange activity.

## In conclusion

Activity therefore flows in waves, broadening before becoming more coherent, deeper, focused, and then expanding again. The grants allowed providers to jump along this process, and it set them on a trajectory towards HEIF – indeed, at least one institution received HEIF the year after their grant. However, providers need support to jump from one stage to the next. The grants allowed them to do this, but the lack of ongoing, predictable support risks this progress freezing or, worse, slipping entirely.

## York St John University

**Location: York, Yorkshire and the Humber**

**Students: 10,646**

As an anchor institution in York city centre, York St John's knowledge exchange activity seeks to align with local and regional needs. Yorkshire and the Humber has 862 businesses per 10,000 adults, compared to 1452 for London and 1055 for England as a whole. Part of the university's knowledge exchange work involves stimulating business growth through a range of interactions between local businesses, staff, and students, and to try and grow this activity over time.

To support new business and enterprise creation, the university repurposed an existing teaching space into the Enterprise Centre (EC). A targeted investment of £20,000 facilitated this transition, and the EC's strategic management was entrusted to a full-time Enterprise Centre Manager. Uniquely co-funded by KE funding and the York and North Yorkshire Growth Hub (GH), the Manager's role has been pivotal in establishing a formal collaborative relationship with the University of York. This partnership, cemented via a Memorandum of Understanding, aligned the business start-up resources from both universities to support local enterprise.

The funding used to date for the EC has yielded a 6:1 return in value, thanks to active collaborations and shared resources with the Growth Hub. Despite being operational for under a year, the EC has extended support to over 200 businesses, and nurtured 13 start-ups, including ventures from five students, one staff member, and seven local entrepreneurs. This initiative has also fostered regional collaboration by creating ties with key business support organisations in the area, including engagement with 131 Social Enterprises – 50 of which are now regular collaborators.

The EC's success is reflected in the experience of its first resident company, AgriSound. This growing environmental tech business was the first to utilise the EC's free facilities and support networks. AgriSound's CEO, Casey Woodward, lauded the Centre, saying, "There were a host of reasons that we chose to base ourselves here, including access to expertise, great facilities and the opportunity to work with the students. A major draw was also how it's meant we can reduce our carbon footprint as it's in the city centre with public transport connections and ready access to local networks. The University is a great place to foster new business. You can develop and grow, alongside other people doing the same thing in the same space."

In parallel, the university delivered several other programmes to encourage business growth, including an advertising campaign to reach businesses through local radio. Harnessing the latest technology, York St John also piloted an

immersive enterprise training workshop on starting a business for 30 students at the university's east London campus using virtual reality headsets, and bolstered the participation of local businesses in graduate placement programmes by offering a 50 percent subsidy. This approach led to a significant uptake in graduate placements within the local business community, fostering knowledge exchange and infusing fresh, innovative ideas into their business models. Ten businesses benefited from this initiative, generating £10,000 in company contributions.

## **Birmingham Newman University**

**Location: Birmingham, West Midlands**

**Students: 2,335**

Knowledge exchange funding has supported the growth of Newman Health & Wellbeing (NH&WB), a social enterprise launched in 2016 to address the need for professional counselling and psychotherapy in Birmingham, and to engage with local youth through meaningful outreach.

NH&WB contributed significantly to the post-pandemic recovery of individuals, society, and the economy. These funds have allowed NH&WB to mature and extend the range of services offered, forming meaningful partnerships throughout the West Midlands area, and deliver counselling and wellbeing training in colleges throughout the region. To date, the enterprise has provided training and placement opportunities to over 60 students, building the future counselling and psychotherapy workforce.

Since its inception, NH&WB has reached over 1,040 clients, including 373 children and 667 adults. The wellbeing team has conducted workshops, training days, and presentations for over 750 pupils, school staff, university staff, and business employees. Knowledge exchange support has been instrumental in ensuring the continuation of the service post-pandemic. An internal review noted that the funding was crucial for sustainability, which Newman University has committed to supporting in the future.

Alongside its immediate community services, NH&WB is also advancing research in the field of counselling. It is an established research centre and forms part of the Training, Research and Counselling Consortium, a joint initiative with the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and four other university-based community counselling services – Salford,



York St John, Roehampton, and Abertay. The consortium collects uniform research data, enabling it to pool resources for multi-site research studies, which holds significant potential for high-profile research output in the counselling field at the national level.

It's helped me regain control over my life and thought processes. I no longer feel consumed by depression and anxiety, and I have been able to return to work. My counsellor has been amazing and helped make the whole process a lot easier for me. The service as a whole is so important and I feel a level of comfort knowing it's here should I need it again. *C, aged 28*

Before I was self-harming and having suicidal thoughts, but with the help provided, I've been clean of self-harming for 3 months now. Without sounding clichéd, it saved my life. *K, aged 20*

Bringing our child here was the best step we took. Counselling was very beneficial – they are much happier and better equipped to move on. Staff are wonderful and very friendly. BIG THANKS :) *Parent*

## **Bath Spa University**

**Location: Bath, West of England**

**Students: 8,620**

Knowledge exchange funding allows institutions to establish new centres of expertise with broad reach and long term impact. Bath Spa University recently initiated two such initiatives: a Short Course Unit and the National Centre for Fashion and Sustainability.

