UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Innovation, Engagement and Impact Strategy

2025–2030



OUImages/Ian Wallman

Foreword

Professor Irene Tracey, CBE, FRS, FMedSci

The University of Oxford has a long-standing tradition of sharing knowledge and turning ideas into real-world solutions. As one of the world's leading research universities, we are uniquely positioned to catalyse innovation that benefits society, informs policy, and accelerates inclusive economic growth.

We are building on firm foundations. Oxford is ranked as the fourth most intensive science and innovation cluster globally[1]. This strength reflects decades of work by our researchers and partners across all disciplines. But our position also brings responsibility. At a time of growing national and global challenges, we must ensure our innovation contributes to wider public good, supports inclusive growth, and creates opportunities for all our stakeholders – from local communities to international partners.

This Innovation, Engagement and Impact Strategy sets out how we will shape the next chapter of Oxford's contribution to society. Building on the University's Knowledge Exchange Strategy (2021–25), and aligned with the Strategic Plan 2025–2030, this strategy articulates five clear priorities that respond directly to regional and national ambitions, including the Oxford Growth Commission, the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, and frameworks such as the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Through targeted actions and strong partnerships, we aim to deepen our local roots and amplify our global reach – strengthening Oxford's place at the heart of a world-leading innovation ecosystem.



Professor Irene Tracey at the #StartedinOxford Showcase, Weston Library

[1] *www.wipo.int/web-publications/global-innovation-index-2024/en/cluster-ranking.html*

Vision

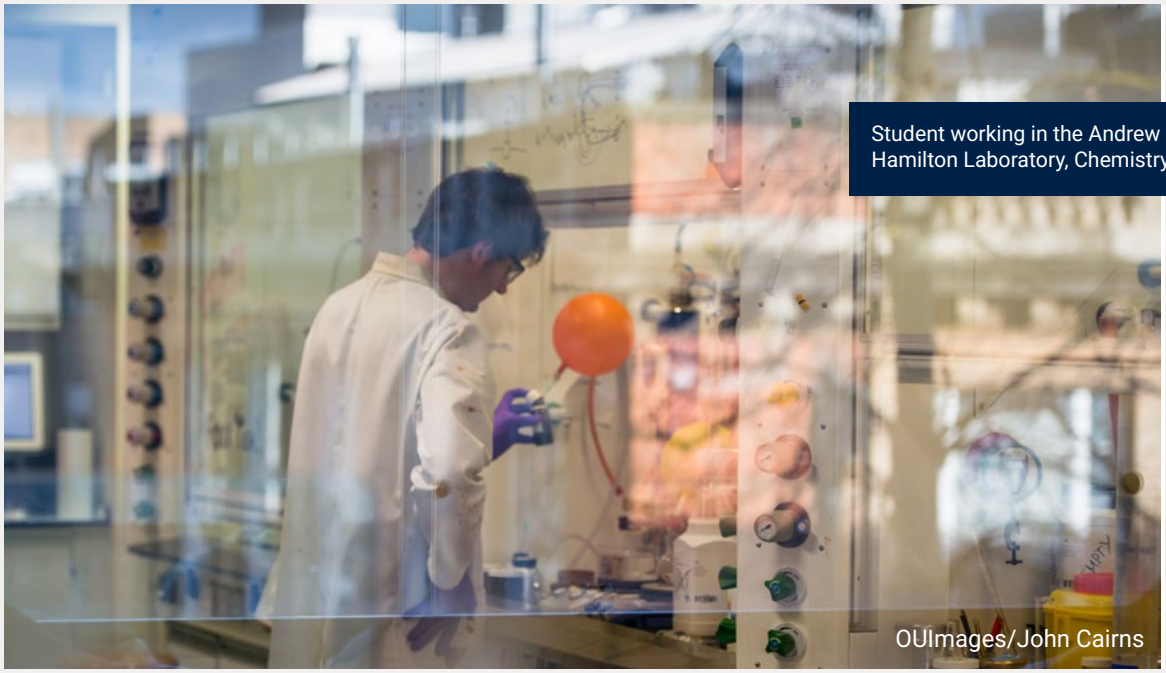
We will be a global leader in inclusive innovation, engagement and impact; rooted in academic excellence and powered by strong partnerships, our work will drive transformative solutions to the world's most pressing challenges – locally, nationally and globally.

