1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This strategy document responds to the recommendation of the Oxford University Innovation Working Group to develop a communications strategy. The aim is to help improve the profile, internally and externally, of the University’s achievements in innovation, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship and to pitch Oxford as a place where talented and creative people can generate and exploit new ideas. This document identifies:

- the University’s communications priorities for innovation
- a top-level narrative around innovation
- the key audiences we are seeking to reach
- how the University can improve the internal and external profile of its achievements
- ways of better coordinating the innovation communications activities that take place across the collegiate University.

1.2. In doing so, this strategy serves two main purposes:

- to provide a basis for better coordination of cross-University communications activity for innovation
- to provide guidance on the University’s objectives and messages for academic divisions, departments and colleges in communicating their own innovation activities.
1.3. To achieve these aims, it is proposed that a campaign-based approach is adopted to innovation communications activity, which would focus on a new cross-cutting theme every few months with tailored messages targeted at different audiences. These campaigns would be supported by communications ‘toolkits’ for use across the collegiate University. This would maintain the momentum and freshness of our innovation communications over time, and allow divisions, departments, colleges and research projects to engage with different themes depending on relevance and available resource.

1.4. This document is not a detailed plan of this specific communications activity. The campaign themes and activity plans will be developed by the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD), Research Services (Knowledge Exchange and Impact Team) (RS KEIT), Oxford University Innovation and the divisions once the strategy has been approved and levels of resourcing agreed. However, Annex 1 outlines an action plan for a summer/autumn 2016 communications campaign starting with the announcement to rename Isis Innovation to Oxford University Innovation. This plan illustrates how a coordinated campaign approach can ensure consistent messages about Oxford’s priorities are reinforced across a range of channels (one of the issues identified in the ‘Oxfordshire Innovation Engine’ Report commissioned by the University and Science Oxford).  

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1. The Innovation Working Group report to Council outlined the importance of innovation:

*It is strategically important for the University of Oxford to be (and be seen to be) a global leader in knowledge exchange, innovation and entrepreneurship. This is a key route by which the fruits of research and teaching contribute to the good of the nation and the world. A vibrant knowledge exchange and innovation culture will contribute to sustained research and teaching excellence by helping to attract the best and most creative students, academics and researchers from around the world. It will also help to secure research and research-related funding from public funders, including the Research Councils, the EU, the NIHR, HEFCE, charities and business. Engagement with businesses and other organisations can help to identify interesting problems and stimulate high quality research. Education and training in entrepreneurship to help develop skills in turning ideas into action, including new or improved products and services, is increasingly demanded and valued.*

2.2. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) has created an opportunity to highlight how innovation, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship are all important ways of demonstrating the real-world impact of research. Many UK higher education institutions are increasingly focused on promoting innovation, including research-intensive universities like Oxford. In many cases, this extends beyond promoting the university’s research capabilities to encouraging student recruitment at both undergraduate and graduate level.

2.3. The Innovation Working Group also noted that there are different interpretations of innovation, particularly across disciplines. As a result, the group used a wide definition that encompassed a broad span of activity:

Innovation means encouraging students and researchers to exchange knowledge across disciplinary and institutional boundaries, to take risks, and to realise the latent potential of their intellectual capital. The impacts of our innovation may take many forms, including entrepreneurial activity, social enterprise, or cultural engagement, but all share their common roots in a commitment to creative and lateral ways of thinking, connecting and problem-solving.

2.4. Throughout this communications strategy, the term ‘innovation’ is used in this broad sense. This strategy is aimed at giving greater visibility to this full range of activity and suitable communications content will, therefore, include activities and achievements that:

- are creative
- demonstrate lateral thinking
- enable solutions for contemporary challenges
- are interdisciplinary and collaborative
- show real-world application of knowledge.

2.5. Our efforts around embedding and publicising innovation also complement work to support increased public engagement with research, and this communications strategy will work in tandem with the Public Engagement with Research Plan that was approved by Research Committee in Trinity term 2016. Indeed, communications and public engagement, rather than being separate activities, represent a continuum of audience engagement, and we will ensure that activities are planned collaboratively, for example the European Researchers Night 2017.

3. CURRENT POSITION

3.1. A huge amount of innovative and entrepreneurial activity is taking place across the University of Oxford, including the Said Business School Entrepreneurship Centre and Oxford Launch Pad, the Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (TORCH), Begbroke Science Park, the Enterprising Oxford portal and MPLS Enterprising Researcher Development programme, Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Oxford Sparks, Oxford University Innovation and Oxford University Museums, to name but a few, as well as within individual departments and research groups. There are also planned developments, such as the Bioescalator, that are intended to enhance innovation at Oxford. However, much of the communication around this work is focused on specific projects or initiatives and so Oxford’s overall innovation effort is not achieving as wide a public profile as it could.