The Short Course Unit was established to identify areas of expertise within the university that could be harnessed for external learning, and allows the university to explore the potential for short courses and Continual Professional Development activities with external partners. This led to the creation of a business plan and the recruitment of new staff to develop, market, and launch a variety of short course provisions.

Additional funding was then sought from the West of England Combined Authority and the Department for Education. The unit has been crucial in forming relationships with numerous external businesses and organisations, resulting in a growing portfolio of courses that will not only provide an income stream for the university but also facilitate valuable networking opportunities for future Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), graduate internships, and staff and student consultancy.

This model has yielded multiple benefits, ranging from providing academic staff with a host of knowledge exchange opportunities such as consultancy, contract R&D, and collaborative projects, to offering students and graduates unique opportunities for placements, internships, and projects with businesses. Courses cater to business and industry partners, facilitating access to students, graduates, and staff to boost R&D whilst upskilling their employees. It also targets individuals within the region seeking to enhance their skills and employment opportunities, contributing to the regional economic growth and aligning with the Levelling Up agenda.

The second initiative, the National Centre for Fashion and Sustainability, will be based within the Cultural Quarter of Bath Spa's Locksbrook Campus. It will serve as a hub for design, study, and developing innovative business strategies, centred on the circular economy and radical new processes to promote sustainability in the fashion industry. The Centre's development has been made possible due to knowledge exchange funding, enabling the university to connect with local and regional partners, creative practitioners, and community stakeholders. University staff have engaged in international fact-finding missions to fashion and creative districts to learn from global best practices.

The Centre aims to provide additional benefits to academic staff by providing research and knowledge exchange opportunities. It will offer students an industry-informed curriculum development leading to placements, internships, and live industry briefs, significantly increasing their employability skills. Graduates will have access to internships and KTPs across the fashion industry. Local businesses and industries will gain access to collaborative R&D, space, resources, and development through opportunities offered by the sustainable fashion district. Lastly, local community members, practitioners, and artists will have access to the maker space and the sustainable fashion district community.

## Arts University Plymouth

**Location: Plymouth, South West of England**

**Students: 955**

Sustainability is at the heart of Arts University Plymouth's (AUP) knowledge exchange activity, including two initiatives centred around dye technology. In "The Colour of Water", AUP staff collaborated with sustainable clothing brand Finisterre to 'dye map' their supply chain. The collaboration focused on understanding the use of synthetic Azo dyes, a common colorant with potential environmental implications. The textile dyeing industry contributes to around 20 percent of global water pollution, and the production of textiles is the second highest polluting industry globally, after the oil industry.<sup>1</sup> AUP shared its expertise on the environmental impact of these dyes and contributed valuable insight into the complexity of dyeing across different locations. The partnership gave Finisterre's design and production team the knowledge to make better informed decisions, demonstrating how these decisions could have far-reaching local and global impacts. The ongoing collaboration is aimed at integrating AUP's expertise into sustainable garment production processes.

Alongside this, AUP launched the "Of the Ground" project, where the Textiles department partnered with the National Trust, Saltram to develop a Natural Dye Garden at a local community farm. This garden, created by 13 students, staff, and volunteers from AUP and Saltram, serves as a living-learning environment. It is a place to teach, foster creativity, develop design thinking, and share knowledge with the public.

[11] <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20201208STO93327/the-impact-of-textile-production-and-waste-on-the-environment-infographic>

Research expertise was shared with community partners: AUP delivered natural dye workshops to nine staff and volunteers from partner organisations. Future plans include developing a natural dye digital archive, creating a dye palette reflective of the local environment, replacing selected chemical dyes in the labs with natural ones, and exploring further commercial opportunities.

These two initiatives, grounded in the principle of knowledge exchange, contribute to broader discussions on sustainability. They also bring in technical expertise on textile production, helping to drive innovation at Finisterre, and draw on local heritage with the National Trust, including planting lists from Saltram's own archives. Through these collaborations, AUP seeks to change the narrative in the textile industry, ensuring environmentally conscious practices are implemented at all levels from design to production. The initiatives also underscore the importance of multi-disciplinary collaborations in tackling environmental challenges, and involving local partners and the public in the process.

# What we have gained

The short-term funding provided an opportunity for institutions to demonstrate their potential and their ambition. It is clear that the funding has provided 'additionality' – supporting activity which otherwise would not have taken place, and certainly not at the scale and pace seen across the 30-odd institutions who benefitted.

Grant funding has been critical for providers to develop and define their own strategies, expand knowledge exchange activities, and support the growth of their programmes. It has been used for building partnerships, commercialising scientific research, launching counselling and employability services, developing short courses, professional development (CPD) activities, establishing research centres, and improving post-COVID graduate employability and entrepreneurship. Multiple sectors have in turn benefitted: health and wellbeing, creative industries, fashion and sustainability, land-based and animal sciences, and sports.