Introduction

Oxford's research has long helped shape ideas, technologies and systems that influence the world beyond academia. But the nature of that influence – and how we support it – must keep evolving. This strategy defines how the University will approach innovation, engagement and impact (IEI) in a changing landscape, where societal challenges, public expectations, and opportunities for partnership are more urgent and interconnected than ever.

It responds to growing momentum across Oxford: in entrepreneurship, translational research, public and policy engagement, and collaboration with business and communities. It reflects the efforts of academics and professional staff across divisions who are already advancing this work in diverse ways.

The strategy's aim is to offer shared direction. It brings together five interconnected high-level priorities around which we can coordinate action, align investment, and champion the many forms of impact Oxford enables. It is also a statement of intent: to be purposeful in how we connect with the world, and ambitious in how we translate ideas into outcomes that benefit society.



Student working in the Andrew Hamilton Laboratory, Chemistry

OUImages/John Cairns

Purpose and scope

This strategy identifies five priorities for the University's innovation, engagement and impact work over the next five years. These priorities are ambitious for the institution as a whole, drive new activity and offer stretch to existing goals. They simultaneously reflect divisions' motivations while consolidating and recasting them as institutional priorities for innovation, engagement and impact. The strategy will shape the work of University researchers and academics, and professional services staff who support innovation, engagement and impact work – whether in the context of research or teaching. It provides both:

a. specific key actions for the University to undertake and outcomes for the University to achieve, with the success of the latter being measured by ambitious targets; and

b. guidance on where to focus innovation, engagement and impact work, given the priorities.

Further, the IEI Strategy serves to give a more specific articulation of the University's innovation, engagement and impact ambitions as described in its institutional strategy. Some of the measures of success for this strategy flow from the institutional strategy and some of the priorities dovetail with existing strategies or programmes of work (e.g., the Public and Community Engagement with Research, and Oxford Policy Engagement Network strategies, and Equinox).

We recognise that even more innovation, engagement and impact work will happen at Oxford, beyond the scope of this strategy – and we celebrate that. This strategy is intended to inspire, support and provide guidance for those who might be uncertain where to focus their efforts in this area, either at a high level or in pursuit of specific key actions or outcomes.

Working in partnership

Achieving meaningful innovation, engagement and impact depends on how we work with others. Across the University, researchers and professional services staff collaborate with businesses, public bodies, communities and third sector organisations in ways that shape how knowledge is generated and applied. This strategy builds on those strengths, offering a clearer framework to support and grow these relationships.

While some priorities focus explicitly on external engagement, all five rest on a commitment to working collaboratively – from co-produced research and shared ventures to new models of civic and commercial engagement. By strengthening the structures that enable this work, we aim to deepen our connections, diversify the organisations we work with, and enhance the real-world relevance of our research.