3.2. A number of common themes emerge across the innovation landscape at Oxford.

Opportunities

- The University is committed to supporting and fostering innovation and an increasing number of academics and researchers are engaged with this agenda.
- Oxford has huge advantages on the international stage given its profile and reputation, as well as a large and influential alumni community.
- Oxford is well-placed geographically (eg close to London, near Heathrow) and English is our lingua franca, which appeals to international businesses.
- Oxford’s total research income is consistently the highest of any UK university. By giving higher profile to the award of major research grants, we will attract more collaborators.
There is already connectivity emerging across the University, between departments as well as with entrepreneurs, funders, collaborators, science parks, the NHS, industry, charities and social enterprises.

The University is now more embedded in regional activity and decision-making. There are a lot of opportunities on our doorstep that we could harness, working with bodies like the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Oxford Strategic Partnership and the Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership.

The University, through Oxford University Innovation, is the most prolific patent filer in the UK and is ranked first in the UK for university spin-outs. We need to ensure the University’s contribution to their success achieves a much higher profile.

We have a large number of staff supporting communications around research and the communications officers network, which comprises people working in communications across the collegiate University, is a valuable resource.

Challenges

- Oxford’s devolved nature makes the innovation landscape highly complex. This hampers our ability to coordinate efforts internally and means that we present a partial picture externally, which lacks critical mass despite the wide range of innovation activity taking place.
- There is no clear shared sense of how innovation is understood across the University – the meaning can differ by discipline.
- There is no clear ‘front door’ into the University for potential collaborators and funders; determining who to contact at Oxford can be difficult.
- There are a lot of preconceptions about Oxford, which can be unhelpful in terms of promoting the University as a centre of innovation (and which we sometimes reinforce ourselves).
- We need to be more on the front foot with our communications, harnessing our collective efforts and pitching stories not just to potential collaborators and funders, but also to prospective students.
- Communications officers are dispersed across the collegiate University, have differing levels of expertise and often work in isolation. There is also a disparity of communications resource across divisions and departments. More needs to be done to coordinate efforts and support best practice.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR INNOVATION

4.1. The University’s Strategic Plan 2013–2018 provides the overarching direction for the University’s research and innovation agenda. The Plan notes that enterprise and innovation are fundamental to Oxford’s continuing research success, and fostering a culture of innovation is part of the University’s strategic vision. Innovation is also woven through the priorities and commitments set out in the Plan, such as empowering people to undertake research that changes the world, maintaining our internationally competitive education and sharing the benefits of our research regionally, nationally and globally.

4.2. The University of Oxford’s Innovation Strategy sets out in more detail the University’s commitment to developing this culture of innovation, outlining three main objectives:
i. to be a world-leader in research-led innovation and enterprise creation through collaboration with external organisations

ii. to optimise the economic, social, cultural and health benefits of our research and research training with the support of research funders, business, community and service organisations, investors, alumni and friends

iii. to provide a world-class environment for entrepreneurial activity and related research impact.

4.3. Regional aspirations for innovation and enterprise are detailed in the Oxfordshire Green Paper, released jointly with regional partners. It positions Oxfordshire as an “innovation engine”, one of the most significant and best connected centres of research and enterprise in the UK and Europe. The aspiration is for the region to:

i. build on our successes at Harwell and Culham by securing the next generation of big science facilities in the UK

ii. lead the world in the rate and scale of successful knowledge-intensive business spin-outs

iii. attract businesses to the county and nurture local enterprises by offering them a well-connected, enterprise-friendly, innovation ecosystem in which they can grow

iv. lead the UK in the number of start-ups and scale-ups that we support

v. attract global leaders to a place where their ideas can have an impact regionally, nationally and internationally, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing.

5. COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

5.1. Based on this strategic context, there are five main objectives to this communications strategy:

i. to project Oxford as a leader and key collaborator in innovation, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship by improving the overall visibility of the University’s activities and achievements both internally and externally

ii. to position innovation at Oxford as a public benefit, which takes place in the context of our educational and research mission, and not simply as an activity that generates a commercial return

iii. to emphasise the University’s role as a key partner in the Oxfordshire region, working with local government, business and community organisations to contribute to the economic, social and cultural life of the region

iv. to ensure that the Oxford brand incorporates innovation in a more visible way, from visual identity to messaging

v. to encourage and support innovation and entrepreneurial culture and thinking within the University.

