

University Alliance is a mission group representing professional and technical universities across the UK. Our members will be critical to [powering the UK's future](#).

Universities and colleges of all shapes and sizes will play their part in delivering a post-pandemic economic, social, and cultural recovery for the UK. As a crucial Comprehensive Spending Review approaches, we have considered how best we can support the government's priorities and ambitions, including: recruiting 50,000 more nurses and 7,500 extra nursing associates; attracting the best talent into teaching; making Britain the best place to start and grow business; introducing the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; unleashing innovation; and meeting the target of 2.4% of GDP being spent on R&D.

A diverse, healthy, and sustainable post-18 education sector will:

1. Train and upskill the future workforce of the NHS and public services.
2. Generate jobs and provide critical industry skills.
3. Regenerate communities and grow local businesses.
4. Deliver cutting edge research and innovation.

## Powering the NHS and public services

Alliance universities train 25% of all nursing students in England, thousands of whom volunteered on the frontline during the first wave of the pandemic. Our members are leading the way in developing [innovations](#) in [training](#) for nurses, physiotherapists, paramedics and other allied health professionals, including new blended learning degrees in nursing and midwifery, as well as discoveries, [treatments](#), services, and [care](#) that are saving lives and creating healthier communities. Our members offer cutting-edge technology and simulation facilities to ensure graduates receive [practical, hands-on training](#) with the latest equipment and treatments. They work in partnership with the NHS in their local areas to improve patient outcomes, and grow and develop the healthcare workforce.

Our members also play an important role in powering other public service professions that communities rely upon. In 2019/20, Alliance universities trained 18% of all social work students; 15% of all teaching training students; and 24% of all students in architecture, building and planning courses in England. Members [design courses in close partnership with the public sector](#) and use [practical, real-world scenarios](#) and [simulation-based learning](#) to ensure delivery of a trained workforce that is fit-for-purpose, agile and ready for the challenges of tomorrow. Alliance universities [work closely with schools and Multi Academy Trusts](#) in their regions, including providing free training to Initial Teacher Training mentors.

### We encourage the government to:

- Work in partnership with universities to [increase capacity on nursing and allied health courses](#) to meet future NHS workforce needs. This could be achieved by boosting clinical placement tariffs; enhancing the use of simulation and virtual/augmented reality; and expanding placements beyond the NHS.
- Remove barriers and improve incentives for more schools to offer increased placement opportunities for trainee teachers.
- Support the role of university/school partnerships in driving change within the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) agenda and enable the sharing of services across education groups to be formally recognised in governance arrangements.

## Powering jobs and skills

Alliance universities help power businesses and jobs – producing highly skilled and job-ready graduates, creating new employment opportunities and [upskilling the existing workforce](#). One third of our courses are professionally accredited, rising to well over half of all courses in some Alliance universities. Our members are leaders in using their [close relationships with industry partners](#) and employers to collaborate on developing the curriculum and delivering practical, skills-led learning with real-world experience and [on-the-job training](#).

Our members were among the first universities to offer higher and degree apprenticeships. These have been embraced by employers and are playing an increasingly important role in regional skills and innovation systems, by delivering the specific needs of hundreds of employers and connecting them to other opportunities to innovate and grow their businesses. Across Alliance universities in England and Wales there are [apprentices on a range of higher and degree programmes](#), covering sectors including healthcare, biosciences, social work, policing, digital solutions, engineering and construction.

All disciplines have an important role to play in ensuring we have the highly skilled workforce to meet the challenges of the future and that scientific and technological innovations are adopted across a broad range of businesses. The subject mix at Alliance Universities enables [collaboration and knowledge exchange across disciplines and industrial sectors](#). The recently published 'Future Skills League Table' from YouGov and Kingston University shows employers seek a portfolio of skills for innovation, including problem-solving, communication and creativity. To support innovation, economic growth, and inspire a national culture of entrepreneurship, there is significant value in funding and delivering creative subjects across a range of higher education institutions.