Several institutions have focused on providing incubation spaces, supporting start-ups, and working with businesses to promote innovation and economic development. Interventions like these support graduates to develop businesses, new products and services as well as collaborating across academia and industry. Others have used the funding to engage local communities with practice-based research, offer internships, and expand their community engagement programmes. This has led to increased participation from students, prospective students, staff, and the wider community. The funding has enabled some providers to address barriers faced by students and graduates in transitioning to employment and self-employment, particularly within the creative and cultural sectors. These skills are paramount to a fast-changing job market with an increased need for skilled workers with sophisticated creativity, independence and initiative.

The funding has enabled universities to buy out staff time, provide training, and support academic and technical staff in developing and implementing more knowledge exchange activities. Some of these have been particularly novel, such as the use of virtual reality technologies to deliver immersive training, or experimenting with new pedagogical methods, such as using circus arts as an educational tool for managers and HR teams. Others have developed interdisciplinary and collaborative projects, partnering with other universities, businesses, and community organisations.

A focus on sustainability and environmental impact is shared by several providers, with an eye on magnifying positive changes through influencing supply chains and broader industry developments. Other activities have contributed to regional development strategies, addressing skills shortages, and enhancing the local economy. This includes projects looking at public health and healthcare professions, developing online CPD programmes and collaborating with external partners to address regional workforce challenges.

Institutions have also used the funding to establish platforms and infrastructure for external engagement, and research and evaluation centres to support capacity in delivering evaluation projects, income generation, and understanding the effectiveness of their programmes. Although the grants were time-limited, they have allowed some institutions to gain technical knowledge and insight that they would not otherwise have had access to.

This, in turn, helped them to secure major capital grants. The strategic partnerships and collaborations that have resulted will outlive the grants.

It is clear that this funding has allowed institutions to embark on new projects and expand the scope of existing ones. It has provided space – giving the time and resources to do the preparation and research necessary for sustainable projects. Other institutions mentioned that the grant helped them to recover from the lull in activity caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, or that the grant has had a beneficial impact on their HE-BCIS returns (the annual submission to the Higher Education Statistics Agency of business and community interaction income and activity) and as a result their progress towards receiving HEIF, as they have witnessed significant growth in income and numbers.

To ensure the impact of knowledge exchange activity, it is the people behind the projects, the research and the delivery that must be supported. Staff have gained experience of managing knowledge exchange funding, developing activities and forging partnerships. For some institutions, this has enabled an acceleration of ideas that were already in the pipeline, or had been discussed with partners outside the university but had sat unrealised due to a lack of funding. For others, the grant has offered a first taste of what is possible with a dedicated funding stream, and a first look at the enormous impact and benefit knowledge exchange can have.



# What we risk losing

There is a risk of losing these benefits, as well as access to the larger funding streams and longer-term collaborations that can be unlocked with a relatively small amount of predictable knowledge exchange funding. We saw how delays in funding between European Structural Fund programmes (for example between the 2007-13 and 2014-2020 ESIF and ERDF programmes) led to a cliff-edge in funding for many universities, damaging their regeneration and skills programmes as highly experienced staff lost their jobs and existing activities languished.

The knowledge exchange funding ran for two one-year periods, and ended in July 2023. Many teams are actively seeking follow-on funding to continue their knowledge exchange projects (for example by bidding to Innovate UK), demonstrating that the original funding provided significant opportunities for innovation and applied research. Others designed their projects to become self-sustaining or to finish within the funding period. And due to the short-term nature of the funding, several institutions reported no direct impact on team size or positions, since it didn't enable the creation of new permanent posts.

However, the overall level of activity will inevitably be scaled back and momentum will be lost. Some positions tied to the funding, such as Project Managers, Projects Administrators, and KE Coordinators, are on fixed-term contracts which will end with the funding. There will likely be a reduction in the scope and depth of knowledge exchange activities amongst the beneficiaries, which may constrain the development of networks, projects, partnerships, and research and innovation impact.

The end of this funding will limit the capacity to undertake new activities, and constrain the ability to amplify the impact of other funding streams. This will stall the development of certain programmes, such as key continuing professional development activity that currently address regional skills gaps. Teams will now need to dedicate more time to trying to secure additional funds, which could detract from their capacity to support and nurture projects.

Where institutions are in the early stages of potentially impactful community-based projects, where trust and relationships take time to build, the future is uncertain. Staff who took on knowledge exchange responsibilities will need to shift focus to other parts of their portfolio, and activities which involve student participation will need reworking.

This does not mean that there will not be long-lasting positive impacts from the funds. Infrastructure has been put in place and experience gained. Many providers have developed knowledge exchange strategies in some form, and they are exploring ways to maintain these initiatives despite funding challenges. These strategies often build on local and regional partnerships and connect with broader levelling up agendas by using, for example, labour market intelligence to inform decision-making. Providers are looking to secure additional funding for specific projects, emphasising the importance of long-term partnerships rather than short-term transactional interactions.

Some providers will rely on the goodwill of external partners to continue work – a challenge in the current financial environment. Others are looking into alternative funding streams, including generating income through commercial opportunities, but recognise that these

take time to develop and become viable. Some institutions are considering collaborations with larger institutions as a way to mitigate the impact of budget cuts. In the meantime, while the funding situation is a challenge, universities still aim to frame their work within the language and structure of knowledge exchange.