5.2. These objectives will be achieved through a combination of approaches:

ensuring our communications and content production incorporates clear examples of innovation and weaving the language of innovation into existing communications activity

- helping coordinate communications activity across the collegiate University by establishing mechanisms for sharing and pooling content

- developing a campaign approach to communications activity focused on broad innovation themes that span disciplines and that will be identified in collaboration with key stakeholders (including RS KEIT, Oxford University Innovation and the divisions)

- providing toolkits to assist communications officers to support the work of their researchers and academics and the University’s wider innovation campaigns, including key messages, images, video, templates, campaign hashtags for social media use, and guidance for communicating via web, social media etc

- using partner organisations (eg LEP, Russell Group, research funders) to help amplify our messages where they align with their goals.

5.3. In delivering these objectives, our communications should be guided by the following principles:

- take a broad view of innovation to encompass research, processes, policy-making and social and cultural entrepreneurship, and in so doing demonstrate the breadth of innovation at Oxford across disciplines

- be people-focused, telling the story of Oxford innovation through the work and experiences of our diverse researchers, academics and students and providing a human face to the cutting-edge work that takes place here

- adopt a ‘show rather than tell’ approach to demonstrating innovation, focusing on good examples of innovation in ideas and their application, both large and incremental

- juxtapose stories of contemporary innovation with Oxford’s tradition of cutting-edge research to create surprising and engaging connections

- ensure our communications activity reflects the reality of working at and with Oxford – if our messages are out of step with reality, they will be unconvincing and counter-productive.

6. PRIORITY AUDIENCES

6.1. There are a wide range of external audiences that the University wishes to reach in relation to its innovation messages, and many of these can be reached through our main communications channels. However, more specific messages may be targeted at some audiences based on their importance as innovation partners and their impact on the University’s ability to achieve its strategic objectives for innovation.

6.2. Based on feedback from academics, researchers and research support staff across the collegiate University, priority audiences for this strategy include:

- Central government as funder, decision-maker and end user of research and innovation, as well as relevant government departments and civil servants

- Local government and businesses

- Potential collaborators (eg industry, charities, NGOs)
• Current and potential funders and investors
• Prospective students (graduate and undergraduate) and prospective staff
• Peer institutions
• Recruiters and employers
• Oxford-based or originated start-ups
• Alumni
• Mainstream and specialist media

6.3. Our internal audience is also a priority, including academics and researchers, Heads of Department, colleagues supporting research and research communications, and current students.

6.4. Other audiences may not be specifically targeted under this strategy, but these groups may still see the messages contained in our main channels (e.g., University website, social media channels). They may also potentially be the target audiences for specific communications activity taking place in departments, colleges and projects based on local priorities or under the Public Engagement with Research Plan.

7. KEY MESSAGES

7.1. The following key messages form an overarching narrative about innovation at Oxford. They are designed to highlight Oxford’s strengths in the innovation landscape and its points of difference from other institutions.

• Oxford is home to some of the most talented people from across the globe, working in an environment that encourages creative thinking and supports the generation and exploitation of new ideas.
• The breadth and interdisciplinary nature of Oxford’s world-leading research sparks imaginative and inventive insights, connections and solutions.
• Oxford has a long-established record of creating ground-breaking solutions for issues that affect not just our own future but that of generations to come.
• Through access to a huge network of partnerships and collaborations across many sectors, Oxford’s work has real-world social, cultural, scientific and economic impact.
• Oxford students are independent critical thinkers, whose contribution to innovation and enterprise across a broad range of fields continues long after they graduate.

7.2. These messages will be supported by specific examples of innovation and memorable facts and figures, tailored to each audience and campaign. For example, the scale of business-community interaction, REF results, the number of spin-outs generated by Oxford researchers and students, number of consultancies undertaken by Oxford academics, and case studies of innovative and entrepreneurial Oxford alumni.

7.3. These messages can not only be used in communications relating directly to research, but employed across all our communications so that innovation and creative thinking are seen as lying at the heart of all our activities. More targeted messages will also be developed for specific audiences, for example:
our activities and interactions with Westminster and Whitehall, and with local
government, will highlight the relevance of Oxford’s innovation activities to policy-
making and their economic, social and cultural contribution;

- internal communication with staff and students will raise awareness of innovation
campaigns, highlight the support and opportunities for innovation for both staff and
students, and showcase examples of innovation and enterprise across disciplines;

- PAD will work with Graduate and Undergraduate Admissions to consider how messages
around innovation could be built into our communications with prospective students so
that creative and entrepreneurial students see Oxford as a place that will help them
foster their ambitions;

- PAD will work with the Development Office and the Alumni Office to explore ways that
messages about innovation and enterprise could be integrated into communications with
donors and with alumni;

- PAD and RS KEIT will work more closely with regional partners to better coordinate our
communications activity, reflect a regional perspective on innovation and enterprise, and
ensure regional partners are aware of our work.

