



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*

# UNIVERSITY OF YORK RESEARCH STRATEGY 2023-2030

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# STRATEGY 'AT A GLANCE'

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# OUR PURPOSE

At the University of York, the advancement of knowledge through the development of ideas, theories and concepts, and through collaboration with others, is done for public good.

We are tackling important environmental, social and economic challenges by understanding and addressing, for example, the climate crisis, improving energy and food security, tackling disease, reducing inequalities, driving positive change in education and culture, and creating more cohesive, resilient, safe and thriving communities.

Through our curiosity-driven research and engagement with partners we lay the foundation for addressing issues not yet known.

# OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE: A Thriving Research Community



## IDEAS AND CREATIVITY: A Centre of Research Excellence



## IMPACT: Delivery of Public Good through our Research



## PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE: A Trusted and Effective Partner



## SUPPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE: An Environment that Ensures We Realise Our Ambitions



**OUR OUTSTANDING REPUTATION SETS THE STAGE FOR EVEN MORE INSPIRATIONAL RESEARCH**

# 1. **OUR PURPOSE: CURIOSITY-DRIVEN AND ACTION ORIENTED RESEARCH**

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**At the University of York, the advancement of knowledge is done for public good.** Research for us encompasses the full spectrum of knowledge generation and exchange to the creation of impact, and we do not draw a hard distinction between these activities, in the way they are performed, promoted or supported. The interplay between these facets of research pervades our strategic approach, as does their relation to education, partnership building and engagement. Knowledge itself – and the creativity of thought and approaches that help generate it – is valued at York for the contributions it makes to understanding and shaping the world in which we live. It is cherished and promoted in its own right and enriches individuals, our communities and society. We steadfastly uphold the freedom of intellectual inquiry and expression. It is through our **curiosity-driven** research and engagement with partners that we can address society’s current challenges and lay the foundation to address future problems as yet unknown.

Through the development of ideas, theories and concepts, and through **action oriented** collaboration with

practitioners and the public, we work on solutions to important environmental, social and economic challenges. We will bring our knowledge to bear on, for example, the climate crisis, improving energy and food security, tackling disease, reducing inequalities, driving positive change in education and culture, and creating more cohesive, resilient, safe and thriving communities – here at home in York and across the globe. Our success will be measured by the positive and lasting contributions we make to our economy, society, culture and the environment.

We are proud of the outstanding reputation of our research and gratified to see this repeatedly recognised via external assessments such as the UK’s Research Excellence Framework. Our location in York affords us with unique opportunities to work with partners in the City and region in the promotion of a just, equitable and sustainable world. Our ambition to be a world-leading academic institution also calls for collaboration with international partners. We make it our business to co-create knowledge with our partners – at home and abroad – in ways that enhance and inform each other.

We recognise the importance of the research environment within which our work is done, and therefore we continuously seek to enrich it so that all who may contribute can do so at the highest levels of their abilities. In short, the research environment at York is shaped by and advances the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, global engagement and environmental sustainability. Through our uniformly excellent research done within and across disciplinary boundaries, and with collaboration across all roles and career stages, we maintain and promote both **independent minds and a collective spirit.**



**2.**

# **UNIVERSITY PRINCIPLES IN ACTION**

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**The University's overall Strategy articulates a set of four main principles to guide action. Here we show how those principles come to life through research and knowledge exchange.**

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Freedom of inquiry and expression are central to intellectual advancement and to social and economic development. Upholding them is tantamount to assuring that every single member of our community is treated with the same respect, is afforded equitable opportunities and feels at ease.

In research, this principle will help us in the creation of diverse teams with equal voices and broad insights, permeating the topics we investigate, the methods we employ and the choice of our collaborators. It will inform our recruitment, selection and reward methods, diversifying our postgraduate research student and staff base, and informing our research culture and the support we offer. We will utilise our research and expertise to ensure our institutional policies are informed by evidence-based best practice.