Inside the Jenner Institute, Old Road Campus Research Building

OUImages/John Cairns

Innovation, Engagement and Impact Strategy: Summary

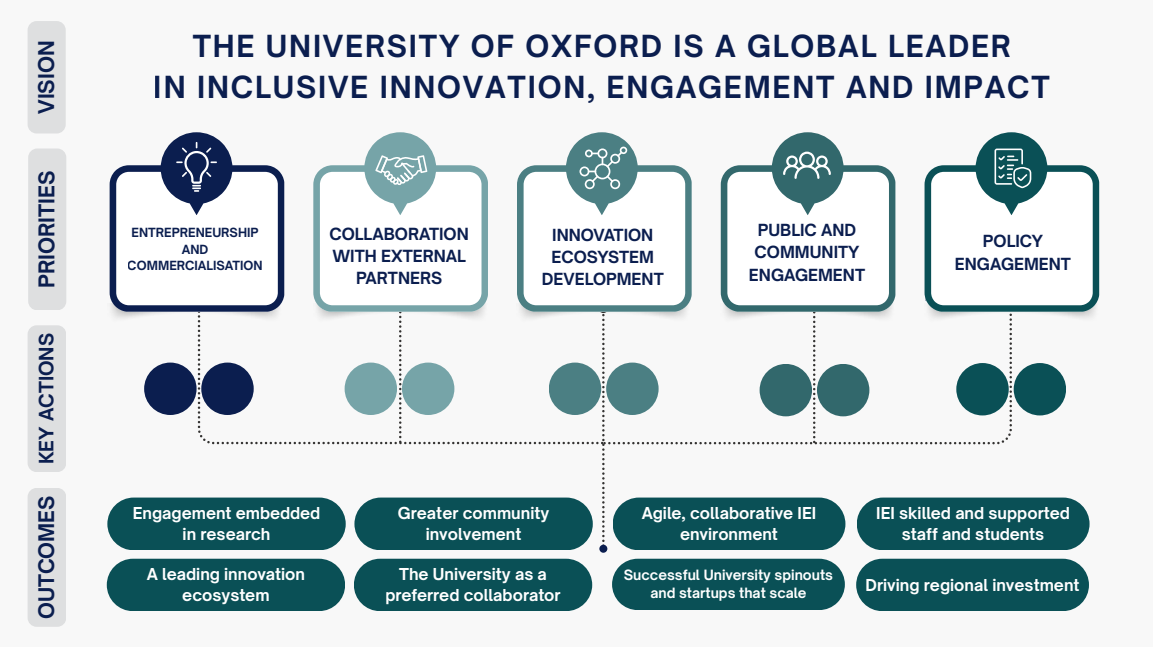


Figure 1 Our strategy in summary. We will focus on five priority areas, which will collectively contribute to achieving eight outcomes, supporting our vision to be a global leader in inclusive innovation, engagement and impact.

As illustrated in Figure 1, above, we will prioritise the following aspects of innovation, engagement and impact to achieve our vision:

- Entrepreneurship and commercialisation
- Collaboration with external partners
- Innovation ecosystem development
- Public and community engagement
- Policy engagement

We intend that our work across these five priority areas will lead to the following outcomes:

- Public, community and policy **engagement** are embedded into more of the University's research, ensuring added value to society through enhanced research rigour and relevance.
- **Communities**, especially those affected by our research and wider activity, such as patient groups and local residents, will be more involved in both our research and decision-making in the context of innovation, engagement and impact.
- Within the University, internal coordination and collaboration will be strengthened to create a more connected and **agile innovation, engagement and impact environment**, enhancing our ability to act strategically and build high value and diverse partnerships, with partners ranging from global corporates to local communities.


Inside the Ashmolean Museum

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- Academics will be incentivised and rewarded for conducting rigorous engagement and impact activities, and all academics, staff and students will be able to access high-quality innovation, engagement and impact training, enabling them to identify and maximise their **potential for real-world impact**.
- An enhanced, **globally recognised and competitive innovation ecosystem**, with the University at its heart, driving continuous improvement and pioneering advancements.
- The University will be the **preferred collaborator** for ambitious and impact-driven organisations who operate across local, national or global scales.
- Successful University **companies will be sustainable and scale** effectively, with many remaining in Oxfordshire to capture investments that generate global impact.
- Greater national and international visibility for Oxfordshire, **attracting additional major investment** funds to support the University's spinout pipeline.

And, in implementing this strategy, we expect to facilitate and realise other outcomes that will further help us to achieve our vision.

