

Generating growth and opportunity in the East Midlands

Contents

Universities in the East Midlands: overview	2
Training public sector workers	3
SMEs and business growth	4
Research and development	5
Building pride in place and local communities	6



Nottingham

Universities in the East Midlands: overview

The impact of universities on people and places can be truly transformational. Universities are crucial to sparking growth and opportunity, by bringing together student populations, research partners, local businesses, and employers to create vibrant communities, jobs, and opportunity across the UK.

Universities in the East Midlands: in numbers

Number of universities: **9**

Number of full-time UK undergraduate students: **119,610**

Number of part-time UK undergraduate students: **10,500**

Number of UK postgraduate students: **22,150**

Number of international students: **44,360**

Total number of students: **196,615**

Number of staff (full time equivalent) employed: **25,335**

Gross output of universities: **£6.3 billion**

Universities in the East Midlands can be found across key cities including Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, and Nottingham.

Analysis by London Economics estimated that universities in the East Midlands had a **total economic impact of £14.93 billion** in 2021–22. This figure includes the economic activity generated by employing people, purchasing of goods and services, the local spending power of staff and students, as well as the impact of research and knowledge exchange activities.

In 2021–22, universities in the East Midlands spent **£1.75 billion** on staff. Staff spend a proportion of their income with local businesses and on local services, which supports a thriving economy.

Training public sector workers

Training key public sector workers is one of the most visible ways in which universities contribute to their local communities. Even at the height of the pandemic, universities were able to continue teaching students on vital medical courses and support them into front line key work.

Universities work closely with their local NHS services to train the doctors, nurses, paramedics and other allied health professionals of the future, but also to refresh the skills of key health workers to ensure top quality patient care.

Since 2021, universities across the East Midlands have trained around:

- **13,775** nurses
- **5,125** medics
- **12,325** teachers

Case study: new medical school in Lincoln

A medical school in Lincoln, in a collaboration between the University of Lincoln and the University of Nottingham, will address projected shortages of doctors by offering first class training that will encourage graduates to complete their junior doctor training locally and apply for jobs in the region.

‘Creating a medical school for Lincolnshire has been an aspiration for many years and we are now realising that goal. It’s something the whole community can be proud of, and which will serve the people of Lincolnshire for generations to come.’

Professor Danny McLaughlin, Associate Dean of Medicine,
University of Lincoln

SMEs and business growth

Universities support existing businesses of all types through their infrastructure, facilities, and expertise. They also encourage the creation of new businesses and social enterprises.

In the East Midlands universities support entrepreneurialism across local communities and within their student populations to spark the development of new businesses. Start-up companies founded by students and graduates of universities in the East Midlands turned over more than **£159 million** in 2023–24, and spin-out companies with some university ownership turned over more than **£26 million** in the same year.

Spin-out, start-up and social enterprise companies founded at universities in the East Midlands attracted more than **£100 million** in external investment in 2023–24 and created more than **4,100 FTE** job positions.

Universities also support existing businesses to grow, especially small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and microbusinesses. SMEs are critical employers across the UK, particularly in areas that don't have larger employers or well-developed economic clusters. They are typically the businesses that have the greatest potential for growth and job creation, but the least time or resource to achieve this. Universities across England provided consultancy to SMEs **18,300 times** in 2023–24.

Case study: Nottingham Business School

The Nottingham Business School, part of Nottingham Trent University, offers courses to upskill staff at SMEs.

This includes a three-day sustainability course which explores the global climate crisis and impact this will have on the economic landscape. Recent developments to the curriculum include teaching on how businesses can become more sustainable in a post-Covid world.

Research and development

Universities' research activities attract investment, make world-leading discoveries, generate knowledge, and create and nurture new, innovative businesses and jobs across the UK.

Universities support existing businesses of all types by using their facilities and expertise to drive local collaboration. They also encourage private sector investment into research and development by developing collaborative relationships with businesses.

In 2023–24, higher education providers across England provided the use of facilities to companies **29,747 times**, including, for example, a wind tunnel and a digital media suite.

The research universities conduct in partnership with business, the NHS, charities and other organisations is diverse in discipline and scope. University research is responsible for major scientific and medical breakthroughs, but also plays a major role in our day-to-day lives.

Case study: low-carbon energy storage at the University of Nottingham

The University of Nottingham received £1.3 million to develop a novel, low-carbon energy storage system to supply cheap, on-demand heat for people living and working in the UK.

The technology will help to decarbonise the buildings sector, while also addressing issues of fuel poverty and pollution. The project aims to overcome technical challenges that currently limit the capabilities of conventional thermochemical energy storage systems.

Building pride in place and local communities

The UK's creative industries are one of the economic success stories of the past decade, growing at four times the rate of the UK economy as a whole between 2010–19. They bring international production teams to the UK, while employing local and regional talent.

Universities play a key role in supporting the creative industries and cultural life in the UK, from producing skilled creative graduates to working with local councils to supporting the UK's cultural prosperity and social wellbeing.

A study by Savanta ComRes for Universities UK revealed that more than two-thirds (69%) of parents think students gain vital creative skills at university, which are essential to powering the UK's creative industries.

The East Midlands region is rich in culture. In 2023–24, over **478,000 attendees** accessed cultural events run by universities in the region, including museum and gallery exhibitions, public lectures and dance and music performances. Universities in the East Midlands make sure culture is free for everyone to access: free events and material (such as podcasts and online lectures) were accessed **over 4.9 million times**.

Case study: #ThisIsDerby

#ThisIsDerby is a national award-winning partnership initiative with the University of Derby, Derby Theatre, Derby County in the Community Trust and Derby's Cultural Education Partnership.

The partnership brings cultural education and events to young people in areas of deprivation and of low cultural engagement with the aim of developing their 'Essential Life Skills', including confidence, communication and teamwork.

'#ThisIsDerby is a flagship example of how the University's partnership-building has galvanised the city to work together to improve the lives of thousands of children and young people from the most disadvantaged areas of the city, and it is wonderful to receive national recognition for this important work.'

Professor Kathryn Mitchell DL, Vice-Chancellor, University of Derby

Universities UK is the collective voice of the UK's universities, bringing them together to pursue a common cause: thriving universities, serving society.



Woburn House
20 Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9HQ

☎ +44 (0)20 7419 4111
✉ info@universitiesuk.ac.uk
🖱 universitiesuk.ac.uk
📺 @UniversitiesUK
📌 /universities-uk



November 2025

ISBN: 978-1-84036-537-5