

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.**

Further clarification:

In the action plan template, the top five priority actions were identified as part of the completed action plan (section 3). When HEPs make their submission through NCUB Apply, the top five priority actions should be completed in section 4.

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.

Further clarification:

Evaluators will consider the level of ambition in the self-evaluation summary, action plan and top five priority actions in the context of the institutional strategy for KE.

To support the feedback to HEPs, evaluators have indicated that specific information on resources available to the HEP would be helpful to contextualise the submission. If not already indicated, HEPs should provide information on overall resources to support their KE strategic objectives including HEIF allocations (where applicable) or other sources of funding for knowledge exchange, and an outline of available staffing and budget. An indication of funding, budgets and staffing will provide evaluators with further context of available resource. A supplementary limit of 150 words will be given to HEPs to minimise inconvenience given the stage HEPs are at with their drafting of action plans. The 150 words on resources should be uploaded as an additional document in section 1 (institutional strategic objectives summary). All evaluators will read the additional 150-word document on resources as part of their evaluation.

A HEP may reference and embed hyperlinks to further reading or upload additional documents through NCUB Apply in sections 1 and 2. A HEP will not be able to upload additional documents for sections 3 or 4. With the exception of the additional document on resources, evaluators are not required to read further reading or additional documents.

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.

Further clarification:

The gaps identified in the self-evaluation should inform the content in section 3. Evaluators will consider how realistic the self-evaluation is and how it has been used to inform section 3. If an action is to carry out further self-evaluation on a principle, this can be listed as a priority action.

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 *and the timescales needed to implement the relevant improvements*
- ~~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.

Further clarification:

On NCUB Apply, the word limit for section 3 is 500 words per Principle. For priority actions, use section 4 using a 250-word limit.

For ease of reference for evaluators, the priority actions originally identified in section 3 should be outlined in section 4. HEPs are asked to outline their top five priority actions and responsible parties for implementing the relevant improvements. This information has been moved from section 3 to section 4.

The self-evaluation scores a HEP provides for the extent to which it meets the principle should be realistic and relevant to the self-evaluation exercise. There should be a direct correlation between the gaps identified in section 2 and the self-evaluation score provided by the HEP. HEPs are reminded that this exercise is non-comparative and feedback will be given based on the information provided in the submission. Evaluators will consider how accurate the self-evaluation score is in relation to the information provided in sections 1 and 2.

Evaluators will consider the logic behind the self-evaluation scores given by a HEP and the links to the action plan. Evaluators will be more interested in the self-evaluation process and the action plan in the context of institutional priorities. There is not an expectation for low self-evaluation scores to lead to priority actions where these do not align with institutional priorities.

HEPs are encouraged use clear examples to support their action plan. Specific examples will allow evaluators to better understand the rationale behind the self-evaluation score

given, the self-evaluation process and identify good, innovative practice and enablers, and how a HEP intends to implement relevant improvements. HEPs are encouraged to provide at least one example of good, innovative practice for each principle, though are not expected to provide five for each principle. Innovative practice will be evaluated within the context of the HEP and where the HEP is in its KE journey.

When outlining its improvement plan for meeting the requirements of a principle, a HEP should outline the timescales needed to implement the relevant improvements. Timescales may be 0-6 months, 6-12 months, 12-18 months, or 24+ months. Timescales will provide evaluators with further clarity of whether the improvement plan is realistic and ambitious for the HEP.

4. Priority Actions (content moved from section 3)

The five priority actions allow HEPs to evidence how they will take their institutional priorities forward. Evaluators will be interested in how clearly the actions address the priorities identified in section 1 and the level of ambition in relation to the institutional strategic objectives for KE. There should be a logical flow throughout the submission and evaluators will consider the priority actions in relation to the information provided in the previous sections.

HEPs will be asked to identify:

- the top five priority actions (five in total)
- the principle the priority action relates to
- the responsible party for each priority action
- the timescales needed to implement each priority action.

The priority actions can address any of the eight principles of the KE concordat and should reflect the institutional priorities of the HEP. A HEP may include multiple priority actions that relate to a single principle and HEPs should not exceed five priority actions in total. The priority actions should be set in the context of the HEP and should identify the timescales needed to implement the actions. Evaluators will consider how relevant each priority action is to the institutional priorities outlined in section 1.

The responsible parties for the priority actions should be provided. Those identified as responsible parties should have the appropriate role and/or seniority to implement the priority action.

Each priority action should not exceed **250 words**. This word limit should be used to outline a single priority action, the responsible party/parties, their position and department, and relevant timescales.