

Levelling up across the country

The Government has set a clear ambition to level up opportunity and investment across the regions of the UK and unleash the country's full potential. We share that ambition.

Russell Group universities strive to serve the whole of the UK as educators, leaders in research and innovation, as business incubators and as the gateway to people and ideas from around the world. In turn, our institutions have become anchors for growth and investment in their local, regional and national communities and are helping to transform many of our major cities through the high value jobs, businesses and overseas investment they attract.

19 of the 24 Russell Group universities are located outside of London, based in cities in every nation and region of the UK. Together, they generate around £87 billion for the UK economy every year through their research, teaching, exports, local buying power and other activities – but we want to do even more.

Investing in place-based economic growth, in fundamental research, in key strategic science-based missions and in the talent pipeline for future high-level skills will create jobs, help realise the levelling-up ambition and boost our knowledge economy as we work to overcome covid-19.

Levelling up and the economic response to Covid-19

Russell Group universities are playing their part in the United Kingdom's fightback against Covid-19. Our universities are carrying out life-saving research and giving practical support to NHS staff in local communities.

The impact of Covid-19 on jobs and growth across the UK will be profound and different regions will be affected in different ways. As hubs of employment, research and innovation with a proven record of securing funding and jobs, our universities are taking a leading role in overcoming the virus and driving economic renewal in every nation and region of the UK.

Anchors for growth across the UK

In 2016, Russell Group universities supported a total of 261,000 full-time equivalent jobs – more than the entire population of cities like Aberdeen and Plymouth. **More than 200,000 of these jobs, supported through direct employment and the expenditure of universities, staff and international students, were based in towns and cities outside of London.**

The overall economic impact of spending by the 24 universities in 2015/16 together with the spending of their staff, their suppliers and their international students in the wider economy was **£27.2 billion**, with **£21.3 billion of this impact boosting communities outside of London.**

The 24 Russell Group universities are often the largest employer in their cities, creating jobs right across their regions. They have also helped to drive City Deals, regional health partnerships and major business investments in every nation of the UK.

Launchpads for regional economic renewal: driving innovation

Businesses and local communities are already benefiting from universities' expertise as they respond to the economic shock of coronavirus.

Durham University's Centre for Innovation and Technology Management reviewed 1.7 million companies in 28 different regions, identified those at high risk from Coronavirus due to how their supply chains operate and offers **mitigation strategies to specific sectors** so businesses can survive. The centre will also offer free advice to local businesses in Durham and towns across the Northeast.

UK universities in regions that are likely to be hit hardest by Covid 19 are also helping build more of the businesses that will drive the recovery.

The University of Nottingham's Ingenuity Gateway is helping small and medium businesses, with over **160 new and early stage start-ups benefitting from support** including £360,000 of investment in businesses through its Ingenuity Fund. Successes include Footfalls and Heartbeats, which is now selling face masks knitted with antimicrobial yarns.

The University of Bristol leads an enterprise partnership with the universities of Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Southampton, and Surrey, that works with local councils and specialises in growing technology start-ups. It currently supports 80 ventures and has raised **more than £1.8bn of investment** and created £8.6 billion of economic impact to date – a figure which is set to rise to nearly **£27 billion by 2030**.

Queen's University Belfast has been ranked as a top university for entrepreneurial impact and has **supported the creation of nearly 100 technology start-ups, adding 2700 jobs to the regional economy**. An additional 1800 roles have been created via a cutting-edge cybersecurity cluster based around Queen's Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT)

Closing the regional productivity gap

Closing the productivity gaps between London and regions such as the Northeast, Midlands, Wales and Northern Ireland will be crucial to delivering an economic recovery that works for communities right across the UK and secures long-term growth and wage increases.

Analysis from the Office for National Statistics has shown 20% of the rise in productivity between 1994 and 2019 can be attributed to improvements in the quality of the workforce, and **NIESR forecast an accumulation of graduate skills is likely to be even more strongly correlated with productivity growth in future** as a result of rapidly-developing technology in the workplace.

Independent economic research has shown productivity spill-overs associated with **world leading R&D carried out at our universities helps deliver a return of £8.35 for every £1 of public funding invested in research**. We also know every £1 of public money spent on R&D raises private sector output by 20p each year in perpetuity by raising the level of the UK knowledge base.

Building a workforce ready for the future

Building a workforce that can drive the economic recovery will require big increases in the number of people with the kind of high-level skills a high-quality university education provides. It is more important than ever everyone with the drive and determination to succeed at university is able to do so, regardless of their background. Potential is spread right across the country, but opportunity is not. This is something our members are working hard to address.

The number of disadvantaged and under-represented students progressing to university, including the most selective institutions, has steadily increased over a period of years. The most under-represented students are **61% more likely to enter university now than they were ten years ago**, and **30% more likely to enter Russell Group universities** than they were five years ago. Our universities are working hard with the Office for Students and devolved administrations to build on this progress.

The University of Glasgow's **Top-Up Programme** works with 2,100 pupils in over 90 Scottish schools annually to promote aspiration for higher education study in under-represented groups, prepare applicants for the transition to university and provide an alternative access route through admissions progression agreements. It has worked with over 20,000 students since its inception.

The **PARTNERS supported entry route** at Newcastle University, launched in 1999, is open to all eligible students resident in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Students attend an Academic Summer School which gives them a unique opportunity to work on campus with academic staff to develop personal and subject specific skills related to their chosen degree programme.