### **Collaboration**

Through the partnerships we create in research, education and engagement, we put to rest the assumption that competition alone lies at the heart of progress. Instead, it will be the collaboration across different disciplines, with people from different backgrounds, with different expertise, experiences and insight, that will create a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

Collaboration will be embedded in every aspect of how we perform and support our research activities. From encouraging novel interdisciplinary approaches to creating and tackling research questions, to ensuring we invest in the people, policies and systems to support partnership working, we will remove barriers to collaboration and encourage new opportunities.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Improving environmental conditions is not only a prerequisite for societies and economies to flourish, and for people to live healthy and fulfilled lives; it is also a powerful driver for research, education and partnerships. The complexity of environmental sustainability requires distinctly new knowledge, fundamentally new ways of generating it and radically new ways of understanding and acting on it.

The creation and implementation of our Code of Practice for Sustainable Research will guide how we conduct our research and collaborations, including embracing technology and new methods to reconsider travel, improve our physical estate and the efficiency with which it is used, and the environmental impact of our research methods. Through our procurement guidance we will use environmental sustainability as a driver of decision-making for the purchase and use of capital equipment. Our people and expertise will support regional activities and we will find effective ways to incentivise and reward research into environmental sustainability across all disciplines.

### **Internationalism**

We embrace global awareness and responsibility in all that we do. We seek partners with complementary skill sets, ambitions and networks, so that together we can address pressing and emerging environmental, social and economic challenges efficiently and effectively.

In research, we will consider the international dimension to both our research topics and research partnerships. We aim to make conducting research on a global stage as easy as with our national partners, by removing barriers and improving planning, processes and support, giving fresh impetus to pursuing international collaborations and funding through institutional relationships and individual partnerships alike.

**3.**

# **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

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## Our Strategic Objectives support the ambitions and intended outcomes of our Research Strategy:

### PEOPLE AND CULTURE: A Thriving Research Community

Creating the conditions and culture within which diverse people, ideas and approaches can flourish - enabling our community to work with integrity, build equitable and respectful collaborations, and seek and tackle new intellectual challenges.



### IDEAS AND CREATIVITY: A Centre of Research Excellence

Nurturing high quality and ambitious research across our broad discipline base - leading the generation and exchange of knowledge and understanding, inspired by working within and across disciplines and through co-creation of research with a wide range of partners.



### IMPACT: Delivery of Public Good through our Research

Addressing environmental, social, cultural and economic problems with compassion and rigour, locally, nationally and globally. Ensuring our research is open and shared to enable effective pathways to impact, influencing teaching and research practice in the global academic community and beyond.



### PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE: A Trusted and Effective Partner

Developing equitable and sustainable partnerships in the City, region, nationally and globally to increase our reach and influence. Working together in synergy to inspire new ideas, addressing common challenges.



### SUPPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE: An Environment that Ensures We Realise Our Ambitions

Building and maintaining the professional expertise, estate, equipment, digital infrastructure and income streams required to foster creativity, deliver world-class research, innovation and knowledge exchange, and to increase the financial autonomy and environmental sustainability of the University.



# 4.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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**To achieve our Strategic Objectives we must focus on particular areas of activity. The Strategic Priorities below describe these areas of focus and which will be reviewed and updated periodically as we make progress on our aims and as we respond to external opportunities and challenges.**

# OBJECTIVE 1

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE: A Thriving Research Community

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Creating the conditions and culture within which diverse people, ideas and approaches can flourish - enabling our community to work with integrity, build equitable and respectful collaborations, and seek and tackle new intellectual challenges.



### **Priority 1.1 Nurture a sustainable and progressive research culture**

Our research community and its culture encompass everyone who plays a role in the research and knowledge exchange process including students, academic and research staff, technicians and professional support. We strive to ensure that undertaking and supporting research is intellectually stimulating, rewarding and enjoyable, and that spaces and time are provided for interaction, reflection, creativity and growth. Through our actions, plans, and structures, we will retain and expand our collegiate and collaborative culture. We will create a diverse and equitable community which is welcoming and respectful of different perspectives and ideas, models for conducting research and of governance structures that represent the communities they serve.

