

Napier University to be home of Scotland's Policing Academic Centre of Excellence

Edinburgh Napier University (ENU) will be the home of Scotland's only Policing Academic Centre of Excellence (P-ACE), building on its success of hosting the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR).

The [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) (NPCC) has announced that nine new P-ACEs will launch across the UK in October 2025, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

As the host of SIPR, Edinburgh Napier will lead the Scottish P-ACE, with the collaboration of partner institutions Glasgow Caledonian University, the University of Edinburgh and the University of St Andrews.

Backed by £4.5m in funding and working with police services across the UK, the Centres of Excellence will aim to ensure that policing is shaped by the latest and best scientific expertise, and that leading researchers are able to challenge and innovate in partnership with policing. The P-ACEs will support police with adopting new technologies, developing new tools and techniques, improving training and skills, and increasing public safety.

The ENU-based centre will be entitled SPACE – the Scottish

Policing Academic Centre for Excellence. The name also links its key research themes, each of which is critical to modern policing: safety, prevention, analytics, confidence and ethics.



Today's announcement will allow SIPR to distribute £300k to support new research and knowledge exchange activity in Scotland over the next three years, in line with these key areas of research interest.

Professor Liz Aston Professor of Criminology at Edinburgh Napier University, SPACE Lead and Director of SIPR, said: "We are delighted to have been recognised as a Policing Academic Centre of Excellence. The collaborative nature of SIPR between its member institutions has made this achievement possible.

"Not only does this recognition cement SIPR's reputation, but it will also increase the reach of our work and help to drive innovation in policing.

“I’m really looking forward to leading SPACE from Edinburgh Napier University with the co-leads. By working with the NPCC and other partners in Scotland over the coming years, we will create evidence-based innovations to improve safety and prevent harm.”

Professor Paul Taylor, Police Chief Scientific Adviser, said: “Academia and policing have a long history of collaborative working on issues as diverse as forensic science, crime prevention, and analytical technologies.

“The P-ACEs will fortify this connection, providing a focal point for research and knowledge exchange.

“I’m particularly excited about what the P-ACEs can bring to early career scientists who are interested in tackling the complex challenge of keeping the UK public safe. The P-ACE community will, I hope, provide them more opportunities and greater support as we look to forge deep and lasting partnerships over the next decade.”

Led by Professor Liz Aston and involving experts from across the SIPR member institutions, SPACE will work across three main themes:

Safety, led by Dr Andrew Wooff, Edinburgh Napier University and co-lead for the SIPR Organisational Development Network. This builds on ENU’s reputation for impactful policing research linked to safety, including the award-winning study into [Police Scotland’s use of naloxone](#).

Prevention, led by Dr Sarah Marsden, University of St Andrews and Professor Lesley McMillan, Glasgow Caledonian University. Dr Marsden is Director of the Handa Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, while Professor McMillan, a renowned expert on gender-based violence, is director of the Scottish Cold Case Unit at GCU.

Analytics, led by Professor Susan McVie, University of

Edinburgh, will work in partnership with Police Scotland and the Scottish Prevention Hub. This area will bring together a network of academics who will use data driven innovation and AI-based solutions to support operational practice and policy decision making.

In addition, Confidence and Ethics will shape all of SPACE's academic work and builds on developments including the independent review of emerging technologies in policing.

SIPR itself is a strategic collaboration between member universities, Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority.

It has helped to forge strong links between policing and the academia, as recently shown in the ENU-hosted [Neurodiversity and Policing](#) conference.