

Universities provide fuel for the engines of a renewed UK economy

Rebooting and reviving Britain's private sector, innovators and wealth creators is key to UK efforts to overcome the legacy of the Coronavirus lockdown – and our world class universities are leading the way

With a proven record of successfully stimulating economic growth, nurturing innovation and supporting new business, the research-intensive university sector can unlock the barriers and deliver on Britain's potential. On their own, Russell Group universities undertake around 23,000 contract research projects with businesses and others and **collaborative research projects worth over £1 billion a year** – nearly twice as much as the rest of the sector combined (2018/19 HEBCI data). The World Economic Forum has also, once again, ranked the UK number one in Europe for business-university collaboration in its 2020 competitiveness ranking.

But while major collaborations with companies such as Boeing, GSK and Jaguar Land Rover often get the headlines, we are also focused on developing the next generation of high growth companies. Many of these will be vital for the UK's economic renewal and regrowth after the economic shock of COVID-19.

- 9 out of 10 university spin-outs which received private investment between 2011 and 2015 survived into 2018. Compared to less than 1 in 2 new enterprises surviving over a five-year period in the wider start-up environment.
- **Nine Russell Group universities were [named](#) in the top 10 UK universities for creating successful spinout companies from research.** At Queen's University Belfast, three companies created from its research are now listed on London Stock Exchange.
- Founded in 1990, ARM holdings – a Cambridge University spin-out – was acquired by Japan's Softbank for £24 billion in 2016.

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](#).

With a presence in almost every region of the UK, Russell Group universities can offer more of this expertise to communities across the country, levelling up opportunity for every part of Britain.

UK universities can also build more of the businesses that will provide the fuel to fire up the engines of our economy. In fact, many are already doing this and, with additional investment from government, that work can increase exponentially.

- 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, and seeks to create smart fabrics with integrated sensors.
- 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**.

- A London Economics [analysis](#) shows Queens University Belfast contributes £1.9 billion to the UK economy. Their research leads to innovative business: **QUBIS has attracted more than £100m in capital and helped create more than 90 spinouts reflecting research at Queen's University Belfast**. The University are also key partners in the Belfast [regional city deal](#), enabling the region to compete in the data driven knowledge economy of the future.

As major regional hubs able to draw together businesses, investors and community groups, universities are also uniquely placed to stimulate the innovation and entrepreneurship that will help generate jobs and economic growth.

- In 2019, University of Leeds launched the **Nexus, a new innovation hub created to bring entrepreneurs, business and researchers together to collaborate on industry-led research and innovation**. The [Nexus](#) can support up to 60 high growth technology-led businesses at a time. Businesses supported by the project have raised £8.7m in private investment since May 2019 last year, helping create over 115 new high-skilled jobs with plans to create hundreds more.
- Newcastle University is developing **Newcastle Helix, a key regeneration project which will bring around 4,000 jobs to the area**, with Newcastle City Council and Legal and General. It brings together academia, the public sector, communities, and business to create a global centre for urban innovation in the heart of the city.

The UK's response to Coronavirus has been led by science, innovation, data and technology – areas where Britain's higher education sector leads the world.

New skills, technology and capacities that did not exist before this crisis are now at the disposal of the UK government as it plots the country's path to recovery and can benefit disadvantaged communities that have been most impacted.

- The University of Glasgow is [leading](#) one of three national UK COVID-19 testing 'superlabs' – the [Lighthouse Labs](#) – testing NHS and frontline workers with suspected C-19, and scaling up to deliver thousands of tests per day. The lab is based in the university's **Clinical Innovation Zone, a space that was designed to meet industrial scale standards** and was therefore readily able to be transformed into a major medical testing facility.
- The University of Sheffield's **Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC)** has been 3D printing PPE visors and producing ventilators to help the NHS in the fight against Coronavirus. It also supports local small and medium sized businesses directly to be more efficient and embrace [automation](#) to help them save time, boost efficiency and maintain quality so they can be competitive in the modern economy.
- Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) is one of several **Russell Group members leading 20 University Enterprise Zones set up around the country**. Working with government, QMUL is [helping](#) local businesses, entrepreneurs and start-ups in bio-pharma, digital health and med-tech companies. This will not only drive economic growth but also improve health benefits in Tower Hamlets, England's third most deprived local authority.
- At the University of Liverpool, [Sensor City](#) has been awarded a £3.5m from DCMS to investigate the opportunities of 5G community Wi-Fi for health and social care. The project will see **high value technologies including low-cost open source 5G networks, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality** used in deprived communities in the Liverpool City Region to help independent living, manage loneliness in the elderly and improve communication between medical facilities and the communities.

Like many, the higher education sector is facing challenges as a result of coronavirus and it is taking steps to respond to those by making savings, and ensuring best value for every pound it spends.

Universities are uniquely placed to drive our recovery, as set out above, however to maintain and turbocharge the growth nurtured through projects like those listed above enhanced government support and investment is vital.

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