

**Introduction**

1. The Knowledge Exchange Concordat is a sector led initiative aimed at enhancing and improving knowledge exchange between universities and a wide range of partners. Knowledge exchange encompasses a wide range of activities including knowledge transfer, enterprise, skills development and local regeneration activities. It also involves a wide range of partners including business, public sector, charity/voluntary bodies and local government/national bodies.
2. The concordat process involves committing to the concordat principles and voluntarily participating in the development year for England which involves a self-evaluation and generation of an action plan to develop and improve knowledge exchange practice. Action plans will be considered by external evaluators who will provide feedback on the clarity, coherence and ambition of action plans in the context of institutional strategies as well as identifying good and innovative practice.
3. We are keen to recruit a wide range of evaluators from both institutions and their partners, recognising the vital importance of partnership and collaboration to successful knowledge exchange. Whilst evaluators are unpaid, the role does provide a unique development opportunity and a chance to contribute to understanding and enhancing national activities.
4. We are also interested in a wide range of knowledge exchange experience including research and innovation partnerships, knowledge transfer and exchange, enterprise, local regeneration and economic growth, employer engagement, public and policy engagement, SME support and skills development.

**Expectations**

5. Following the submission of action plans by higher education providers (HEPs), each submission will be evaluated by an 'evaluation team'; a term referring to a collective set of evaluators. The evaluation panel refers to all evaluators, will be chaired by Dr Phil Clare and will meet to support development of evaluators and consider the overall evaluation of the development year.
6. The evaluation panel will consist of representatives from HEPs, both academic and professional staff, and partner organisations. We have a commitment to create a diverse panel because we understand the significance of having diverse representation in terms of experience, perspectives, and backgrounds. An associated written guide to higher education will be provided to all evaluators to ensure consistency in feedback and awareness of the language used in submissions.

7. Evaluators are expected to consider the [entire submission](#) and provide feedback on each section. Due to the diverse size and expertise of submitting institutions, action plans should not be compared to those from other HEPs, nor is the evaluation process a comparative ranking exercise.
8. All evaluators will be expected to review a maximum of ten action plans during the evaluation period outlined below. Each action plan will be a maximum length of twelve pages (A4, size twelve font).
9. Evaluators will be expected to engage in developmental activities including several webinars prior to the evaluation period to ensure that each evaluator is confident in appropriately evaluating action plans. These will take place between March and April 2021.
10. All evaluators will be expected to contribute to the overall evaluation process. Evaluators' commitment is expected to last until December 2021, with occasional feedback and involvement being asked of them throughout the writing of the overall evaluation report.

### **Timescales**

Deadline for action plan submissions	31 July 2021
Evaluation period for evaluators	02 August 2021 – 01 October 2021
Approval of feedback by KE concordat portal administrators	04 October 2021 – 22 October 2021
Feedback released by KE concordat portal administrators	25 October 2021

11. The named contact at a HEP participating in the development year for England will be able to submit their action plan between 1 May and 31 July 2021 via the KE concordat portal. The final deadline for submission is 23:59 31 July 2021.
12. Following the collation of action plans, evaluators will begin evaluating submissions from 02 August 2021. All action plans must be evaluated by 01 October 2021 and will require a minimum time commitment of 20 hours from each evaluator.
13. The KE concordat Operational Group will discuss the feedback given to each action plan with the relevant evaluators from 04 October to 22 October 2021. The KE concordat portal administrators will release feedback to all HEPs on Monday 25 October 2021. Feedback will be anonymised.