Institutions recognise the importance of diversified funding streams, in part to reflect the diversity of activity – from sports injury clinics to contributing to community food strategies and developing entrepreneurship initiatives. Yet they require a predictable, sustainable, long-term foundation of funding upon which to build – even if this funding is modest in the context of UKRI's overall budget. Future support would provide an injection of capacity, not only enabling a continuation but an acceleration of knowledge exchange activity. Without it, the growth and development of contributions from specialist providers, and providers in left-behind areas or sectors, will continue to stifle.

# Challenges with short-term, time-limited funding

The funding for smaller institutions was an unexpected surprise for institutions. Most processed the funding through existing internal structures, with responsibility distributed among various roles and teams. Some needed to establish a dedicated team or set up committees which were responsible for approval and oversight of the funding. For all institutions, the process to manage the funding improved their overall knowledge exchange governance. In some cases, temporary or part-time staff such as consultants or KE coordinators were brought on to manage the fund. Management of this funding required capacity, resource and knowledge of the research and innovation system. For greater investment in developing staff skills, job expectations and long-term career trajectories for knowledge exchange practitioners, and supporting teams, requires predictable funding. As a critical activity at universities, knowledge exchange activity demonstrates civic, social, economic and cultural value to society, on both a micro and macro level. With time-limited and uncertain funding conditions, the systemic barriers to growth in this area remain.

Providers made efforts to mentor and guide colleagues through the process, offering 'KE surgeries' for project discussions and advice. Many staff members at smaller providers have deep expertise in areas relevant to tackling significant societal challenges, yet have had little experience of formalised knowledge exchange activities. Processes were often built from scratch. Some set up familiarisation workshops, followed by a bidding competition with business cases or project proposals, scoring and approval processes, and then ongoing management by a designated team or individual. Institutions noted the importance of alignment to strategic ambitions and goals, using the funding to support existing initiatives and plans as well as invest in areas of potential growth. Long-lasting impact on economic growth and skills development requires strategic direction and modelling over a multi-year timeframe. Whilst this funding was welcomed as a recognition, and boost, for smaller providers, institutions found that the spending timelines were tight and did not support strategic planning.

Institutions with no experience in knowledge exchange developed a taste of what is possible, and the value their knowledge has for external partners and for society. For those with some previous or limited activity, knowledge exchange is now firmly on the radar of the senior leadership team and appetite for future activity is high.

With secure funding, providers could invest in sufficient job roles to support this activity, staff training and efficient knowledge exchange management which demonstrably unlocks the foundation for transformational innovation, research impact and public engagement. A modest stream of funding to support this activity would ensure knowledge exchange is embedded in smaller and specialist institutions, and will support the distinctive influence they have on the places, sectors and communities they serve as higher education providers.

## **AECC University College**

**Location: Bournemouth, Dorset, South West England**

**Students: 920**

Established in 1965 as the first chiropractic college in Europe, AECC University College has long been a global leader in musculoskeletal healthcare. Its knowledge exchange work translates its specialist expertise, and specialist equipment, into tangible benefits for the local community.

Some initiatives have the potential to be scaled nationally. Two MSc Physiotherapy students, with guidance from an AECC academic collaborated with local schools in a study designed to expand and refine a flexible resource for teachers to use in physical education classes. The novel flexible system is designed to stimulate and maintain the engagement of pupils managing attention deficit challenges, while providing the whole school class with enjoyable physical activities. This work builds on the academics previously published research on undertaking physical activity at moderate-to-vigorous intensity helps school children and adolescents manage symptoms of attention deficit. This has been found to be associated with increased ability to focus on school work, improved memory recall and improved social interactions. The aim of this work has provided a flexible tool for teachers to help them support their pupils managing these challenges.

Other initiatives are also rooted in the community. In the Covid-19 pandemic, AECC University College purchased a school in financial difficulty and established an Integrated Rehabilitation Centre on the premises. This centre fosters partnerships with the local community, healthcare sector and charities to deliver clinical services and support initiatives, including the Active Dorset scheme, where local GPs prescribe vouchers for exercise classes.

Another project aimed at enhancing patient outcomes involved training musculoskeletal practitioners in shockwave therapy, a useful therapeutic tool in the management of a number of conditions particularly conditions of the knee. The goal of this project was to expand access to this treatment modality with an aim of improving patient outcomes, decreasing need for repeat NHS appointments, reduced imaging and prescription referrals.

The university also runs a weekly breastfeeding clinic, staffed by chiropractic students from AECC University College and midwifery students from Bournemouth University, offering free support to the public on breastfeeding positioning and attachment to increase continuity of breastfeeding.

## Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance

**Location: Twickenham, Richmond**

**Students: 137**

The arts and culture industry makes a significant contribution to the UK economy, contributing £5 in taxes for every £1 of public funding. Within this, performing arts makes up around a quarter of the industry.<sup>1,2</sup> Knowledge exchange funding at the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance has contributed to the school's potential as a hub for artistic development beyond immediate higher education delivery, and to further strengthen the arts and culture industry.

Rambert has an ongoing focus on embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in their curriculum and pedagogy. The intention is to ensure the embracing of a diverse range of dance practices and promote inclusivity in every aspect, be it racial justice, gender identity, disability, or neurodiversity. As part of this initiative, and supported by knowledge exchange funding, the School held a "Spotlight on Inclusivity" week in February 2023. The week served as an arena for the school community to engage in meaningful dialogue on inclusive practices in dance. It allowed exploration of inclusivity in a creative way, offered experiences of diverse ways of working within dance, and importantly, illuminated the methods of creating, curating, and facilitating inclusive environments in dance.

