

Extra funding for work with universities

- The Open Innovation Team was set up in 2016 to help government departments generate new ideas with the help of academics
- Universities of Brunel, Essex, Lancaster and York provide £1m funding for next three years
- Project has already helped develop policy in areas including young people's mental health

A successful project which helps to develop innovative new policies by linking up government officials with universities across the UK, is to be extended for another three years.

The Open Innovation Team was set up in 2016 to help government departments work more closely with academics to develop analysis and ideas in key policy areas.

The initial trial saw government officials connect with more than 500 academics and deliver almost 30 projects, covering some of the government's key policy priorities. This included white papers on mental health and online harms, as well as projects on economic growth and gender equality.

Thanks to a funding deal worth more than £1million, the project will now be extended to 2022, with the latest round of funding coming from Brunel University, Essex University, Lancaster University and York University.

The Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden, said:

Working with academics in this way has brought expertise and fresh thinking into how government officials are approaching some of the most challenging policy issues.

I am delighted to see the project extended for another three years and look forward to what we can achieve through these new partnerships.

The extension of the programmes will see academics work with government officials on a wide range of topics, including areas such as digital transformation, economic growth and preventative healthcare.

The move has been welcomed by academics from across the four partner universities.

Professor Rebecca Lingwood, Provost of Brunel University London, said:

We are very excited to join the Open Innovation Partnership, and

look forward to establishing sustained and productive connections between our academics and policy makers, and involving our students in real policy work. Matching up Brunel's academic rigour with the policy and project needs of government will help us deliver true economic, social and cultural impact.

Professor Christine Raines, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Essex, said:

As a leading, dual-intensive university with a strong link between transformative education and research, our research is making a difference to people's lives and we look forward to this new partnership bringing our research into public policy through joint projects with the Cabinet Office and Whitehall departments.

Dr Giles Carden, Chief of Staff & Director of Strategic Projects , Lancaster University said:

Staff and students at Lancaster have reaped many benefits from our involvement in the pilot phase of the scheme, and we very much look forward to further enhancing our links with the Government and Whitehall during the next phase.

Professor Matthew Festenstein, Director of the Research Centre for Social Sciences at the University of York, said:

This is an important initiative to help bring government closer to the latest world-class research in a wide range of areas, and the University of York is delighted to be part of it.

To mark the extension of the project, an official signing ceremony was held at 10 Downing Street on Tuesday, June 18.

The universities of Bath, Lancaster, Southampton and Warwick funded the pilot project, which ran from 2016 to 2018.