

Generating growth and opportunity in London

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Stratford, London

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 London: in numbers

Number of universities: **31**

Number of full-time UK undergraduate students: **169,995**

Number of part-time UK undergraduate students: **16,110**

Number of UK postgraduate students: **68,290**

Number of international students: **162,515**

Total number of students: **413,055**

Number of staff (full person equivalent) employed: **84,090**

Gross output of universities: **£27.0 billion**

Universities in London are situated across the city, ranging from large providers, such as University College London, to small and specialist institutions, such as University of the Arts London.

Analysis by London Economics estimated that universities in London had a **total economic impact of £60.87 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 London spent **£6.1 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 London have trained around:

- **22,400** nurses
- **27,755** medics
- **24,450** teachers

Case study: University of East London's nursing apprenticeship programmes

The University of East London (UEL) has developed nursing and nursing associate apprenticeship programmes which work with employers to create models that are effective and needed within the sector. UEL uses an innovative one-day-a-week model, which enables NHS partners to maximise apprenticeship training posts.

The university has also invested heavily in online simulation technology and redeveloping the Hospital and Primary Care Training Hub to ensure it offers the optimal learning environment for students.

Small and medium-sized enterprises 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 London 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 London turned over more than **£322 million** in 2023–24, and spin-out companies with some university ownership turned over more than **£446 million** in the same year.

Spin-out, start-up and social enterprise companies founded at universities in London attracted more than **£1.4 billion** in external investment in 2023–24 and created more than **24,800 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 in London provided consultancy to SMEs **3,300 times** in 2023–24.

Case study: Support for GiveVision from University College London (UCL)

GiveVision has received free business support from UCL Innovation & Enterprise since 2018. The start-up uses augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to improve the vision of people with severe sight loss. As one in nine people over the age of 65 will be diagnosed with macular degeneration, GiveVision's innovations promise major benefits for society.

'UCL Innovation and Enterprise has actively supported our entrepreneurial journey, making sure we connect with relevant partners and identify opportunities to raise funding.'

Elodie Draperi, Co-founder and CEO, GiveVision

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: Air pollution research at Queen Mary University of London

Researchers at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) have played a pivotal role in making London's air healthier.

Air pollution is responsible for approximately 40,000 premature adult deaths in the UK each year. In addition, research has linked air pollution to a range of serious long-term conditions, such as dementia, heart disease and cancer.

The team at QMUL showed that increased exposure to nitrogen oxides and particulate matter in London was linked to reduced lung function. It found that falls in air pollution due to the London Low Emission Zone weren't enough to reverse the harm. Their research influenced the introduction of the London Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) and the decline of diesel vehicle sales.

Case study: City, University of London's Eyecatcher technology

An academic team at [City, University of London](#) have developed [Eyecatcher](#), the world's first portable, home monitoring visual field test for the eye disease, glaucoma. Through a pair of smartglasses, patients can assess their vision and automatically share the results with a clinician, via the internet.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide, affecting 10% of people of aged 75 and over. At home testing could allow assessment to be performed more frequently, cheaply, and conveniently, making diagnosis and tracking easier across this age group. At home testing also prevents missed appointments and eases appointment backlogs, creating efficiencies within the NHS.

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 and 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.

London is rich in culture. In 2023–24, over **2.3 million attendees** accessed cultural events run by universities in the region, including museum and gallery exhibitions, public lectures and dance and music performances. Universities in London make sure culture is free for everyone to access: free events and material (such as podcasts and online lectures) were accessed **over 28 million times**.

Case study: Central Saint Martins' creative studio

Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, worked in partnership with Camden Council, the land developer Lendlease and the residents of Somers Town and St Pancras to launch a creative studio for public collaboration called MAKE.

The project promoted the values of the 'maker' culture, which is focused on co-operation and knowledge-sharing. It included open days for local community groups, tours, talks and workshops, including 'Women in Making', which saw five women share their journeys into building a career in making.

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



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