The successful delivery of this strategy requires a set of enabling factors (described in more detail below) that will operate in parallel with its implementation. These include mechanisms for academic recognition, robust evaluation processes, effective communication, and high-quality professional support.

Throughout this work, we will embed the principles of Responsible Knowledge Exchange, Engagement and Impact (RKEEI)[2], ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), as well as trusted research practices, are integral to everything we do.



Entrepreneur and community member at the #StartedinOxford Showcase, Weston Library

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[2] *www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/rkeei*

Innovation, Engagement and Impact Strategy: Priorities

The **priorities** set out below were identified following extensive consultation with colleagues across the University and key partners in the local innovation ecosystem. The **key actions** within each priority will be our primary focus, but we will also support broader efforts that align with our intended outcomes. A separate implementation plan sets out, in more granular detail, the work that we will do to achieve the outcomes described above. Each priority has a box that highlights an exciting **opportunity** now, in summer 2025, which we intend to capitalise on in delivering this strategy. Finally, **Appendix 1** sets out examples of how we will work within each priority.

1. Entrepreneurship and commercialisation

By commercialising our discoveries[3] and encouraging entrepreneurship, we drive economic development and contribute to solving some of the world's most pressing issues.[4]

The University of Oxford is a globally competitive hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. We are home to a vibrant and growing community of entrepreneurial researchers, students, mentors and investors, supported by a wealth of training opportunities and funding. This creates a rich environment where the ideas and ventures of tomorrow can take root and thrive. EnSpire Oxford, our central hub for entrepreneurship, brings together the full range of initiatives and resources across the University, fostering a strong culture of innovation and encouraging students and staff to explore the commercial potential of their ideas.

To help realise commercial success and deliver meaningful economic and societal impact, Oxford University Innovation (OUI) acts as a bridge between academic research and commercial application. Working closely with Oxford Science Enterprises and other investment partners, OUI helps to build innovative and high-value businesses, including social enterprises, that translate novel ideas into ventures for the future economy.

This strategy will facilitate greater investment into our spinouts and student startups, helping them to scale within Oxfordshire. It will also support the training of staff and students to match the growing demand for entrepreneurship programmes, equipping them to become the visionaries of tomorrow.

Key actions

We will:

1. Provide entrepreneurship training and access to translational funding for any student or researcher from any discipline who wishes to build their entrepreneurial skills and explore commercial or translational opportunities.
2. Attract new funds into the region and create novel partnerships to support scale-up ambitions, high-tech science cluster expansion and diversity of founders, to enhance our international leadership in university-backed ventures and licencing.



The R21/Matrix-M™ malaria vaccine was developed by the University of Oxford in collaboration with the Serum Institute of India, leveraging Novavax's adjuvant technology.
It is a safe, effective vaccine, recommended for use by the World Health Organisation and can be manufactured at scale and low cost. Production capacity is set to reach 200 million doses annually, significantly aiding malaria-endemic regions.

[3] *www.beauhurst.com/research/spotlight-on-spinouts-2024*

[4] *https://impactreport2025.innovation.ox.ac.uk/*

2. Collaboration with external partners

Global Institute | School of Leadership & Policy demonstrates a strong commitment to collaborating with private, public, and third-sector organisations, developing mutually beneficial strategic partnerships that address complex, real-world challenges and create new opportunities for researchers and collaborators alike.

Our approach is rooted in building strong, purposeful relationships with external partners – particularly in business and industry – to support innovation and drive economic growth. The University is in a diverse, high-tech and research-intensive region that provides a dynamic and compelling environment for commercialisation, social enterprises, public and third sector engagement, innovation in culture and heritage and collaborations with strategic partners. We are uniquely positioned to co-create solutions to global challenges and contribute to economic prosperity and societal progress at multiple scales.

