

Invitation to Tender: University Alliance Employer Research

[University Alliance](#) is looking for an independent, external agency to work with the team to conduct extensive research of different employers (ideally including representatives from both SMEs and larger corporates).

The research will assess what employers value when hiring graduate applicants: whether they most value the graduate's skills and experience, the course they studied, or the institution they studied at.

We are keen to find out the extent to which employers value graduates with a range of experience of the workplace or industry placements, and to what extent they value those who have graduated from universities typically considered prestigious.

We would also like to test their understanding of what professional and technical universities offer, not only to students through the form of 'hands-on' technical education and links with industry, but the extent to which they understand universities deliver support to local businesses.

About University Alliance

University Alliance (UA) represents 16 of the UK's leading professional and technical universities. Our members specialise in working with industry and employers. Their teaching is hands-on, and designed to prepare students for careers. Their knowledge and research drive industry to innovate, thrive and meet challenges.

Our members are leading the way in innovation and business support in the green, tech, creative and healthcare industries. They are leading providers of teaching in healthcare, the creative arts, degree apprenticeships and more. We collaborate as UA to benefit our members and their communities, and to provide expertise to policy makers.

Background

In 2023, University Alliance commissioned an agency to carry out some qualitative audience research on perceptions of higher education. Our objective

was to assess how a range of groups (prospective students, parents, parliamentarians and employers) felt about the professional and technical universities that UA represents.

The qualitative findings strongly indicated that employers increasingly value a graduate applicant's skills and experience, and are not necessarily concerned with the prestige of the university they studied at.

At the end of the project, the audience agency strongly recommended commissioning some quantitative research to back up the findings of their qualitative study.

The requirement: what we want from an agency/individual.

We are looking for an agency or consultant to conduct detailed research of employers/hiring managers at larger businesses and SMEs, who have extensive experience of hiring graduates.

The research should seek to quantify the following:

- What businesses know about different types of university, and what kinds of courses they offer.
- What business know about professional and technical universities like UA's members (e.g. applied research, links to industry, greater diversity of students).
- What businesses value most about graduates when hiring.
- To what extent perceptions of the university the applicant graduated from is considered in the hiring process.

Approach

We are happy to take advice on the approach, but our initial suggestion would be to focus primarily on quantitative research of relevant hirers a range of businesses.

We have some ideas for the questions we would like to ask employers but would strongly value any input from experienced research agencies to shape the survey.

Project timeline

Deadline for proposals: 23:59, Friday 8 March

Interviews: w/c 11 March

Project kick-off: Monday 25 March.

Final report and project close: Friday 31 May (provisional date)

Tender process

Bidders must submit an electronic copy of their tender submission no later than 23:59, Friday 8 March, with the subject line: ITT University Alliance Employer Research to: thomas@unialliance.ac.uk.

In submissions, bidders should detail:

- How they propose to work with UA to gather the views target audiences.

This should include:

- Approach to recruiting participants
- Methodology for gathering views of participants
- A breakdown of expected costs
- Previous work you/your agency has delivered which is similar in focus.
- Details of staff who will undertake the work, a breakdown of how their time will be spent and how their expertise will add value to University Alliance
- Organisation details including name, legal status, full contact details and lead contact

The contract for the successful provider will be made with University Alliance, for an initial term of 2 months, running from March 2024 to May 2024.

The total value of this contract cannot exceed £30k inclusive of all VAT and expenses.

It is our preference to pay for the contract in two stages:

- Payment of 50% of agreed total on signing the contract
- Final payment of 50% of agreed total upon receipt and formal approval of final report.

Within the contract we may agree certain deliverables conditional for receipt of the second payment.

In calculating project overheads account should be taken of the fact that University Alliance is a non-profit making body.

If any person has an interest or connection with University Alliance, please provide that person's full name, position, and the nature of the connection/interest with University Alliance.

Evaluation of bids

The bids will be judged by the following criteria:

Criteria % of total score:

- Clear proposal for the project - 60
- Skills and relevant experience of the agency/individual - 20
- Value for money (though we are not bound to accept the lowest priced tender) - 20

The information contained in this ITT and all other information made in connection with the project by University Alliance and UA's member universities is supplied on the basis that such information will be used only for the purposes of participating in the bidding process and delivering the project.

Information supplied by agencies as part of the tender process will also be treated with confidentiality.

If you have any questions regarding the tender or this work, please contact Thomas Creese: thomas@unialliance.ac.uk