### **Priority 1.2 Create career paths, incentives and reward mechanisms that develop and encourage all members of the research community**

We recognise that differential support is needed at each career stage to enable all of our exceptional staff to reach their potential. We will invest to diversify and grow our postgraduate research student and researcher community,

incentivising and supporting a wider range of individuals to come into academia. We will expand our capacity for practice-based research and for facilitating the movement of people in and out of academia across all career stages. By establishing clearer and more stable career paths for our non-academic research community members – such as technicians, PRISMs<sup>1</sup> and research managers – we will improve our ability to recruit and retain excellent staff. We will ensure all of our existing staff have the time, incentives and resources to further their own professional development and careers, and also mentor and lead the next generation, contributing to academic citizenship beyond York.

### **Priority 1.3 Provide time and reward for staff to deliver on the institution's research and impact ambitions**

We will ensure that the personal investment needed to deliver on our research and impact ambitions is properly recognised in each individual's portfolio of work so that expectations are clear and a healthy work-life balance is achievable for all staff and students. We will ensure that the full ecosystem of curiosity-driven through to action oriented research is equally valued, rewarded and recognised. We aim for

all students and staff to be motivated and empowered to deliver research and impact commensurate with the University's ambition and society's needs.

### **Priority 1.4 - Meet the needs of our postgraduate research student community from recruitment to graduation and beyond**

York's postgraduate research students are an integral part of our research community. We will continue to encourage and facilitate innovation in the design and delivery of York's postgraduate research and training in order to attract and retain committed and curious postgraduate research students from around the world. We will diversify our community so that it is more representative of wider society, encouraging applicants from a broad range of backgrounds and careers into postgraduate research. We will grow our community by increasing the flexibility and relevance of our research degree programmes and ensuring our recruitment processes are effective. We will provide the support and training to prepare our postgraduate research students to succeed in future professions within a global job market.

### **Priority 1.5 - Embed the principles and culture of open research and responsible research and innovation**

We will encourage and support staff and students to explore and engage with open research practices in their work and study, acknowledging that research should be as open as possible, and as closed as necessary. We will ensure research processes are transparent and create opportunities for outputs and methods to be reused, reproduced and credited, embracing disciplinary differences and needs. We will develop our support structures to enable researchers to gain a greater understanding of responsible research and innovation and therefore go on to design their research to fully incorporate those principles. We will continue to champion, and have clear expectations for, the highest standards of research integrity and ethics.



<sup>1</sup>PRISM: Professional Research Investment and Strategy Managers

## **OBJECTIVE 2**

# **IDEAS AND CREATIVITY: A Centre of Research Excellence**

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Nurturing high quality and ambitious research across our broad discipline base - leading the generation and exchange of knowledge and understanding, inspired by working within and across disciplines and through co-creation of research with a wide range of partners.



### Priority 2.1 - Undertake and enjoy excellence in research

We will deliver internationally-recognised excellent research across our breadth of disciplines – such as was celebrated in the 2021 UK Research Excellence Framework – with the ambition of further enhancing our reputation via a range of measures. We will enable our researchers to play leading and influential roles in ambitiously advancing their disciplines, shaping new fields of research and pioneering new ways of working. We will support and encourage more of our research teams to lead large consortia and large-scale centres of excellence. Our outstanding research will be an attractor to recruit and retain talent from across the globe, enhancing our ability to create lasting impact on academic disciplines and on society.

### Priority 2.2 - Advance curiosity-driven research

We will ensure that the fundamental importance of curiosity-driven research is recognised, valued and shared, thereby creating an environment where freedom of thought and expression, curiosity and exploration are celebrated. We recognise that curiosity and inspiration are the defining features of research, and we place research at the core of our teaching and partnership activities. We value rigorous methods and research practices

and understand that the foundation for addressing complex challenges comes through both the inquisitive questions we ask and the insightful answers we uncover. We will use our research to inspire and equip the next generation as a force for good.

