Research Action Plan 2025-26

KEY PRIORITIES FOR ACTION & STRATEGIC LINKS *What are our priorities and how do they contribute to the delivery of the Research Strategy?*	SUCCESS MEASURES *What will be the outcome?*	OWNERSHIP *Who is responsible for leading the activity in partnership with stakeholders, monitoring and reporting on progress* *Date of completion of activity* *[Other key contributors to activity]*

Theme 1: Enhancing a Research Culture that supports our internationally renowned researchers and strengthens our research community

Core to our mission of excellence in research and education are the talented and creative people whose ambition is to produce new understanding and knowledge that is at the leading edge. To attract, retain and nurture the highest quality researchers we will provide the best possible intellectual, cultural, and physical environment. (RS 1 RS 2)

Objective 1: Nurturing an inclusive and supportive research culture and environment in which EDI exists across all activities and career stages

| 1.1 | Maintain our support offer for researchers, including our PGR community, and research support staff, including technicians, at all career stages. (RS 1.1) | The RDF is supporting researchers at every career stage to develop knowledge, skills and networks. An annual gap analysis on the content is implemented and resources, training, and events continue to be revised and improved accordingly. Impact on supporting our research environment is tracked and evaluated through delivery of the Research Strategy objectives.

We are delivering on the actions within the Technician Action Plan as revised for 2024 – 2027.

Established researchers at Essex are playing a key role in building a research culture within their respective discipline areas and more widely by offering, e.g., grant, publishing or impact masterclasses. | **Director of Organisational Development**

July 2026

[Head of Academic and Professional Practice
Head of Research Development and Impact
Research Governance and Planning Manger
Faculty Deans (R)
Dean PGRE
Director of Inclusion, People & Culture |

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			Head of Corporate Communications Director of Library and Cultural Services]
1.2	Implement the Research Equality action plan to support the embedding of EDI considerations across all our research activities. (RS 2.2)	We are implementing the approved EDI action plan for research to ensure EDI considerations are embedded across our research activities and continually strengthening our research culture. The Research Equality action plan is supporting our REF 2029 preparations and identifying, sharing and championing best practice with regard to the development of an inclusive and enabling research culture.	**PVC-R** July 2026 Research Committee Head of Research Governance and Planning. Director of People and Culture Director of Organisational Development Director of Inclusion, People & Culture
1.3	Undertake a review of the Annual Research Review process.	The revised Annual Research Review process is more fully realising its developmental potential, acknowledging researchers' achievements, across outputs, grant capture, knowledge exchange and impact, identifying best practice and ensuring training and support measures are in place where needed.	**PVC-R** July 2026 Head of Research Governance and Planning Research Excellence and Planning Manager Director of P&C Faculty Deans (R) Heads of Departments Directors of Research

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1.4	Build on Transitions and Transformations Project ▪ Development of targeted mentoring and sponsorship programmes ▪ Championing EDI by removing barriers to the research environment and promoting an open and inclusive research community Ensure those responsible for making research applications are trained to understand the EDI considerations in research	Collaboration with Vitae on inclusivity within the RDF and EDF is enabling us to develop our support mechanisms to optimise their inclusivity. Major grant, Centre and DTP/CDT applications are reviewed to ensure that EDI considerations are embedded across research activities. Successful recruitment of the EDI-focussed, centrally funded PGR scholarship students from under-represented groups. Recruitment of ASER staff attracts and retains the highest quality colleagues from under-represented groups.	**Dean PGRE** July 2026 [Director of People and Culture Director of Organisational Development Director of Inclusion, People & Culture Head of Research Development and Impact Faculty Deans (R) Heads of Department]

Theme 2: Our Globally Significant Transformational Research

The delivery of impactful research for societal benefit is a major pillar of our aspirational and ambitious research agenda including contributions to local, regional, national and international networks involving partners from academia, business, third sector groups, local government and policy makers. (RS 3)

Objective 2: Progress and implement plans for the next REF submission

2.1	Advance preparations for future REF performance	Our participation in the PCE Pilot for four Units of Assessment (UoAs) has enabled us to established strengths and areas for improvement, including gaps in EDI data collection and dissemination, practice and performance in relation to People, Culture and Environment. We have developed and are implementing clear actions to optimise the PCE submission across all UoAs.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Head of Research Governance and Planning

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			Research Excellence and Planning Manager UoA Leads and Directors of Research]
		Tableau Dashboards are being rolled out to support REF planning. This will include data on outputs, impact and various supporting metrics for Environment and Culture including grant capture, PGR completion, EDI and related information. UoA allocations are finalised to support the REF2029 volume calculations Implementation of the CPPE Strategy is supporting the development of impact case studies, disciplinary level evidence statements, public and policy engagement champions and funding applications across UoAs.	July 2026 [Head of Department and Directors of Research] First iteration Summer 2024 [Head of Governance and Planning] **Director of CPPE** July 2026 [Head of Research Development and Impact]
2.2	Maximising the positive impact of Postgraduate Researchers on our research and future REF submission. ([RS 2.2])	Growth in quality and quantity of the PGR community. We are maintaining or growing external funding for PGR students resulting in PGR Student Growth.	**Dean PGRE** July 2026 [Senior Postgraduate Research Education Manager Faculty Deans (PG)