This initiative raised awareness of the lived experiences of dance practitioners within the industry who are already working in inclusive ways. Historically, conservatoire dance training has occasionally been seen as elitist or exclusive, and this initiative aimed to dismantle such perceptions while fostering a learning and progressive environment. A significant aspect of this was providing students (as the leaders and artists of the future) with a platform to see themselves represented and celebrated, thereby breaking down hierarchical structures within dance. This focused approach to inclusivity encouraged students to engage actively in important discussions, reinforcing the school's belief that the student voice is central to its development.

Rambert's work on inclusivity has highlighted the necessity of ongoing training and engagement with industry development on EDI. It has opened up the curriculum to a more diverse range of dance practices and continued the dialogue on inclusion in dance through specific events. These initiatives have also underscored the need for supportive frameworks and processes across dance education and the industry, and for more disabled leaders in the field.

[12] <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/art-culture-and-economy/economic-contribution-arts-and-culture>

## Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

**Location: Camden, London**

**Students: 1,030**

The Government's "Levelling Up For Culture" plan seeks to generate more opportunities for people in previously overlooked or neglected areas to better access cultural activities and arts jobs, in part by cultural organisations in London expanding operations beyond the capital.<sup>1,3</sup> Knowledge exchange activity at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama draws on a broad, and long-established, network of relationships with cultural organisations across the UK to help deliver this plan.

Together with Fevered Sleep (whose Co-Artistic Director is also a Central researcher), the school partnered with arts organisations across the UK – from Barrow-in-Furness to Weston-super-Mare, Wigan to Preston, Crawley to Northampton – to create a range of unique projects. Each one, from 'This Grief Thing' to 'The Sky is Filled with Thunder', was co-created with local partners, ensuring that the art produced resonated with the local community and reflected local contexts and challenges. The learning from these projects was then shared across the sector through public talks and briefing reports, demonstrating Central's commitment to fostering an open and collaborative culture in the arts sector.

Other knowledge exchange projects to boost cultural participation in underrepresented areas have involved the use of immersive technology and partnerships with SMEs. 'New Beginning: Immersive AI and Biological Design' involved a partnership with Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch, studio Lusion, and agency Superflux, to develop a digital production using video projection technologies, AI generative and biological performance design. The project builds on long-standing relationships and is part of wider regeneration efforts in Essex. With this initiative, Central has not only supported Queen's Theatre to work with technology specialists for the first time but also enabled mid-scale venues to lead digital innovation. The broader significance of this project lies in its potential to inspire other institutions and regions to harness technology to reach new audiences and generate income.

In a separate collaboration with theatre and sound collective Auricle, Manchester Jewish Museum, and Exilmuseum Berlin, Central developed an immersive binaural (or 3D) sound and video installation based on Ulrich Boschwitz's 1938 novel *The Passenger*. The installation was piloted in Manchester and will now be part of an experimental set of events that have the potential to inform permanent exhibitions and engage international audiences in Berlin (the Exilmuseum will officially open with a large scale new building at the Anhalter Bahnhof in 2026). This international collaboration demonstrates how the innovative use of sound and theatre can have far-reaching applications in enhancing the experience of museum visitors around the world.

[13] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-100-places-to-see-improved-access-to-culture-and-arts-across-england>



## The Place - London Contemporary Dance School

**Location: Camden, London**

**Students: 250**

Registered as a higher education provider in June 2022, The Place is a hub of artistic creation and innovation – with a 288-seat theatre, a hands-on producing team, and varied courses for different age groups. The Place was awarded the status of World Leading Specialist provider for 2022-27 by the Office for Students, and is building on this expertise in the dance industry to develop a knowledge exchange strategy, including a consultancy policy, and build its commercial and civic activities. Two examples, supported by knowledge exchange funding, demonstrate this activity.

Future Cargo is a remarkable outdoor sci-fi dance show conceived by Frauke Requardt and David Rosenberg. This unique production is performed in a 40-foot haulage truck equipped with an internal travelator. Developed through extensive research and development by the Producing and Touring team at The Place, this spectacle fuses intimate experiences with large-scale dance. Having already visited outdoor festivals in the UK and embarked on a tour to Spain, The Place is now engaging with external production partners in Australasia to explore new income streams via potential license agreements.



*Requardt & Rosenberg*

“There are reports of fireballs in the area. Power surges and blackouts and electromagnetic waves. The message boards are filling up with unexplained visions of ‘gods’ and lights. A mystery shipment arrives in Coal Drops Yard from an unknown location.

“As the side rolls up on a 40ft haulage truck, an alien machine is revealed and a strange and unstoppable process begins. A compelling invitation to make contact evolves. Before it’s too late to walk away, the driver must consider their options...”

