

WHY UNIVERSITIES MATTER FOR THE SOUTH WEST

THE **13** UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTH WEST...



1. UNIVERSITIES CREATE JOBS AND HIGH QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

Universities provide business support and help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow. For example, the local Growth Hub at the University of Gloucestershire worked with 179 businesses in 2014–15.

Universities provide the higher level skills to meet the job requirements of the future. For instance, the University of the West of England is working with GE Aviation in Cheltenham on the design of a Master's-level apprenticeship programme to upskill the company's graduate engineers.

Since 2012–13, graduates from universities in the South West have created 1,355 new start-ups or social enterprises, supporting over 1,430 full-time jobs in 2015–16 alone. In the same year, universities and their staff created 66 new businesses supporting nearly 1,000 full-time jobs.

2. UNIVERSITIES INVEST IN THE SOUTH WEST

Plymouth University has led the regeneration of Plymouth city centre with several investments in public spaces including The House, a £7 million cutting-edge performing arts centre, and the multi-award-winning restoration of the derelict Drake's Place Gardens and Reservoir. Universities in the South West have already contracted for future capital expenditure projects worth over £200 million, providing long-term investment in local economic priority sectors such as marine energy, aerospace and the digital and creative industries as well as supporting the construction industry.

Universities are long-term partners for the South West. Together, the universities in the South West have nearly 580 years of experience working with the region, and are invested in its future.

3. UNIVERSITIES ATTRACT MONEY FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Universities are rooted locally, but they represent their region nationally. They perform 19% of the South West's research and development, often using funds drawn from outside of the region. They provide the necessary match funding to unlock investment spending for local projects from European Structural and Investment Funds and the UK government's Local Growth Fund.

Universities are deeply embedded in the South West's local growth infrastructure that helps the region to prosper, while being nationally and internationally connected. They sit on Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) boards and second staff to work with LEPs and devolution deal panels, work with councils, and provide evidence and analysis to support the development of strategic economic plans.

With further devolution from central government to come, it is becoming increasingly important to have such capacity and expertise locally.

4. UNIVERSITIES REACH AREAS OTHER INSTITUTIONS CAN'T

Universities are working through local consortia such as the Next Steps South West partnership to improve higher education participation in disadvantaged areas and to drive social mobility. Through initiatives such as the University of Bath's 'On Track to Bath', a free two-year curriculum enhancement programme to help disadvantaged post-16 students into higher education, they are central to addressing disparities at local level.

Universities also utilise international connections to benefit the South West. For instance, the University of the West of England has opened a permanent office in Guangzhou which promotes the city of Bristol and the university to businesses in South China.

Finally, universities in the South West have stepped up to help communities hit by the collapse of large local industries. The University of the West of England in 2009 helped 1,400 individuals and 800 businesses with start-up assistance, procurement opportunities, internships, training and a flexible £3,500 voucher enabling access to any university service.

5. UNIVERSITIES ATTRACT SKILLED PEOPLE TO THE AREA

The universities in the South West attract 74,055 students from the rest of the UK, and over 25,700 international students who spent nearly £323 million in the local economy in 2014–15.

In many cases they are also among the largest employers in the region. For example, the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England are two of only 25 businesses with over 250 employees in the city of Bristol, and together provide jobs for nearly 9,500 people.

Businesses looking for skilled workers or access to research and business support often set up close to universities, and often in incubation centres managed by universities. For example, the National Centre for Computing Animation at Bournemouth University provides a steady supply of visual effects graduates to the local creative business cluster, which has the third highest density of digital tech businesses in the UK.

A skilled local population is also vital for attracting inward investment. For example, the University of Bath's Advanced Propulsion Centre, which helps drive innovation and address skills gaps in the automotive industry, will bring £500 million investment into the area from 27 international companies.

YOUR LOCAL UNIVERSITIES HELP...

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Universities in the South West work with thousands of – mostly small – businesses. Last year they signed over 6,800 research, consultancy or facility contracts with businesses and charities. Forms of collaboration include co-owned apprenticeships, development of curricula, internships and placements for students, and innovation and business support to help firms grow. All universities in the South West also offer bespoke company training. For example, the Centre for Alternative Materials and Remanufacturing Technologies at the University of Exeter provides free advice to local SMEs about manufacturing and operational improvements, and helps them test new products and materials, adding an estimated £2 million to regional growth since its launch.

BIG BUSINESSES

Bombardier worked with Plymouth University to develop a cutting-edge coded railway signalling product, drawing on the university's expertise in IT security, communication and network technology. The product helped the company become the world leader in coded track systems and also resulted in additional investments in its Plymouth site, securing its long-term survival.

COMMUNITIES

Every year, the two universities in Bristol work with the BBC and other local and national partners to deliver the Bristol Festival of Nature, a weekend of free events promoting public understanding of the natural world and environmental issues which attracts around 30,000 visitors to the city.

SCHOOL-LEAVERS

Universities in the South West are planning to provide 305 degree apprenticeship places in 2017–18 (up from 12 in 2015–16), giving students the benefit of industry experience with a leading company and a globally recognised degree.

LOCAL SERVICES

The jobs that the communities of the South West rely on – the teachers, doctors and nurses – are trained at university. Universities in the South West are currently training around 4,900 nurses, 3,450 doctors and dentists and 4,050 teachers.

Universities in the South West are also transforming health and social care for local residents. One such initiative is the University of Bath's InTouch project, which will help reduce the social isolation of people with dementia by enabling them to connect with friends and family in other households through 'virtual visits'.

All universities in the region work closely with local schools to raise attainment and aspiration among children and young people. For example, Bath Spa University has partnerships with over 1,400 primary and secondary schools, plus a number of early-years settings.

'The biggest economic asset we have is the knowledge capital of our people. We have four world class universities with 21 world leading academic departments. These institutions attract and retain talent and help to develop clusters around high growth and knowledge intensive sectors.'

WEST OF ENGLAND LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN

HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN THE SOUTH WEST

Bath Spa University	The University of Bath
Bournemouth University	University of Bristol
Falmouth University	University of Exeter
Plymouth College of Art	University of Gloucestershire
Plymouth University	University of St Mark & St John
Royal Agricultural University	University of the West of England, Bristol
The Arts University Bournemouth	

FURTHER INFORMATION

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