8. CHANNELS

8.1. We have in place a range of existing channels that we can use to convey our innovation
messages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Audience(s)</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Main University website, plus broad          | Broad, predominantly external, including prospective students and staff, funders, those interested in Oxford or Oxford research | Work with AAD and RS KEIT to review main sections (eg admissions, research pages) to incorporate innovation messages
<p>| relevant sub-sections (including research pages, About Us, and admissions) |                                                                             | Profile a range of innovation stories within the ‘Discover’ carousel on the homepage               |
| Innovation and partnerships website (<a href="http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/innovation-and-partnership">www.ox.ac.uk/research/innovation-and-partnership</a>) | Potential collaborators, including industry and charities                     | Better integrate these pages with the research pages to improve their visibility and create more engaging content (eg case studies) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University’s social media channels</td>
<td>Broad, including potentially all audience groups</td>
<td>Coordinated cross-channel approach, including developing and sourcing content that exemplifies innovation (e.g., long-form content, social media advertising, creating bespoke hashtags to help coordinate messages from across the University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News media</td>
<td>Broad, including potentially all major audience groups</td>
<td>Incorporate more innovation messages in media engagement activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for researchers website</td>
<td>Existing researchers and PIs</td>
<td>Provide information about innovation 'hubs' across the University and resources available to support innovation communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for researchers website (<a href="http://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers">www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers</a>) and Enterprising Oxford portal (<a href="http://www.eship.ox.ac.uk">www.eship.ox.ac.uk</a>)</td>
<td>Current students</td>
<td>Provide information about support and services for enterprise and entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly undergraduate and graduate newsletters (and targeted communications through SITS information) and Pre-arrival News</td>
<td>Current students</td>
<td>Provide information about support and services for enterprise and entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary public-policy events series</td>
<td>MPs, policy-makers, researchers and potential collaborators</td>
<td>Incorporate topics and themes that reinforce Oxford as a centre of innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueprint (University staff magazine)</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Highlight examples of innovation across disciplines and the support available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford Today (print and online)</td>
<td>Alumni and friends</td>
<td>Include examples of pioneering research and entrepreneurship at Oxford, both contemporary and historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Review</td>
<td>Broad, including potentially all audience groups</td>
<td>Highlight examples of innovation across disciplines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2. PAD will work with RS KEIT, divisions and other internal stakeholders to maximise access to communications channels across the collegiate University. Many of these are central channels that PAD and RS KEIT manage directly (see section 8 below for examples) but it will also be critical to ensure that other formal and informal channels can be harnessed by working closely with academics, researchers and communications staff to support a coordinated and coherent innovation message. Senior officers who meet with influencers and decision-makers should also be regularly briefed about innovation activity (eg a monthly research briefing has recently been introduced for the Vice-Chancellor).

8.3. As part of the communications activity plans that will be developed from this strategy, we will explore new channels, dependent on the resource available, such as:

- creating more coordinated systems for identifying and gathering innovation-related content from across the collegiate University (eg using Symplectic to flag up newsworthy content), including student-led groups and activities
- working more closely with partner organisations at a local and national level (eg the LEP, research councils) so that they can incorporate our messages into their communications activity
- identifying new, more innovative, communications channels and piloting their use (eg Facebook Live)
- running bespoke events for key audiences (eg innovation showcases for MPs and parliamentary researchers)
- running internal innovation showcase events to foster networking and sharing of best practice across departments and divisions and to encourage more researchers to get involved
- further quantitative evaluation activity.

9. BRANDING

9.1. A brand encompasses the values and aspirations of an organisation, and our communications activity should focus on embedding innovation within the Oxford brand. This will be supported by a visual identity that conveys a sense of vitality and creativity.

