

Circular letter

To	Heads of English higher education institutions
Of interest to those responsible for	Knowledge Exchange, including directors of knowledge exchange and PVC Research and Enterprise/Innovation
Reference	RE-CL-2020-04
Publication date	16 April 2020
Enquiries to	Hamish McAlpine, Head of KE Data & Evidence KEPolicy@re.ukri.org

Dear Vice-Chancellor, Principal or Director

Knowledge Exchange accountability and funding: revised timetable due to coronavirus (covid-19)

1. In conjunction with Office for Students, this letter sets out:
 - a. Expectations relating to the use of Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) allocations, to ensure Higher Education Providers (HEPs) are clear that they are able to act flexibly to respond to pressures during the current academic year 2019-20.
 - b. How we are adapting our requirements and timescales for submission of documents related to the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and HEIF.
2. These changes are being made in response to the significant disruption caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic. Our intention is to lower the burden on institutions, whilst providing longer-term direction and stability.
3. Note that new deadlines may be subject to further revision as the situation may dictate. In these circumstances, Research England will give as much notice as possible of

changes. A Summary of deadlines for HEPs and anticipated publication dates by Research England is provided at Annex A.

Use of HEIF in academic year 2019-20

4. Providers are required to spend HEIF on Knowledge Exchange (KE) activities, but are allowed to deploy HEIF flexibly to adapt their plans to respond to emerging opportunities or challenges in line with their approved institutional strategies.
5. In view of the current situation, we are adding flexibilities for the immediate period. Institutions may, without prior discussion with (or agreement from) Research England, use HEIF to support KE activities that respond better to the needs of, or opportunities for, their KE partners, even if this varies from their institutional strategy.
6. HEPs should keep appropriate records of exceptional uses of HEIF or variations from strategic objectives and report these via the usual HEIF Annual Monitoring Statement (AMS) process, which we expect to send out in December 2020, to be returned in February 2021. This will enable us to understand the pressures on - and responses of - HEPs in this extraordinary period, and to account for public funds.
7. HEPs must also take into account any future guidance we may issue on this topic coming out of the immediate crisis period, although we will not apply such guidance retrospectively.

Knowledge Exchange Framework

8. The previously advised deadline for submission of KEF narrative statements (Friday 29 May 2020) no longer applies. The new deadline will be **17:00 on Friday 16 October 2020**.
9. We previously asked HEPs to focus their narratives on activities that occurred during the preceding three years. However, this extended narrative statement submission deadline will also allow providers to include the most recent activities, including responses to the coronavirus pandemic, where relevant to their narrative.
10. HEPs eligible to participate in the KEF, but whom are not currently in receipt of HEIF were originally asked to inform us by 27 March 2020 if they wished to submit narrative statements. This deadline no longer applies, instead we ask that any eligible provider not in receipt of HEIF, but wishing to submit narrative statements to the KEF informs us of their intention when they are able, but no later than **Friday 2 October 2020**. If you

have previously submitted your intention, there is no requirement to do so again unless your intention changes.

11. KEF metrics will not be published in the summer as previously advised. We now expect to publish a full set of KEF results (metrics and narratives where submitted) after the October narrative deadline in December 2020. KEF results will then be available for HEPs to take into consideration in responding to HEIF accountability and KE Concordat exercises, which have been re-timetabled as a consequence, set out below

HEIF allocations and institutional accountability for use of HEIF for 2020-21 onwards

12. We expect to make allocations for the 2020-21 academic year as usual and HEPs will be notified of their allocations as part of the Research England funding round in due course. This includes allocation of an additional £25 million from 2020-21¹.
13. [RE-CL-2018-02](#) advised that we intended to enter a new five year strategic period from 2020-21 to 2024-25. We also stated that we would issue updated policies and priorities for use of HEIF at this time, to refresh previous guidance in [HEFCE 2016/16](#), reflecting new Government priorities.
14. To reflect information that we anticipate being gathered through the KEF and the forthcoming KE concordat, we had already planned to replace the requirement for full KE strategies with a simplified and shorter 'HEIF accountability statement' to meet our public expenditure reporting requirements.
15. In order to provide direction and allow forward-planning we still intend to publish these updated policies and priorities for HEIF from 2020-21 by May 2020, together with a template for the new accountability statements. However, in light of the current situation, we will both extend the deadline for the return of these accountability statements, and separate the coming 2020-21 academic year from the remainder of the five year period. The following deadlines will therefore apply:
 - a. For the 2020-21 academic year, providers should prepare a statement outlining how they will be using HEIF to support KE activities, taking into account their previously approved strategies (which already cover 2020-21) and addressing the new notified priorities. This will be a single question and will be returned as

¹ <https://re.ukri.org/documents/2019/letter-from-chris-skidmore-to-david-sweeney-2oct2019-pdf/>

part of the 2019-20 HEIF AMS process by **Friday 26 February 2021**, alongside reporting as set out above on 2019-20 allocations. HEPs should keep sufficient records of expenditure for annual monitoring (AMS) and audit purposes. It is important that we know about the pressures and opportunities facing HEPs in supporting their KE partners through crisis and recovery, so we can understand longer term strategic direction.

- b. For the academic years 2021-22 to 2024-25, providers should complete the more detailed multi-year accountability statement template, to be submitted by **May 2021**. We aim to approve all statements in sufficient time before start of use of 2021-22 HEIF allocations.
16. We stress the importance of providing high quality information in statements on use of HEIF, focussed on key activities being funded from our allocations and alignment with institutional KE strategic objectives, as these will be used to account for public funding to Government and for future public funding cases.

KE Concordat

17. The development and implementation of the KE Concordat is led by sector bodies who will be publishing plans in due course. We see the Concordat, sitting alongside KEF and HEIF accountability exercises, as a key part of providing accountability for public funding for KE.

Further information

Any questions about this letter should be addressed to Hamish McAlpine, Head of KE Data & Evidence, kepolicy@re.ukri.org

Yours sincerely



David Sweeney
Executive Chair, Research England

Annex A

Summary of knowledge exchange deadlines and publications

Summary of deadlines for English Higher Education Providers (HEPs)

Deadline	Policy area	Information required
Friday 2 October 2020	KEF	HEPs eligible to participate in the KEF but not currently in receipt of HEIF to submit notice of intention to submit KEF narratives.
Friday 17 October 2020	KEF	Eligible HEPs intending to participate in the KEF to submit full narrative statements.
Friday 26 February 2021	HEIF	HEPs in receipt of a 2019-20 HEIF allocation to submit an annual monitoring statement covering 2019-20 HEIF expenditure, plus a brief statement on plans for HEIF for 2020-21.
May 2021	HEIF	HEPs in receipt of a 2020-21 HEIF allocation to submit detailed multi-year HEIF Accountability Statement.

Summary of anticipated publication dates by Research England

Publication month	Policy area	Information provided
May 2020	HEIF	Publication of updated policies and priorities for HEIF and the template for the new multi-year accountability statements.
December 2020	HEIF	Distribution of guidance and templates for the 2019-20 HEIF Annual Monitoring Statement.
December 2020	KEF	Publication of the KEF metrics and narrative statements.
June/July 2021	HEIF	Approval of HEIF accountability statements.