*Introduction to ‘Future Cargo’*<sup>14</sup>

[14] <https://theplace.org.uk/events/summer-22-future-cargo-at-coal-drops-yard>

Secondly, an innovative feature of The Place's dance curriculum is the way it embeds approaches to periodisation in student training. This innovative methodology borrows the concept of periodisation from sports science, which helps athletes achieve peak performance at the required moment. When applied to dance education, this approach helps students manage their physical and cognitive loads, fostering their well-being. Taking this a step further, The Place is developing a research and knowledge exchange project to share this periodisation approach with professional dance companies and extend it to corporate leadership. This initiative aims to adapt the principles of periodisation to craft coaching packages for corporate leadership and managerial training, extending impact beyond the arts.



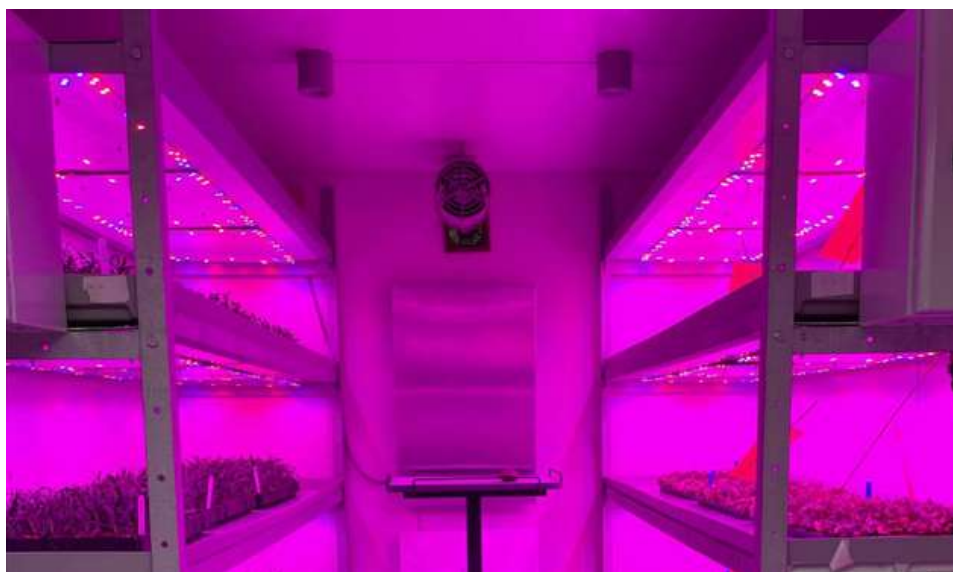
*Camilla Greenwell Studio*

## Writtle University College

**Location: Chelmsford, Essex**

**Students: 740**

Writtle has led a range of knowledge exchange initiatives, all designed to enhance productivity and address industry-specific challenges. Two examples focus on horticultural and farming advancements. This first focuses on vertical farming – growing crops in vertically stacked layers, in a carefully controlled-environment – and the use of this innovative technique to produce high-quality, disease-free propagules. Not only is the planet running short of farmland to feed a growing number of people, but nearly a quarter of all food never reaches consumers – due in part to low quality and long supply chains.<sup>1 5</sup> Vertical farming offers the potential to cut pollution, help address climate change, and shift cities towards being producers – and not just consumers – of food. Writtle's team is partnering with Hugh Lowe Farms, Palmstead Nurseries, and Yorkshire-based SME iGrowing. The project is exploring the energy efficiency of iGrowing's solar/off-grid DC-based power technology compared to state-of-the-art technology available on the market, and offers the promise of addressing one of the key roadblocks to wider adoption of vertical farming: energy costs. By growing a diverse variety of crops, the project is testing and refining the technology, offering valuable insights for future vertical farming efforts. The work builds on an ongoing Knowledge Transfer Collaboration project supported by the Enabling Innovation: Research To Application (EIRA) fund in the East of England, part of Research England's Connecting Capability Fund (CCF).



[15] <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15487733.2017.1394054>;  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00402-w>

As part of the 'Feeding the Future' project, another Writtle team is researching the production of invertebrates for animal feed by developing and establishing an invertebrate unit at Writtle and consulting with industry professionals. Insect farming has the potential to contribute substantially to increased food security.<sup>16</sup> A thriving colony of black soldier flies has been established, and the on-site 'bug barn' has been integrated into teaching and used as a valuable tool for hands-on learning. So far, six practical husbandry sessions have been organised for first-year animal husbandry students, and three dissertation projects based on invertebrate production have been offered to animal science undergraduates and masters students. An undergraduate horticultural student has also leveraged the initiative to study the potential benefits of insect frass, a byproduct of insect production, on soil health, yielding promising initial results. The work at the barn has led to new discussions and potential new partnerships with external academics and industry professionals, including producers of insect protein who are interested in collaborations on insect welfare, as well as hosting the first conference on insect ethics and welfare at Writtle.

## **Norwich University of the Arts**

**Location: Norwich, Norfolk**

**Students: 2,625**

Knowledge exchange activity at Norwich University of the Arts demonstrates the power of commercialisation to catalyse growth and cross-sector partnerships. Two contrasting examples show these partnerships in action, both with the university at the heart of emerging regional clusters.

Norwich University of the Arts has extensive links with the John Innes Centre, a renowned plant and biological science research centre in Norwich. The challenge here was to commercialise science created at the John Innes Centre that could have a beneficial effect on human health, particularly through innovative communication design. The project focused on the potential health benefits of a new type of pea and the impact it could have on reducing blood sugar levels, potentially preventing type 2 diabetes.