### We encourage the government to:

- Improve awareness of higher and degree apprenticeships amongst employers and students and continue to make them more flexible.
- Ensure regulation is proportionate and risk-based and does not hinder the bold ambitions set out in the Lifelong Loan Entitlement to expand access to short courses and modules.
- Avoid limiting progression routes to higher education and employment by ensuring students can choose from a range of technical and vocational qualifications at Level 3. Ensure withdrawal of funding for a qualification is based on public consultation and consent from employer representative bodies.

## Powering communities and businesses

By supporting Alliance universities, the government is investing in communities, towns, cities, and regions across the nation. Our members are interconnected across education ecosystems and their civic and local infrastructure, and use these strategic partnerships to deliver innovation and [pathways to higher-level skills](#).

As partners in the new Institutes of Technology and through [further education partnerships](#) and collaboration with local schools, our members are opening up opportunities to a diverse range of learners and equipping businesses for the future. Alliance universities [support the upskilling and reskilling](#) of the existing workforce, providing routes to highly skilled careers, and helping people to re-enter the labour market. They deliver outreach and engagement opportunities through collaboration [with community projects](#) to develop their own long-term [initiatives, spin-outs and social enterprises](#).

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Our members provide a range of [technical and other support options](#) to help businesses at various stages of development to [innovate and grow](#). This activity includes leveraging private sector investment to provide routes to early-stage finance, offering specialist facilities and expertise, and facilitating businesses, creative organisations and graduate start-ups to co-locate and innovate together. Alliance universities focus particularly on supporting the creation, growth, and development of [local SMEs](#), providing a range of [bespoke support services](#). In 2018/19, they provided facilities and equipment-related services to 6,227 commercial companies and non-commercial organisations, of which 88% were SMEs. Staff in our universities take on strategic and leadership roles within their regions, such as acting as advisors to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and participating in LEP boards and committees.

**We encourage the government to:**

- Build on the impact of combining EU Structural Funds with research and innovation funding on regional economic development and [underpin](#) the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with a national framework that balances allocation of funding to skills development, business support and research & innovation.
- Include universities as a key stakeholder and delivery partner in the Levelling-Up agenda and consultation for the forthcoming White Paper.

## Powering research and innovation

Alliance universities deliver research that is making a practical difference to people every day. Through our focus on applied research, knowledge exchange and innovation, we are working towards ensuring a fairer, [greener](#), [healthier](#), more prosperous and resilient UK, and a [sustainable world](#).

As globally connected and locally-rooted institutions, our members are key to ensuring the UK's future will be driven by cutting-edge research and innovation. Alliance universities leverage public and private sector investment, including vital quality-related research (QR) funding, [to create the right conditions](#) for new talent, products, services and discoveries to flourish. They identify the individual needs and market gaps within their regions in order to apply research into a real-world, everyday context.

Central to these efforts is a commitment to removing barriers and expanding the diversity of R&D talent pipelines, and answering the call to action in the R&D People & Culture Strategy. University Alliance's own [Doctoral Training Alliance \(DTA\)](#) is a structured PhD training programme run across 19 Alliance universities and partner institutions, and is one of the largest nationwide doctoral training initiatives in the UK.

**We encourage the government to:**

- Secure the involvement of a diverse range of universities in developing the UK R&D Place Strategy and ensure these views are translated into the Levelling-Up White Paper.
- Reward excellence in all its forms and maintain the funding ramp for 3 and 4\* activity in the QR settlement post-REF2021.
- Conduct a root and branch review of the Higher Education Business & Community survey and its relationship to the Knowledge Exchange Framework, and scale-up the Higher Education Innovation Fund as a proven way to stimulate regional university-business partnerships and economic growth.
- Provide stability on Horizon Europe funding and clarity on how these costs relate to a longer-term strategy for increasing domestic public R&D spending and achieving the 2.4% target.

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