

# Generating growth and opportunity in Yorkshire and the Humber

# Contents

Overview	2
Training public sector workers	3
Small and medium-sized enterprises and business growth	4
Research and development	6
Building pride in place and local communities	8



Hull

# 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 Yorkshire and the Humber: in numbers

Number of universities: **10**

Number of full-time UK undergraduate students: **123,530**

Number of part-time UK undergraduate students: **13,815**

Number of UK postgraduate students: **28,545**

Number of international students: **55,545**

Total number of students: **221,435**

Number of staff (full time equivalent) employed: **34,910**

Gross output of universities: **£8.0 billion**

Universities in Yorkshire and the Humber are located across the breadth of the region, with many cities being home to multiple institutions such as Sheffield, Leeds, and York.

Analysis by London Economics estimated that universities in the Yorkshire and the Humber region had a **total economic impact of £19.74 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 Yorkshire and the Humber spent over **£2.3 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 Yorkshire and the Humber have trained around:

- **14,250** nurses
- **5,850** medics
- **18,150** teachers

## Case study: University of Hull's SHH! campaign

The University of Hull supported a campaign to attract health and care workers to the region.

The SHH! campaign was launched by Rt Hon Alan Johnson, former Hull West and Hessle MP and Secretary of State for Health. The campaign sought to promote Hull and East Yorkshire as a 'hidden gem' and featured stories of people who came to work there, fell in love with the area and wanted to promote the region to others.

*'This campaign is important to us as a university. We are in a region which does have a lot of inequality [...] The university does a lot of work around health inequality, education and training for health professionals to make sure we take a diverse population into the university and that they succeed.'*

Professor Susan Lea, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Hull

# 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 Yorkshire and the Humber 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 region turned over more than **£56 million** in 2023–24, and spin-out companies with some university ownership turned over more than **£153 million** in the same year.

Spin-out, start-up and social enterprise companies founded at universities in Yorkshire and the Humber attracted more than **£94 million** in external investment in 2023–24 and created more than **4,200 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: Marketing and leadership partnerships with Leeds Beckett University

Marketing and leadership experts at Leeds Beckett University have teamed up with UK-based small businesses to share their academic knowledge, and applied industry experience to bring long-term, sustainable, growth to the companies.

This has included a partnership with Kingfisher Lubrication Limited to support their strategic marketing processes and diversification efforts.

*'Running a business during the past three years has been challenging, to say the least. To be given the opportunity to*

*collaborate with Leeds Beckett University on this project has given us all a renewed sense of enthusiasm for the road ahead.'*

Lorraine Nugent, Managing Director of Kingfisher

# 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: University of Leeds' partnership with Asda

A partnership between the University of Leeds and Asda saw customers reduce food waste and save money.

The UK throws away 9.5 million tonnes of food each year, and household food waste accounts for 70% of this amount. Professor Young, an expert on consumer behaviour and modelling, worked with Asda to tackle knowledge barriers faced by consumers around waste.

Face-to-face behaviour change initiatives, such as community networks, focus groups, and in-store 'champions', proved highly successful in influencing and motivating consumers to take action.

## **Case study: University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) in partnership with Boeing**

The University of Sheffield with Boeing has secured funding for a £43 million state-of-the-art research factory to meet the future needs of aerospace and other high-value manufacturing industries.

The AMRC Factory 2050 will be the UK's first fully reconfigurable assembly and component manufacturing facility, capable of rapidly switching production between different high-value components and one-off parts. The AMRC Factory 2050 will combine technologies including advanced robotics, flexible automation, unmanned workspace, off-line programming in virtual environments linked to plug-and-play robotics, 3D printing from flexible automated systems, man-machine interfaces, and new programming and training tools.

## **Case study: University of Hull's partnership with Smith and Nephew**

The University of Hull are partnering with Smith and Nephew to innovate ways of accelerating wound healing. Unhealed wounds cost the NHS in excess of £5 billion a year. The ongoing partnership with the medical technology company has enabled a team of experts to be recruited at state of the art wound healing research laboratories based at Castle Hill Hospital include dedicated cell and tissue culture facilities. The work is giving post graduate students the chance to work on this world leading research.

# 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 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 Yorkshire and the Humber region is rich in culture. In 2023–24, over **124 thousand attendees** accessed cultural events run by universities in the region, including museum and gallery exhibitions, public lectures and dance and music performances. Universities in Yorkshire and the Humber make sure culture is free for everyone to access: free events and material (such as podcasts and online lectures) were accessed **over 3.4 million times**.

## Case study: University of York's research into local Covid-19 recovery

The University of York and North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) have been working in partnership to help NYCC develop their post Covid-19 social and economic recovery plans, through a research-informed collaboration.

The University of York led a sub-regional housing workshop to identify key areas of future collaboration. The results of the workshop suggested that the top priorities are financing and supplying affordable and social housing; social care and later life; and achieving net zero.

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](mailto:info@universitiesuk.ac.uk)  
🖱 [universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://universitiesuk.ac.uk)  
✕ @ @UniversitiesUK  
in /universities-uk



November 2025

ISBN: 978-1-84036-544-3