Our researchers are delivering transformational change across a wide range of fields, from artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and climate mitigation, to tackling health inequalities, improving social care, and deepening understanding of cultural and societal dynamics. Many of these collaborations have attracted significant external investment, particularly from business – most notably in the life sciences sector – as well as from third-sector funders and public partners. In 2023–24, research income derived from business collaboration alone totalled £148 million, representing 19% of the University's total and exceeding that of any other UK university by more than £90 million. These partnerships are advancing research excellence while generating meaningful benefits for society, the economy, and our local and global communities.

Through this strategy, we will strengthen our approach to the stewardship of external partnerships, ensuring they are actively supported, strategically aligned and sustained over time. This strategy will deliver an agile and coherent environment for partner engagement that enables researchers from all disciplines to collaborate with sector-leading, innovative organisations to amplify the real-world relevance and impact of their work.

Key Actions

We will:

1. Develop a governance and operational framework for sustainable, scalable and mutually beneficial strategic partnerships.
2. Enhance the scale and diversity of our portfolio of external partnerships, prioritising long-term sustainability, accelerated research and impact, and mutual benefit.


© Ellison Institute of Technology

The Ellison Institute of Technology (EIT) has invested over £100 million in a strategic alliance with the University to accelerate innovation in health, food security, climate change and AI.

Set for completion in 2027, the EIT campus in Littlemore will include more than 300,000 sq ft of research laboratories, educational and gathering spaces. EIT is also expanding its footprint to create a transformative 2 million sq ft campus across The Oxford Science Park. Designed for up to 7,000 people, it will bring together cutting-edge laboratories, including a dedicated plant sciences building, and dynamic environments that drive collaboration and discovery.

3. Innovation ecosystem development

As the local anchor institution, our work drives regional prosperity while leveraging our global profile to foster an inclusive innovation ecosystem that benefits both the University and local communities.

The University is at the heart of a dynamic, innovation-driven regional economy, which it has helped to shape and influence over many decades. We are recognised worldwide as the foundation from which the region's globally competitive standing as an innovation hub has grown. We have supported the development and expansion of multidisciplinary innovation clusters across the physical, life and social sciences, and the humanities, recognising that benefits to the region bring reciprocal value to the University, our stakeholders and to local communities.

The region is unique in the UK for the strength and breadth of its expertise and capabilities. This thriving innovation landscape reinforces the University's ability to attract investment, recruit and retain world-class research talent, and deliver economic impact through outstanding commercialisation, all of which are central to our research and innovation excellence.

Oxford University cultivates strategic and mutually beneficial regional partnerships to attract substantial inward investment and new corporate collaborators. These efforts contribute to economic prosperity, elevate the global profile of the area, and promote the development of an inclusive innovation ecosystem where communities benefit from increased economic activity.

This priority sets out the University's commitment to championing innovation-led growth across Oxfordshire in support of regional stakeholders, its science parks and innovation districts, including Begbroke Science Park, Osney Mead Industrial Estate, Headington Science Cluster and the Churchill translational research campus. It also highlights the potential for our researchers to achieve meaningful local impact when their work is connected to the region's most pressing challenges.

Key actions

We will:

1. Use our leadership position to convene regional partners through Equinox, working collectively to attract new investors and corporates into Oxfordshire's innovation ecosystem. Through aligned action, we will connect these partners with local challenges, strategic opportunities, and world-class research and talent, supporting inclusive, place-based growth.
2. Build a regional data archive to improve our understanding of investment flows into Oxfordshire and enhance evidence-based decision-making and narratives, particularly in relation to infrastructure challenges and the needs of developers to support economic prosperity and regional productivity.

The Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor will help the region catalyse investment for innovation infrastructure and growth, and is expected to boost the UK economy by up to £78 billion by 2035.

By enhancing connectivity and fostering collaboration between Oxford and Cambridge, the corridor aims to attract international investment and anchor cutting-edge work in fields such as AI, life sciences and semiconductors.



OUImages/John Cairns

4. Public and community engagement

We are committed to public and community engagement as we recognise its vital role in shaping how we think and act as an institution, keeping both the University and our research accountable, socially responsible, relevant and trustworthy.[5] Crucially, we expect all our public and community engagement to be inclusive, responsible and for mutual benefit.