### Priority 2.3 - Advance interdisciplinary research practice

York has an outstanding track record of bringing together the distinct knowledge, perspectives and practices of different disciplines to enhance creativity and deepen understanding, thereby having a profound impact on both fundamental research and complex 'real-world' challenges. We will continue to adopt creative and agile strategies for the design of organisational structures and roles that embed interdisciplinary thinking and practice in new ways. Interdisciplinary practice also provides mechanisms to improve equality, diversity and inclusion, providing more varied career paths, experiences and team structures. We will invest in the development of our research community as we nurture the interdisciplinary thinkers of the future through our flagship doctoral training programmes and by creating and sustaining a talent pipeline of strong interdisciplinary practitioners.

### Priority 2.4 - Develop research participation and involvement

We will build our research involvement expertise to support inclusive, ethical, compassionate and reciprocal participatory interactions with communities and the public in a far broader context. In doing so, we will strive for an open and accessible research culture with a goal of further democratising our research. Those who participate in studies as research subjects will also be drawn from a more diverse population, and we commit to sharing the findings and next steps with them. Adopting an inclusive approach to partnering with our student body will advance research thinking and methods, stimulate new ideas and prepare the next generation of researchers for independent thought.

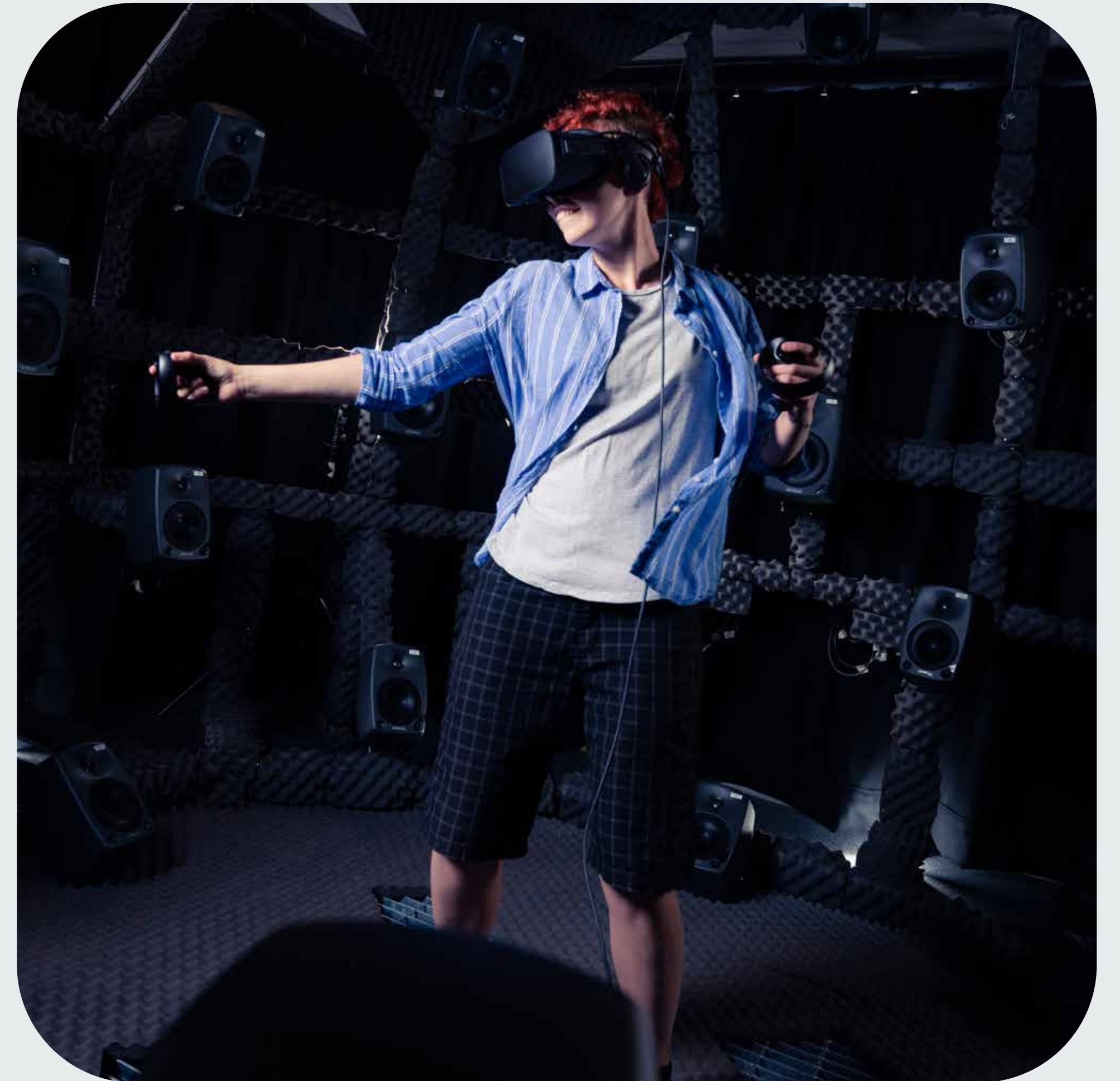


## OBJECTIVE 3

# IMPACT: Delivery of Public Good through our Research

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Addressing environmental, social, cultural and economic problems with compassion and rigour, locally, nationally and globally. Ensuring our research is open and shared to enable effective pathways to impact, and influencing teaching and research practice in the global academic community and beyond.



### **Priority 3.1 Promote and value the sharing of ideas and knowledge to generate impact**

The generation of impact for public good is integral to our research ambitions and strategies: we will embrace and support the breadth and diversity of routes to impact that flow from our knowledge generation and co-creation, recognising all scales of contribution along our pathways to impact. Our effectiveness will be recognised externally including via the UK's Research Excellence and Knowledge Exchange Frameworks. We will foster and develop a mindset and skill set for knowledge exchange – including engagement, networking, team working and communications – in all members of our community, with opportunities for personal growth, reward and recognition. We will value our role in wider capacity building as our skilled staff and students take their careers beyond York, capitalising on new relationships to expand the further scope of our impact.

