

Guidance for the completion and submission of action plans

Higher education providers (HEPs) that participate in the development year for England are required to submit:

1. A summary of their institutional strategic objectives for knowledge exchange (KE)
2. A summary of their self-evaluation and gap analysis
3. A completed action plan.

A downloadable template of the action plan is available on the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KE concordat) [portal](#). **Evaluators will provide feedback and advice on the action plan and priorities in the context of the HEP's institutional strategic objectives for KE.**

1. Summary of institutional strategic objectives for knowledge exchange

The summary of institutional strategic objectives for KE will highlight the HEP's current strategic approach to KE. The summary will allow evaluators to understand the priorities and approaches of the HEP to KE. The HEP should align the action plan with its institutional strategic objectives for KE. Evaluators can comment on how effective they think the alignment is, whether the actions are relevant, sufficient and appropriately resourced, and whether there is good practice that could inform and develop the institutional approach.

HEPs are encouraged to demonstrate ambition throughout their action plan, particularly in their five priority actions across the eight principles. Evaluator feedback on the plan will consider the level of ambition in the context of the institutional strategy for KE, self-evaluation and the top five priority actions.

There is no expectation that a HEP will have a dedicated, separate KE strategy. It is therefore up to the HEP to identify the institutional strategic priorities that are relevant to the eight principles and the top five priority actions.

A HEP may reference more detailed documents as hyperlinks for further reading. HEPs should, however, ensure that their summary of institutional strategic objectives for KE is as comprehensive as possible within the outlined page limit as there are no expectations for evaluators to read any listed further reading. The summary should be a standalone, coherent statement to support effective evaluation feedback.

Where applicable, HEPs are welcome to refer to:

- Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) institutional context narratives (due October 2020)
- Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) accountability statement strategic objectives narratives (due February 2021).

These may be the relevant objectives for the KE concordat and can be outlined in this section.

The summary of institutional strategic objectives for KE should not exceed **500 words**. There is no expectation that HEPs should reach the advised limit, and evaluators will not regard this section or any others based on length.

Please contact keconcordat-support@ncub.co.uk if you have any queries or difficulties when completing the summary of institutional strategic objectives for KE.

2. Self-evaluation (including gap analysis) summary

The self-evaluation exercise, and resulting gap analysis, will help to reveal what HEPs could do to align with the eight principles of the KE concordat in the context of the HEP's strategic priorities. By evaluating current practices, policies and strategies against the KE concordat principles, HEPs can identify gaps and address them through identified actions. Given the areas identified in the gap analysis between existing practices and the KE concordat principles, HEPs can ask themselves what they will do to develop and improve. Given the timescale for completing the self-evaluation, it is intended that the self-evaluation can form part of normal institutional planning processes where possible.

There is wide diversity among institutions in terms of priorities, the scale and breadth of KE, and resources to support KE, including participation in the development year. It may be that a HEP's priority actions include a more detailed analysis or self-evaluation in relation to some of the KE concordat principles, to identify better evidenced and considered future actions. Evaluators will respond supportively to HEPs that identify priority actions but also identify the need to do more in-depth self-evaluation. **This exercise is designed to guide and support HEPs to improve their KE practices, policies and strategies. It is not intended to direct or dictate how a HEP approaches KE.**

The self-evaluation summary should outline the main conclusions of the self-evaluation exercise and identify the relevant gaps in practices, policies and strategies for KE against the eight principles of the KE concordat.

A HEP should include details of:

- the approach adopted to carry out the self-evaluation
- the key priority actions aligned to institutional strategic objectives and the institutional vision for KE, specifically drawing on the gap analysis
- recent successes and challenges
- the overall organisational approach for taking forward the actions outlined in section 3 (the action plan).

A provider may wish to draw on existing institutional information if it is relevant to the exercise, in addition to the summary of institutional strategic objectives for KE outlined in section 1, including, where applicable:

- HEIF accountability statements
- KEF narratives and results
- other sector concordats including, though not limited to:

- Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research
- Concordat to Support Research Integrity
- Researcher Development Concordat

The way in which self-evaluation is conducted varies among KE professionals, HEPs and internal departments. The approach will depend on experience, preferred approaches, resources and priorities. Given the diversity of HEPs, UUK and GuildHE do not want to outline a specific approach to self-evaluation. We have, however, worked collaboratively with PraxisAuril and the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) to encourage discussions on the various approaches to self-evaluation. We are also offering early discussions with HEPs on their approaches to self-evaluation and completing the action plan in an upcoming webinar in January 2021.

PraxisAuril, in collaboration with UUK, GuildHE and others, is committed to supporting members with self-evaluation tools and will work across the sector (including with other KE organisations) during the development year to deliver an approach to self-evaluation that is clear and constructive.

HEPs are encouraged to use their preferred tool for conducting a self-evaluation. The methodology and tool(s) used should be outlined in the self-evaluation summary.

The self-evaluation summary should not exceed **1000 words**.

Summaries will not be published during the development year. However, examples of good practice and tools used to conduct a self-evaluation may be used after the pilot year. These examples may be shared on the KE concordat portal with the relevant HEP's permission.

Please contact keconcordat-support@ncub.co.uk if you have any queries or difficulties when completing the self-evaluation summary. PraxisAuril and the GuildHE Research Network will continue to support their members throughout the KE concordat development year process.

3. Action plan

The action plan is designed to allow a HEP to reflect on the outcomes of the self-evaluation exercise and gap analysis in relation to the institution's ambition and tangible next steps. Actions should be produced by the HEP for future KE practices, policies and strategies using the results of the self-evaluation and gap analysis, with relevant enablers being used to demonstrate how the HEP will achieve its objectives.

The action plan will build on the self-evaluation exercise by identifying which principles and enablers should be prioritised to realise the HEP's KE vision. The HEP should draw on the gaps identified in section 2 (the self-evaluation and gap analysis), and translate these into actionable steps, outlining the top five priorities actions in the action plan.

In the action plan, HEPs will be asked to outline:

- the extent to which the HEP meets the principle
- how the HEP intends to improve on the gaps identified in the self-evaluation exercise

- its top five priority actions across the eight principles
- examples of good and innovative practice and enablers
- the timescales needed for the HEP to implement the relevant improvements
- the person or people responsible for the HEP's top five priority actions.

The enablers will not be viewed as a checklist. We encourage the use of innovative enablers that may be used and shared as examples of good practice with the sector. Examples of good, innovative practice should include practice that:

- has helped the HEP achieve its objectives
- may be of interest to other HEPs
- has been developed in collaboration with other partners and HEPs
- has been developed using local, national and international evidence.

The action plan should not exceed **500 words per principle** and should reflect the scale of KE at the HEP.

Submitted action plans will not be compared with those of other HEPs. Action plans will be evaluated individually against the context provided in the summary of institutional strategic objectives for KE. Innovative enablers and examples of good practice may be shared with the sector following the evaluation process.

HEPs will be provided with the action plan template and self-evaluation guidance from 26 October 2020 for the purposes of planning their submissions prior to availability of the online submission platform. The online submission platform will be made accessible via the KE portal from late November. The submission period opens on 1 May 2021 and the final date for submission is 31 July 2021.

Action plans will not be made publicly available or published in the development year, although elements may be used in the overall evaluation process. Examples of good practice and continuous improvement may be used after the development year.

Please contact keconcordat-support@ncub.co.uk if you have any queries or difficulties when completing the action plan.