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			CER (Marketing and Student Recruitment and Communications)]
Objective 3: Optimise our strategic approach to KEF, knowledge exchange, and social, cultural and economic benefit through research			
3.1	Adapt and continue optimising our strategic approach to KEF in the context of the changes in the KEF methodology. (RS 3.2)	We are maintaining our top 50% performance in each perspective, while excelling in some perspectives. Our HEBCI return is optimised in a way that continues to maximise our HEIF income, increasing year on year.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Director of REO Faculty Deans (R) Deputy Director (Enterprise) Communications and Web Teams]
3.2	Further develop and optimise industry partners, including the KTP portfolio, to increase external income and secure wider benefit (RS 3.2)	Our KTP portfolio is further expanded and diversified across the University's departments and our top 3 position for KTPs in UK maintained. We are scaling-up our KTP partnerships systematically to support larger research funding applications. We are developing the Knowledge Exchange opportunities identified in the Health Wellbeing and Care Hub (HWCH): Research & Impact Opportunities plan.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Director of REO Faculty Deans (R) Deputy Director (Enterprise) Head of Research Development and Impact Head of Corporate Communications]
3.3	Embedding knowledge exchange (KE) as foundational in enabling	Through implementation of the Enterprise and Innovation Sub-strategy more staff, including ECRs, are engaging with KE through a range of mechanisms for	**PVC-R**

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	the delivery of impact from our research and ensuring that our researchers are supported in this activity. (RS 3.2)	connecting with business e.g., innovation vouchers, consultancy, collaborative and contract research.	July 2026 [Director of REO Deputy Director (Enterprise) Head of Research Development and Impact Director of CPPE]
3.4	Increase the visibility and provide support for commercialisation across the University. (RS 3.2)	A growing IP portfolio is supporting an increase in commercialisation activities. Business cases for new spin-outs are being developed and presented for approval.	**PVC-R** July 20265 [Director of REO Deputy Director (Enterprise),]
Objective 4: Ensuring that our research reflects a commitment to the Climate & Ecological Emergency			
4.1	Ensure the Institution remains compliant to continue accessing available funds (e.g., LEAF accreditation) (RS 2.1)	Participation in the UKRI Environmental Sustainability in Research & Innovation Concordat is helping us develop an informed approach to measuring the carbon and ecological footprint of our research. A pan-institutional understanding of our existing and emerging strengths in climate, ecology and sustainability research is creating further opportunities for research and innovation aligned to the declaration of a climate emergency. LEAF Accreditation to at least Bronze Standard and Silver where required for funders is achieved for all labs identified in the first cohort of the LEAF delivery plan and an ongoing plan to onboard further labs is in place.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [CEEAG Director of REO Head of Research Development and Impact Sustainability Manager]

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4.2	Embedding UN Sustainable Development Goals ([RS 2.1](#))	Our communications have built on and reflect our progress and international strengths, as shown in our performance in the THE Impact Rankings. Our annual UN SDG report has been promoted, embedded on our website, and included in key messaging and identifying stories and case studies which powerfully illustrate our strengths to key audiences including students, applicants, partners, and stakeholders.	The THE report is completed between September and November with publication online in the first week of November to meet submission requirements. [Corporate Communications team Web and Digital Media team]
Objective 5: Increasing our research capacity, visibility and reputation			
5.1	Fully exploit research Institutes and Centres to increase their visibility and external funding and explore opportunities for the future development of institutes and centres, including inter- and cross- disciplinary options. ([RS 3.1](#))	Institutes and Centres are collaborating effectively to increase research capacity evidenced by high quality outputs/increased grant submission – including to Horizon Europe – and development of impact cases. Departments across the three Faculties are engaging more strategically in the work of our research Institutes – HRC, IADS, IPHW, ISER and UKDA - to strengthen further our interdisciplinary approach to tackling major challenges.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Faculty Deans (R) Director of REO Deputy Director (Enterprise) Head of Research Development and Impact Communications team Web Editing and Digital Media Team]
5.2	Continue to enhance the University's global reputation and standing in the THE World University Rankings, in light of the new methodology	An International Research Collaboration Strategy has been approved through USG and progress on implementing the strategy is being monitored through PAG, to improve international reputation and grow collaboration.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Executive Deans