### **Priority 3.2 Expand the impact of our business engagement**

By 2030, the University of York will be known for its ambitious business partnerships, through which we will innovate alongside business and industry to create a more

equitable and sustainable future for all. Our success will be measured by the impact we deliver together, improving business products, services and practices, as we consider not only economic prosperity, but also society, culture and the environment. Our wider University strategic principles will guide the types of relationships we seek and sustain, enhancing our reputation with industry and also with potential students and research collaborators.

### **Priority 3.3 - Engage to inform and shape policy and public discourse**

We will draw on expertise and knowledge across all disciplines to inform and shape the development of policy; locally, nationally and internationally. We will create and harness opportunities to inspire and influence public debate on a wide range of topics stemming from our research. By demonstrating the value and accessibility of higher education to broader society, we will open up possibilities for a wider range of future interactions within our community.

### **Priority 3.4 - Foster entrepreneurial activity arising from our research**

Entrepreneurial applications of our research provide valuable routes to impact that benefit wider society through the development of new products and services, as well as generating income for the

University. Embedding an entrepreneurial mindset and encouraging the development of personal entrepreneurship also positively enriches our wider research and knowledge exchange activities and provides fulfilling career avenues for staff and students alike. We will encourage and reward the exploitation of our intellectual property, the creation and delivery of specialist training, and access to our skills and facilities, both via traditional commercialisation routes and through new ventures such as social enterprises and not-for-profit businesses.





## **OBJECTIVE 4**

# **PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE: A Trusted and Effective Partner**

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Developing equitable and sustainable partnerships in our City, region, nationally and globally to increase our reach and influence. Working together in synergy to inspire new ideas, addressing common challenges.



### **Priority 4.1 Promote and manage partnership opportunities that deliver positive change**

Partnership opportunities may be found close to home, in our City and region, or further afield both nationally and across the globe. In all cases we are committed to growing and maintaining partnerships where we can work together toward mutual goals, with mutual benefits. Partnerships will help shape our future research directions, grow sustainable sources of income, and create career-enhancing opportunities for staff and students. Wherever these opportunities arise, and as they evolve, our decision making on partnership development will be transparent and be informed by our mission to deliver public good, choosing to work with partners who share our core principles.

