

# Generating growth and opportunity in the North East

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Newcastle

# Universities in the North East: 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 North East: in numbers

Number of universities: **5**

Number of full-time UK undergraduate students: **63,935**

Number of part-time UK undergraduate students: **7,805**

Number of UK postgraduate students: **16,215**

Number of international students: **37,100**

Total number of students: **125,055**

Number of staff (full time equivalent) employed: **21,180**

Gross output of universities: **£3.8 billion**

Universities in the North East stretch down the coast from Newcastle through Sunderland, down to Teesside, and in the historic city of Durham.

Analysis by London Economics estimated that universities in the North East had a **total economic impact of £9.66 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 North East spent **£1.1 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 the North East have trained around:

- **11,000** nurses
- **4,000** medics
- **8,000** teachers

## Case study: Newcastle Health Innovation Partners

Newcastle Health Innovation Partners was launched in April 2020, bringing together Newcastle University, Newcastle City Council, two NHS Foundation Trusts, and the Academic Health Science Network for North East and North Cumbria. Using world-class research, education, and clinical practice, the scheme aims to to address health inequalities in the region.

*'Our region has some of the country's greatest health inequalities and the aim of this centre is to help address these by delivering new treatments, pioneering research and better workforce education.'*

Pat Ritchie CBE, Chair of Homes England (formerly Chief Executive of Newcastle City Council)

# 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 North East 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 North East turned over more than **£440 million** in 2023–24, and spin-out companies with some university ownership turned over more than **£52 million** in the same year.

Spin-out, start-up and social enterprise companies founded at universities in the North East attracted more than **£207 million** in external investment in 2023–24 and created more than **4,800 FTE** job positions.

Universities also support existing businesses. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and microbusinesses are critical employers across the UK, particularly in areas that don't have larger employers or well-developed economic clusters. They are often 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: University of Sunderland's Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing Project

At the University of Sunderland, the Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing Project (SAM) aims to help businesses become more productive and sustainable.

SAM participants reported an overall £47.1 million gross value added (GVA) to businesses, and growth in employment of 25.1% along with sales growth of 30.1% following programme support.

## Case study: Newcastle Helix innovation district

A partnership between Newcastle University, Newcastle City Council and Legal & General established the Newcastle Helix innovation district.

The development is home to the National Innovation Centre for Ageing, the National Innovation Centre for Data and a wide range of SMEs and corporates working in life sciences, data, tech, and law. Bringing the organisations together fosters strong collaboration.

# 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: Life Sciences in the North East

Universities in the North East are contributing to innovations in the Life Sciences sector, addressing local health inequities while driving regional and national growth.

The University of Newcastle have invested Regional Innovation Funding into a project to develop a Health Innovation Neighbourhood (HIN). The HIN will be a residential, training and research space which will co-locate intergenerational residencies with interdisciplinary healthcare provision. The HIN will explore ways of sustainable and healthier living, rethinking the future of care.

A MedTech spin-out at Northumbria University have designed a hand-held device that revolutionises diagnosing respiratory diseases. By simply breathing into the device, the technology can be used to study infections of the deep lung, reducing the need for invasive and costly surgical procedures.

# 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 recent 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 North East region is rich in culture. In 2023–24, over **1 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 the North East make sure culture is free for everyone to access: free events and material (such as podcasts and online lectures) were accessed **over 1.3 million times**.

## Case study: preserving heritage in Tees Valley

Research from Teesside University has informed a series of regional arts and culture projects which seek to preserve Tees Valley heritage.

Working in partnership with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and the SSI Task Force, a group set up to provide support after the closure of SSI steelworks in Redcar, the university contributed to the design and delivery of an award-winning exhibition at Kirkleatham Museum.

The 'Steel Stories' exhibition ran from April until December 2019, attracting over 30,000 visitors – a 28% year-on-year increase in visitor numbers for the museum – with 86% of visitors saying that they 'felt pride in Teesside's heritage after viewing the exhibition'.



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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