Our public and community engagement with research strategy[6] envisions a university where meaningful engagement with communities, including patient groups, businesses, local and regional government, and more, drives collaboration and positive change. More than simply connecting our research to non-academic partners, it intends to support collaboration between our researchers and those whose lives and interests are affected by us. It emphasises responsible engagement and collaborating with communities to coproduce research with end users and those it impacts directly. Beyond engagement with research, as a key civic institution, it is right that we collaborate with local and regional communities to share our extensive facilities, expertise and influence, while also recognising and valuing the unique assets these communities bring.

We are building on strong foundations. Patients and the public are key stakeholders in our medical research who contribute significantly to and benefit from our institution's research portfolio; their involvement underpins close collaborations between the University and the NHS in Oxfordshire and neighbouring counties, ultimately influencing national clinical trials and studies. The University's overseas research units in Thailand, Vietnam and Kenya excel in partnering with and involving communities in research, while the REACH programme, led by the University, has significantly improved water security for over 10 million vulnerable people across Africa and Asia through robust public and community engagement. Our Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) incorporate research into freely available cultural offerings that reach millions[7] of visitors each year. And more locally, The Oxford University Sport and Community Partnership creates opportunities for young people by making University and college sports facilities available, delivering inspiring sports programmes to local schools, and fostering connections between the collegiate University and the wider community.

Key actions

In addition to implementing the University's Public and Community Engagement with Research strategy, we will:

1. Consolidate existing insights in public and community engagement to drive innovative, multidisciplinary and responsible engagement practice, such that we are at the forefront of impactful and engaged scholarship.
2. Improve institutional processes that support community engagement, including payment and recognition, to increase the involvement of community members in University innovation, engagement and impact activities.



The Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities will enhance engagement, learning, teaching and research with state-of-the-art facilities. Alongside faculties of the Humanities Division, it will house a concert hall, theatre, performance space, and cinema in addition to dedicated public engagement spaces.

This landmark centre is open to the public and will also host exhibitions and events, fostering a vibrant cultural hub that connects the University with the wider community.

[5] *www.publicengagement.ac.uk/introducing-public-engagement*

[6] *www.ox.ac.uk/research/using-research-engage/public-engagement/strategy*

[7] *Data from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA); alva.org.uk*

5. Policy engagement

We support policy engagement so that public policy – from local councils to international bodies – can be informed by the best available research evidence and expertise from the University, benefitting people locally, nationally and globally.

Across academic disciplines and career stages, Oxford's researchers generate a wealth of evidence which policy professionals can rely on when tackling society's most pressing challenges.

However, supply is not enough: we must do more to enable research and policy professionals to join forces in shaping public policy that protects what is valuable and changes the world for the better. This kind of engagement – built on mutual understanding and respect, pursued in the public interest, and complementing the work of others – strengthens policy design and implementation, benefits communities in Oxford, across the UK, and around the world, and improves the quality and utility of research, without compromising academic independence or integrity.

In recent years, several new policy-focused initiatives and institutes have been launched that exemplify this approach, such as the Agile Initiative, Local Policy Lab, Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre, Pandemic Sciences Institute, What Works Centre for Global Education, and ZERO Institute. With more than 1,200 members across almost all departments and faculties, as well as among policy professionals, the Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN)[8] complements such initiatives, explores synergies between them, and fosters new ones.

Key actions

In addition to implementing the OPEN strategy, we will:

1. Strengthen development of mutually respectful partnerships with policy professionals, by creating new ways for them to engage with the University, our researchers and students, and ensure that together we co-produce better evidence-led decision-making.
2. Improve access to opportunities and resources for learning and engagement, including by creating more avenues for research and policy professionals to learn from each other and innovate in the ways they develop and implement policy.