### **Priority 4.2 - Establish an effective role in our local community to use our research to deliver public good**

Place matters to what we do. Effective relationships with local partners ensure that our research improves conditions in our local communities - for example by fostering environmental sustainability and climate resilience, understanding and addressing pressing societal needs and inequalities, improving the efficacy of health and social

care, or supporting education and skills development. Recognising the need for knowledge, skills and financial resources, we will build ambitious and effective networks at scale to attract significant inward investment into the region. Through targeted investments and support, we will ensure that they deliver considerable economic impact on sectors such as the bioeconomy and the creative industries.

### **Priority 4.3 - Forge new international partnerships where research drives engagement and knowledge creation**

Many of the challenges we encounter are global in nature, and as such we must continue to develop our global partnerships to realise our aim of local commitment on a global scale. In doing so we must be alert to new partnership opportunities and new approaches, bearing in mind that partnerships can only be forged over time. We will build these partnerships around our key areas of strength, for example, through the work of centres and institutes that cut across academic disciplines, and around the interplay of research, education and knowledge exchange.

### **Priority 4.4 - Increase our influence by effective use of our national and international networks**

The University of York is not alone in building its partnerships: we are a member of networks, and our network partners themselves are fostering relations with other organisations. We will use our membership in national and international networks to identify and exchange best practice, seek and access new sources of funding, and help shape research and policy agendas to deliver on our mandate to be a University for Public Good. In doing so, we will participate as a valued member in our networks, thereby influencing our sector and society at large.



## **OBJECTIVE 5**

# **SUPPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE: An Environment that Ensures We Realise Our Ambitions**

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Building and maintaining the professional expertise, estate, equipment, digital infrastructure and income streams required to foster creativity, deliver world-class research, innovation and knowledge exchange, and to increase the financial autonomy and environmental sustainability of the University.



### **Priority 5.1 - Deliver effective, efficient and resilient processes and systems to support research**

We will develop and implement a cross-institutional research service, built around an interconnected professional support community, to deliver seamless, consistent and enhanced end-to-end support for research. This approach will facilitate further externally-funded research, innovation and knowledge exchange activity, and minimise the administrative burden by streamlining processes and improving resource allocation, as well as offering improved career structures and development opportunities for professional service staff.

### **Priority 5.2 - Build our capability to grow our partnerships**

We will elevate and enhance external engagement across the University and ensure its value is embedded throughout our leadership and planning structures. We will develop the support services and associated policies and processes to ensure that sustainable, scalable engagement is conducted effectively and efficiently – offering improvements in how the University engages in all types of external research partnerships, and contributing to our financial autonomy.

### **Priority 5.3 - Deliver an environmentally sustainable, high quality physical and digital estate to support world-leading research**

We will adopt a targeted approach to making institutional investments in new sustainable research infrastructure, facilities and capacity – ensuring that these are prioritised in line with prevailing University, Faculty, School and Departmental strategic priorities. We will increase grant capture and research capacity, including by the alignment of matched funding with awards from external bodies and through partnerships with private sector investment.

### **Priority 5.4 - Raise our ambition and capacity for growing and diversifying externally-funded research**

We will increase the scale and diversity of income streams for research, contributing to improving the financial autonomy of the University. We will also raise both our ability and ambition to secure and deliver externally-funded activity by improving how we use our time and resources, making effective use of digital capabilities, and expanding and deepening our engagement with a wide range of external partners, funders and collaborators. We will incentivise and support our staff to make their research practices more environmentally sustainable, using our resources and decision-making processes to drive change.

### **Priority 5.5 - Ensure the York Graduate Research School provides an institutional focal point**

The delivery of an agile and efficient service to our postgraduate research students and their supervisors depends on consistency and clarity in policies, systems and processes, across all Faculties. We will support all postgraduate research students at every stage of their time with us, regardless of their source of funding. As the York Graduate Research School evolves to meet the new needs of Faculties, we will combine resources and add value to deliver on our ambitions to grow and diversify our postgraduate research student population.





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