### **Evaluation process**

14. Every HEP action plan submitted will follow the format of the online action plan. The submission for evaluation will appear on the left of the screen, and an evaluation form on the right.
15. The evaluation form will allow an evaluator to write a free-text narrative with evaluation comments about:
  - a. the summary of the institutional strategic objectives for knowledge exchange
  - b. the self-evaluation (including gap analysis) summary
  - c. the action plan (following each individual principle)
  - d. priority actions
16. Evaluators are expected to provide feedback on the entire action plan submission. Evaluators will not be asked to objectively judge a submission on whether the information is correct. Instead, evaluators will be asked to comment on whether the information provided in the action plan is appropriate to that specific HEP based on the evaluator's personal experience and knowledge of the criteria listed in point 15.
17. Evaluators will be expected to comment on a distinctive commitment to continuous improvement, good practice, and innovative practice that could be of use to the sector.
18. All evaluators may suggest additional examples of good and innovative practice and possible enablers. Evaluators are expected to make suggestions and offer advice to a HEP. The evaluation process is intended to support individual institutions by offering advice, guidance and suggestions and help the sector and partners more broadly through identifying and sharing good and innovative practice.
19. Evaluators will be asked to comment on the:
  - a. summary of the institutional strategic objectives for KE
  - b. summary of the self-evaluation (including gap analysis)
  - c. ambition of the action plan in relation to institutional strategic objectives for KE
  - d. improvement plan for meeting the principles of the KE concordat
  - e. examples of good and innovative practices which can be shared with the sector
  - f. five priority actions and their relevance to the wider action plan
20. Feedback should be KE concordat principle based. Evaluators should review the extent to which the actions, enablers, improvement plans, timescales, and priority actions provided have been appropriately considered, resourced and are related to the strategic objectives for KE at the HEP.
21. **Comments should be situated in the context of the HEP, as outlined in the summary of the institutional strategic objectives for KE.** For example, a

smaller, specialist institution will be judged within that context and a larger, research-intensive institution may have different, broader objectives.

22. Evaluators should not quantitatively rank an action plan (i.e. by using a numerical scale) and should instead feedback using free-text narratives.

### **Allocation of submissions**

23. All action plan submissions will be sent to the KE concordat portal admins who will then manually allocate a single action plan to three evaluators. Each action plan will be evaluated by a different group of evaluators; however, each action plan will be evaluated by three individuals.
24. Evaluators are allocated to an action plan based on their familiarity with:
- a. the scale of knowledge exchange at the HEP
  - b. the size and location of the HEP
  - c. the [Knowledge Exchange Framework \(KEF\) cluster](#) of the HEP, if applicable
  - d. the institution specialism (i.e. STEM, arts, agriculture) of the HEP, if applicable
25. Evaluators from outside the higher education sector will be allocated to an action plan based on their familiarity with the criteria listed in point 24, in addition to:
- a. their experiences of working in partnership with the type of HEP
  - b. their understanding of knowledge exchange, public engagement, and partnerships in the region of the HEP
  - c. ensuring that every evaluation team has participation from a partner organisation
26. Early career evaluators will be allocated to an action plan based on their familiarity with the criteria listed in point 20, in addition to:
- a. the developmental opportunities available when evaluating an action plan from a HEP, with which the evaluator is less familiar
27. The evaluators who have been allocated a submission will be automatically emailed to notify them when an action plan is ready to be evaluated. The action plan can be accessed via the KE concordat portal by the evaluator. Instructions about how to access the evaluation system will be outlined at the developmental activities for evaluators (see point 5).

### **Feedback**

28. Each evaluator will submit their feedback to the KE concordat portal administrators for moderation. Feedback may be sent back to an evaluator if:

- a. the feedback is minimal (i.e. the feedback is not comprehensive and does not address every section of the action plan)
  - b. the feedback is incomplete (i.e. evaluators have left a section of the evaluation form empty)
  - c. the feedback is substantially irrelevant to the information in the submission made by the HEP
29. Evaluators will not be able to access the feedback and comments of the other two evaluators allocated to the same submission during the evaluation process. Comments will, however, be accessible as part of the consultations with the KE concordat Operational Group and evaluators.
30. There will be an opportunity for evaluators to add comments to the feedback already provided, following the consultation with the KE concordat Operational Group.
31. Once the feedback has been approved by the KE concordat portal administrators, it will be made available for the named contact at the HEP to view.
32. A named HEP contact can request clarification on feedback if necessary. Evaluators will therefore need to remain on-hand in the two weeks following the date for releasing feedback to HEPs, in the event of a HEP requiring clarification. However the evaluation process is intended to minimise the need for this.