9.2. Images play a critical role in this. While the traditional images of Oxford – architecture, ceremony and tradition – are an important part of our identity, we need to create a wider set of connections in the minds of our audiences using images that demonstrate innovation at work. These include a diverse range of researchers and students in modern spaces as well as conceptual images that provide a visual representation of innovation and enterprise. As well as commissioning professional photographs, a University-wide photo competition may be a useful way of collating a range of images in an Oxford setting.
9.3. It may be helpful to use a tag line that can encompass a broad range of disciplines, thereby demonstrating the many forms that innovation can take and enabling us to pull relevant content from across the University into central channels. For example, the ‘Innovation &...’ concept can be applied where appropriate to identify innovation in a particular area or field (eg Innovation & Culture, Innovation & Policy, Innovation & Health).

9.4. We do not recommend developing a separate logo for innovation at Oxford. While a logo can provide a clear visual cue to audiences, it is inappropriate in this case for two main reasons:

- the University brand mark is already very strong and widely recognised by our target audiences. Attempting to build a separate brand for innovation risks diluting the value of the Oxford brand, as well as being confusing and resource-intensive;
- it is important that innovation becomes an integral part of how Oxford is perceived rather than a separate ‘add on’ that distances innovation from the main University brand. It would be damaging if our most innovative activities are represented by a separate visual identity, reinforcing perceptions that the main Oxford brand is staid and old-fashioned.

10. RESOURCES

10.1. The University’s central communications channels managed by PAD will play an important role in promoting a more coherent and unified sense of innovation at Oxford by incorporating more innovation messages within existing activity. However, the development and implementation of an action plan to successfully deliver this strategy will require both collaboration and resource from across the University (including RS KEIT, the divisions and Oxford University Innovation).

10.2. Better coordination of current communications activity can be achieved by utilising existing networks and meetings, including the Communications Officers Network coordinated by PAD, which comprises more than 400 people from across the collegiate University, and the Research & Impact Support Network, coordinated by RS KEIT.

10.3. While we can achieve a higher profile for innovation at Oxford through greater coordination of communications activity, new investment will also be required in a number of areas, including:

- compiling comprehensive toolkits for use across the collegiate University in support of innovation campaigns
- commissioning professional images and video to illustrate concepts of innovation, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship across a wide range of areas, to expand on the work currently being undertaken as part of a HEIF small award
- commissioning drone footage of innovation sites, including indoor footage of buildings and facilities
- developing a video ‘wall’ featuring innovators and entrepreneurs in order to showcase the scale and breadth of innovation and entrepreneurship at Oxford
- work to improve the research web pages and integrate them better with the partnerships website, which would require the services of a third-party web developer
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- commissioning research on the regional and national economic impact of University activity, to augment the Biggar Economics report commissioned by LERU.
- a paid internship to conduct a fuller mapping exercise of innovation and related support mechanisms across the collegiate University to provide content for campaign activity, including projects with high-profile collaborators and Oxford start-ups
- benchmarking activity to assess our position against similarly positioned higher education institutions in the UK and overseas.

11. RISKS AND MITIGATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient resource to support a comprehensive campaign approach</td>
<td>Incremental change can be achieved through adapting and coordinating existing processes. However, this would not deliver the step-change required to enable Oxford to rival UK and international peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of achieving high levels of coordination in Oxford’s devolved structure</td>
<td>Senior officers and relevant committees to provide leadership for and championing of the strategy and encourage buy-in within their divisions and departments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial momentum generated by a new strategy is not maintained</td>
<td>The campaign-style approach, focused on key themes and issues over defined periods, will help keep the strategy fresh and relevant.</td>
</tr>
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12. EVALUATION

12.1. Measuring outcomes of high-level goals based around changing perceptions is difficult and resource-intensive, both in terms of time and money (eg wide-scale surveying of target audiences to assess attitudes, repeated at regular intervals to measure progress). There is also a risk that activities are driven by what can be easily measured but which are not directly associated with the aim of changing attitudes.

12.2. The advantage of a campaign approach is that specific measurement and evaluation are more easily applied to particular projects and activities with targeted messages and clearly identified audiences. These measures can then be linked back to the strategic objectives in this strategy to assess progress and allocation of resource. Measures could include:

- take-up of campaign themes and tools
- reach of and engagement with online content
- scope, profile and tone of media coverage
- event attendance and evaluation
- qualitative feedback from members of target audiences to determine changes of perceptions

12.3. This can be reported to KEISC in line with the campaign timetable.

13. **CONSULTATION**

13.1. This strategy has been written by PAD following discussions and workshops with academic and research support colleagues across the collegiate University, including RS KEIT, Oxford University Innovation, Enterprising Oxford, Begbroke Science Park, the MPLS industrial partnerships team, divisions, museums and libraries, Continuing Education and the Careers Service.

13.2. Implementation of this strategy will be done in full consultation with key stakeholders.