The Blavatnik World Leaders Fellowship offers distinguished global leaders a year-long residency at the Blavatnik School of Government.

The fellowship provides a structure and platform for leaders to share their insights, distil lessons from their leadership experiences and contribute to academic discourse, while developing forward-looking perspectives on governance, policy and international cooperation.

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[8] *www.ox.ac.uk/research/using-research-engage/policy-engagement/introducing-policy-engagement-team/open-strategy*

Conditions for success

Enabling factors

The success of this strategy depends upon factors beyond work that is directly oriented around innovation, engagement and impact. We will work with colleagues to shape these factors in such a way that best supports this strategy.

- **Reward and recognition**: we will work with existing projects such as the Academic Career and Reward Framework to recognise and legitimise colleagues' efforts in Innovation, Engagement and Impact at the University.
- **Monitoring, evaluation and learning**: we will capture robust data on our activity and use it to evaluate our progress, demonstrating achievements and return on investment.
- **Internal and external communications**: we will celebrate our work in Innovation, Engagement and Impact through consistent messaging internally and externally, disseminating best practice widely to support adoption.
- **High quality professional support**: we will ensure that our Professional Services staff
  a. are supported and enabled to work in an agile way
  b. promote collaboration between academics and professionals across the University
  c. are appropriately recognised for their work

to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Ways of working

In terms of realising our desired outcomes, how we work will often be as important as what we do. Accordingly, we will embed **Responsible Knowledge Exchange, Engagement and Impact** (RKEEI) throughout implementation of this strategy, so that it can be as successful as possible. Colleagues in our Social Sciences Division have developed this framework, considering how best to work responsibly in innovation, engagement and impact[9]. It has the following six principles:

1. Integrity and ethics
2. Equity, inclusion, diversity and belonging
3. Reciprocity and sustainability
4. Contextual sensitivity and cultural respect
5. Sharing and openness
6. Support and recognition

By following these principles, we aim to ensure that our strategy will be implemented to the highest standards of responsibility and effectiveness, ultimately achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes for all stakeholders.



Students engaging with a display at the University's Museum of Natural History

[9] *www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/rkeei*

Appendix 1: How we will work across our priorities

1. Entrepreneurship and commercialisation

- **Training and mentoring**: Our entrepreneurship hub, EnSpire, will provide a one-stop shop for staff and students to access high-quality entrepreneurship training, enabling budding entrepreneurs to find out more and apply for seed funding to kick-start their ideas.
- **A thriving ecosystem**: We will work in concert with key partners such as OUI, Oxford Science Entreprises and other investment partners to support the commercialisation of research discoveries.

2. Collaboration with external partners

- **Diversifying types of interactions**: We will utilise a range of collaboration models appropriate to the scale and ambition of the research partnership.
- **Promoting opportunities**: We will co-ordinate across the University to promote the full breadth and depth of collaborative opportunity to current and potential partners, e.g., providing access to executive education, talent acquisition and corporate donations.
- **Building sustainable and productive partnerships**: We will be strategic and intentional in the types, size and purpose of partnerships we develop.

3. Innovation ecosystem development

- **Inward investment**: We will work to attract new investors, corporates and developers to invest in our innovation ecosystem.
- **Partnerships**: We will develop mutually beneficial partnerships to open new avenues for research to accelerate innovation.
- **An inclusive innovation ecosystem**: We will promote inclusive growth and economic prosperity for all in Oxfordshire.

4. Public and community engagement

- **Purposeful engagement**: Wherever possible, we will coproduce our research to maximise its benefit to the end users.
- **Responsible engagement**: With an increased emphasis on engaging communities, we will ensure we engage responsibly, drawing on the principles of RKEEI.
- **Inclusive engagement**: Wherever possible, we will involve people with diverse expertise to shape our work across innovation, engagement and impact.

5. Policy engagement

- We will follow the values set out in the OPEN strategy of **integrity, EDI, complementarity, openness and sharing, and collaboration and partnership**.


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