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			HoDs Dean of Partnerships (R)]
Objective 6: Developing new and enhancing existing strategic partnerships			
6.1	Further develop partnership opportunities arising from Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) and Young University for the Future of Europe (YUFE) (RS 3.1)	Our relationships with YERUN and YUFE continue to strengthen, evidenced by at least one joint funding application, successful staff visits, and at least one joint workshop (resource permitting). The implementation of our European Engagement Plan, generally, and the Research Strategy EU Networks (YERUN, YUFE) specifically, are helping to optimise strategic and productive relations with YERUN and YUFE. Implementation of the Southern Denmark University platform on research collaborations is promoting enhanced collaboration across the YERUN network and we are fully capitalising on opportunities.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Dean of Partnerships (R) Director of REO Faculty Deans (R) Head of Research Development and Impact Deputy Director (Enterprise)]
6.2	Continue to establish and nurture relationships with local and regional government and health providers and housing stakeholders to identify innovation and partnership opportunities and contribute fully to delivering on regional development and the place agenda. (RS 3.1)	We are actively supporting Colchester City Council, Tendring District Council and Essex County Council to address local social and economic challenges. Support development of Freeport East, including Bathside Bay and Gateway 14 sites, including the innovation and skills workstreams required by government. Delivery of work with Tendring DC to attract funding for pilot proposals for support of cluster formation around Bathside Bay Our research alignment with East of England Applied Research Council (ARC), East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT) partnerships and Integrated Care Board is providing access to NIHR funding. We are working with Health Education England to identify funding sources and opportunities to develop our health-related educational and engagement offer.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Dean of Partnerships (R) Director of REO Faculty Deans (R) Deputy Director (Enterprise)]

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6.3 Work with the Director of Eastern ARC to increase the reputation, visibility and impact of the Eastern ARC. Emphasis on the role of Eastern ARC as one of the University's key partners and strengthening that relationship. (RS 3.1)	Stronger collaborations across the Eastern ARC partners is resulting in collaborative, large-scale grant capture, high-profile events, and cross-Eastern ARC researcher mentoring. We are realising the added value of University of Sussex joining EARC through strengthening research and KE collaboration in the form of cross-institutional culture and funded projects.	**Director of Eastern ARC** July 2026

Theme 3: Resources and Infrastructure

We will invest strategically in our research infrastructure and facilities, maximising supporting funding from external sources, to strengthen our peaks of excellence and enable the development of new interdisciplinary priority themes with the potential to be world class as well as uniquely Essex. **(RS 2)**

Objective 7: Invest in resources, infrastructure, and equipment to maintain existing and develop new research strengths

7.1 Develop capital investment priorities, with an emphasis on capacity to leverage external match funding in support of the University's research mission. (RS 2.2)	Improved research facilities are enhancing departments' capacity to produce high quality research outputs and/or generate funding bids. Areas for strategic investment are being identified, vision documents produced, and support provided to increase external income capture, staff retention and to build critical mass to enable global competitiveness. Trusts and Foundations are engaged across infrastructure investment plans from an early stage to support research infrastructure priorities and secure external funding contributions. Collaborative mechanisms that maximise the sharing of equipment are fully exploited and centralised Inventory project is being delivered.	**Deputy Vice Chancellor** July 2026 [PVC-R Business Analyst (Equipment & Technician Support Review)]

Objective 8: Increase external research funding

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8.1	a. Strengthen relationships with key funding bodies to ensure we are well prepared to respond effectively to their changing priorities. b. Provide consistent support for our research community to identify funding opportunities, develop funding applications, optimise grant success, and ensure effective post-award management and delivery. (RS 1.1, 2.1)	University external research funding continues to increase in comparison with 2023/24 position. Relationships across Eastern ARC are enhancing strategic engagement with funding bodies. Regular meetings with contacts in UKRI Funding Councils are generating actionable insights to support the strategic development of larger-scale funding applications.	**PVC-R** July 2026 [Director of REO Deputy Director (Research Support) Deputy Director (Enterprise) Head of Research Development and Impact Head of Philanthropy Faculty Deans (R) Director of Communications and External Relations Corporate Communications team Director of Eastern ARC]
8.2	Developing collaboration with businesses and charities and maximising opportunities for PGR funding from these external sources. (RS 2.1)	Targeted collaboration is generating business or charity funded scholarships, placements, and internship opportunities for PGRs .	**Dean PGRE** July 2026 [Director of REO Deputy Director REO (Enterprise) Head of Philanthropy]
8.3	Continue to secure EU research funding as sole institution and in partnership with others (RS 3.1, 2.1)	Delivery of our EU Research Strategy, drawing on YUFE and YERUN partnerships, is supporting successful individual- and multi-institutional funding applications to European schemes.	**PVC-R** July 2026

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		Academics are supported in applying for Horizon Europe grants following UK association.	[Director of REO Head of Research Development and Impact Dean of Partnerships EU Faculty Deans (R)]