To ensure this cutting edge science has real-world impact, Norwich University of the Arts staff and students have been developing messaging and branding, testing these with large numbers of consumers, and further honing and optimising

[16] <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/68137>



the design to maximise the chance of commercial success. Given the NHS spends around £10 billion a year on diabetes – around 10 percent of its entire budget – knowledge exchange partnerships such as this, bringing together specialists from the arts, health and sciences, have the potential to impact public health on a broader scale.



In a second example, Norwich University of the Arts are looking to drive economic growth in the film sector while also promoting the adoption of new creative technologies by businesses. The university worked with screen businesses, including October Studios and Lexhag VFX in Norfolk, to explore the potential of virtual production for mid-budget production houses. Recognising the UK's competitive advantage in this field, plans have been developed to create a studio in Norwich – potentially on the site of the disused Colmans Mustard Factory – for advanced creative technology and to attract inward investment. The ambition is to market Norwich as a cost-effective and cutting-edge destination for film production, focussing on virtual production technology – a promising new market sector at the intersection of film production and game design using a gaming engine and LED screens.

# Concluding statement

Recognising their size, smaller and specialist institutions across the UK demonstrate excellent performance and effectiveness in knowledge exchange with, in some cases, years of experience disseminating specialist knowledge across numerous sectors. Sustainable funding would give institutions the opportunity to support and expand existing projects as well as develop new ones, increasing their portfolio, outputs, and impact. It would allow institutions to invest in strategic partnerships with their region and build relationships over the longer term with both large and small partners, including SMEs, businesses and charities.

Providers would be able to plan their infrastructure and strategy development more effectively, reducing uncertainty. It would provide an opportunity to shape institutional strategy through a knowledge exchange lens and enable a more strategic approach to external work, enhancing the providers' meaningful civic role. Ongoing funding would enable institutions to create a support team for project management, embedding a culture of knowledge exchange across the institution. These benefits would, most importantly, unlock the valuable benefits for external partners and participants. Fostering long-term relationships, leveraging additional funding, and helping co-create new projects would stimulate a system of support between higher education, industry, business and the public that only creates a positive impact on research outputs, the job market and new ideas. In turn, ongoing support will allow for greater public engagement, innovation, and opportunities for economic growth in areas, disciplines and specialisms that are, currently, left beneath the surface.



# The impact of GuildHE members in numbers

The contribution of smaller and specialist institutions to community and business development is already huge. The total figure below is the sum of GuildHE members' submissions to the HE-BCIS. Some of these members receive HEIF and will therefore return larger figures. If all smaller and specialist institutions were supported with funding, and therefore able to grow their capacity to engage with business and communities, this number, and the value it represents, would be much larger.

## Total = £137,808,000

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Over the past three years (2018-19 to 2020-21), GuildHE members have conducted knowledge exchange activity worth:

- £38,925,000** – collaborative research involving public funding
- £34,540,000** – regeneration and development programmes
- £10,696,000** – contract research for non-commercial businesses
- £10,508,000** – consultancy services for (non-SME) commercial businesses
- £9,900,000** – consultancy services for non-commercial businesses
- £7,879,000** – consultancy services for SMEs
- £5,825,000** – provision of facilities and equipment for non-commercial businesses
- £4,966,000** – intellectual property income from non-commercial businesses
- £3,396,000** – provision of facilities and equipment for SMEs
- £3,396,000** – provision of facilities and equipment for (non-SME) commercial businesses
- £3,055,000** – contract research for (non-SME) commercial businesses
- £2,341,000** – contract research for SMEs
- £1,204,000** – intellectual property income from (non-SME) commercial businesses
- £1,177,000** – intellectual property income from SMEs

# Statistical analysis extracts

## **Collaborative research involving public funding**

The Royal College of Art ranks 76th in the UK for the value of collaborative research involving public funding, but 33rd when the number of students is taken into account. Abertay University moves from 59th to 37th, and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama from 100th to 44th.

## **Consultancy services for non-SME commercial businesses**

RADA ranks 20th in the UK for consultancy services for non-SME commercial businesses, but 1st when adjusted for the number of students (over £24,000 per student). The Royal College of Art moves from 40th to 10th. Harper Adams University was 6th in the West Midlands, and jumps to 2nd place on a per-student basis.

## **Consultancy services for non-commercial businesses**

RADA moves from 75th to 2nd in the UK for consultancy services for non-commercial businesses when adjusted for the number of students (over £8,000 per student), and LAMDA from 101st to 9th. In the South West, AECC moves from 7th in the region to 1st, and the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts from 11th in the North West to 4th.

## **Consultancy services for SMEs**

LAMDA moves from 12th to 1st for consultancy services for SMEs when adjusted for the number of students (over £21,000 per student), and RADA from 91st to 5th. Harper Adams jumps from 70th to 32nd (7th to 2nd within the West Midlands), Arts University Bournemouth from 79th to 41st, and Hartpury from 102nd to 46th.

## **Contract research for non-SME commercial businesses**

Harper Adams University moves from 62nd to 38th for contract research for non-SME commercial businesses when adjusted for the number of students, Royal College of Art from 68th to 42nd, and the Royal Agricultural University from 106th to 57th.

## **Contract research for non-commercial businesses**

Royal College of Art from 76th to 34th and the University College of Osteopathy from 126th to 44th, for contract research for non-commercial businesses when adjusted for the number of students.

## **Contract research for SMEs**

Harper Adams University moves from 35th to 6th (4th to 1st in the West Midlands, attracting £500 of research work with SMEs per student) and Bishop Grosseteste University from 68th to 30th (6th to 3rd in the East Midlands), for contract research for SMEs when adjusted for the number of students.

## **Provision of facilities and equipment for non-SME commercial businesses**

Hartpury University moves from 25th to 5th (and to 1st in the South West) for the provision of facilities and equipment for non-SME commercial businesses when adjusted for the number of students – £800 per student. St Mary's University Twickenham climbs from 41st to 23rd, and Harper Adams University from 60th to 35th.

### **Provision of facilities and equipment for non-commercial businesses**

Hartpury University, St Mary's University Twickenham, Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, RADA and Writtle are all example of GuildHE members climbing the rankings for the provision of facilities and equipment for non-commercial businesses when adjusted for the number of students: from 48th to 16th (and from 4th to 1st in the South West), 34th to 19th, 79th to 22nd, 111th to 24th and 81st to 26th respectively.

### **Provision of facilities and equipment for SMEs**

RADA provides £900 worth of facilities and equipment support to SMEs per student, moving from 81st to 7th when adjusted for the number of students. The London Institute of Banking & Finance moves from 91st to 12th, and Hartpury University moves from 46th to 13th (and from 3rd to 1st in the South West).

### **Regeneration and development programmes**

Hartpury University moves from 59th to 10th (£1,700 per student) and Falmouth University moves from 32nd to 11th (and to 1st and 2nd in the South West, respectively) for regeneration and development programmes when adjusted for the number of students. Bishop Grosseteste University moves from 69th to 14th, Arts University Bournemouth moves from 65th to 19th, Plymouth College of Art moves from 89th to 28th and AECC moves from 99th to 31st.

### **Intellectual property income from non-SME commercial businesses**

Harper Adams University from 43rd to 22nd (and 1st in the West Midlands) for intellectual property income from non-SME commercial businesses when adjusted for the number of students, and Bath Spa University from 37th to 28th (and 2nd in the South West).

### **Intellectual property income from non-commercial businesses**

The Royal Agricultural University ranks 2nd in the UK for intellectual property income from non-commercial businesses when adjusted for the number of students, up from 25th (£300 per student, second only to the University of Oxford). Harper Adams University moves from 19th to 3rd, and the University of Cumbria from 9th to 5th. All three are 1st in their regions.

### **Intellectual property income from SMEs**

Solent University moves from 15th to 10th for intellectual property income from SMEs when adjusted for the number of students (£100 per student). The Royal Agricultural University moves from 49th to 12th, and AECC University College from 66th to 23rd.

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## About GuildHE

GuildHE is an officially recognised representative body for UK Higher Education, championing distinction and diversity in the sector. Our 60 members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions, representing over 150,000 students. Member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture and food; education; business and law, theology, the built environment; health and sports.

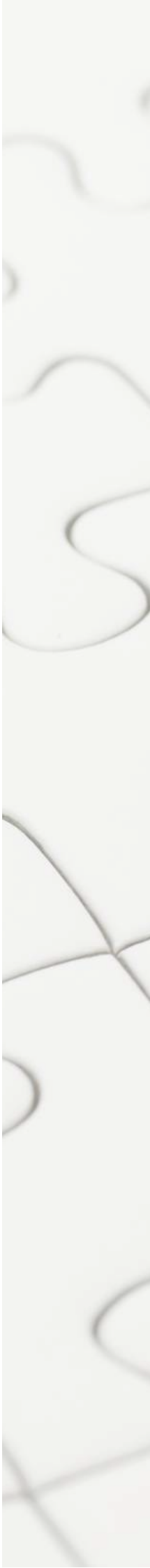
## About GuildHE Research

GuildHE Research, a sub-association of GuildHE, is the research consortium for smaller and specialist higher education institutions.

GuildHE Research engages the full diversity of its institutions, people, and places in research and innovation, and advocates for the recognition and support of excellent research wherever it is found. It helps members to embed a positive and constructive research culture, develop robust research and innovation strategies, and establish appropriate infrastructure through which they can drive forward their ambitions.

## About UKADIA

United Kingdom Art and Design Institutions Association (UKADIA), a sub-association of GuildHE, is a group of leading specialist arts and design institutions drawn from all regions of the UK. It engages institutions in a network to advocate which advocate for specialist arts education, the value of creative skills to all industries and disciplines and the growth and prosperity of the UK.





## About GuildHE:

GuildHE is an officially recognised representative body for UK Higher Education, championing distinction and diversity in the sector. Our 60 members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions, representing over 150,000 students. Member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts, agriculture and food, education, business and law, theology, the built environment, health and sports.

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A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, wavy, ribbon-like shapes in various shades of green, extending from the left and bottom edges towards the right.