

# Our work

2021-22



# Contents

---

Introduction from the Chief Executive	3
Highlights from the year	5
Coronavirus response	8
Our work in numbers 2021-22	9
Financial statement	10

---

# Introduction from the Chief Executive

The past 12 months have continued to be challenging and full of uncertainty as we have navigated the ongoing pandemic, significant and frequent policy developments, and the crisis in Ukraine. Across our membership, we have seen positive engagement and strong support for our activities.

Covid-19 dominated the political narrative and impacted university activities particularly in the first half of the year. UUK dedicated significant resource to supporting universities to manage these challenges. Approaches across the four nations differed with England emerging from restrictions in advance of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

More recently, we have seen the Westminster government finally publish its long-awaited post-18 education and funding response with confirmation of a tuition fees freeze in England until 2024–25 and the launch of significant consultations on HE reforms and the Lifelong Loan Entitlement. In the latter half of the year, we have undertaken substantial member

engagement, analysis and evidence gathering to formulate our consultation responses alongside extensive communications and political affairs activity to make our position clear.

With COP26 happening in late 2021 and climate change an ever-growing global challenge, we published a report outlining how the UK's universities are confronting the climate emergency. We also took steps to increase public understanding of how universities are tackling climate change via a major new strand of our #MadeAtUni campaign.

In the year in which the UK hit its international student recruitment target more than eight years early, we progressed a range of actions to secure the UK's status as a front runner in international education. We mobilised rapidly in response to the humanitarian crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, identifying and facilitating how universities could support students and staff in both countries. We also continued our efforts to secure the UK's status as an associated country

in Horizon Europe and took steps to ensure the success of the Turing scheme.

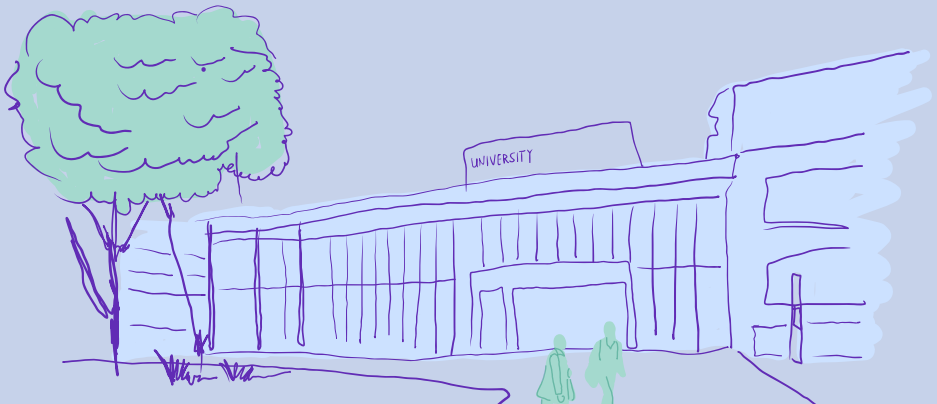
We continued to expand our political influencing, adapting to a new Westminster Education Secretary part way through the year and strengthening our links with Westminster and across the devolved parliaments. The All-Party Parliamentary University Group which we provide the secretariat for continues to go from strength to strength.

Member engagement remained high with regular monthly VC calls, our annual conference at Northumbria University in September which signalled a return to in-person activities and our quarterly members' meetings. We continued our engagement with new and mid-term vice-chancellors through peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and our Specialist Institutions' Forum (SIF) brought focus and profile to the issues of our small/specialist institutions.

This year saw the departure of UUK's Chief Executive Alistair Jarvis CBE after five years in the role and over eight years with the organisation. Alistair steered UUK through several seismic developments including the UK leaving the European Union and the lengthy pandemic. Under his leadership, UUK has become a stronger organisation with greater impact, higher member engagement and a more focused campaigning approach. We wish Alistair every success in his new role at the University of London.

A full report on our work and achievements in 2021–22 will be included in our annual report and accounts which will be published in October 2022. In the meantime, here is a summary of some of our headline achievements from the past year.

**Chris Hale**  
**Interim Chief Executive**



# Highlights from the year



## Support for Ukraine

We led the sector's response to the crisis in Ukraine including establishing a twinning mechanism to support Ukrainian universities, influencing visa and research policy, and informing the roll-out of the Homes for Ukraine programme.



## Post-18 reforms

We developed comprehensive responses to the HE reform and LLE consultations drawing on specially convened task and finish groups, significant member engagement and compelling evidence including a new analysis of the economic impact of universities.



## Levelling up

We responded strongly to the Levelling Up White Paper by urging government to bridge the funding gap while it sets up its UK Shared Prosperity Fund, publishing a new report on the value of graduates to future economic success and developing a positive vision for universities and levelling up.



## Student wellbeing

We established a new task and finish group to support universities to understand and address student drug use.



## Value

We demonstrated continued leadership in addressing concerns about low value courses, via the development and promotion of our Framework for Programme Reviews. We published an explainer outlining how universities are protecting degree standards and tackling grade inflation.



## Admissions

We showcased the sector's commitment to maintaining fair and transparent admissions processes by publishing our Fair admissions code of practice which over 120 universities have now signed up to.



## Harassment and hate crime

We continued our efforts to tackle all forms of harassment and hate crime within universities including guidance on tackling staff-to-student sexual misconduct, tackling Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism and our #CombatMisconduct Toolkit for Vice-Chancellors.



## Promoting academic freedom and freedom of speech

We worked with UK government on the development of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill with a view to reducing burden on the sector. Our work was heavily informed by member engagement to identify where further support could help balance academic freedom and freedom of speech with other duties.



## Ensuring post-Brexit success

We worked to secure the UK's success post-Brexit including our high-profile 'Stick to Science' campaign urging EU leaders and the UK and Swiss governments to place science collaboration before politics. We called for visa reform to maximise the success of the Turing scheme, as well as measures to attract and retain international researchers.



## Promoting the impact of universities

We continued a range of public campaigning including our #GettingResults campaign and two strands of our #MadeAtUni campaign focusing on Creative Sparks and Climate Action. Our #WeAreTogether campaign received two national awards – a PIEoneer Award and a PR Week Global Award.



## Security

We supported universities to manage security-related risks by assessing sector progress since our October 2020 guidance. We also issued a joint statement with international counterparts committing to safe, secure, and sustainable internationalisation, helped universities understand the National Security and Investment Act and established the Higher Education Export Control Association.



## Climate emergency

We highlighted how universities are confronting the climate emergency, via a new report, our MadeAtUni Climate Action campaign and through analysis on how the climate crisis affects internationalisation.



## Quality and standards

We responded robustly to the OfS consultations on student outcomes, the TEF and the construction of indicators, warning that excessive administrative will detract from teaching, assessment, and student support. We took on the role of secretariat for the UKSCQA to provide oversight of quality assessment arrangements.



## Research and innovation

We promoted how research and innovation at universities will help deliver on the UK's plans for growth and informed several national reviews on the research environment. As secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, we implemented a new governance structure and strategy.



## Access and participation

We influenced the revised approach to access and participation ahead of the appointment of the new OfS Director for Access and Participation. This included significant consultation with members and stakeholders to ensure universities could build on past successes and avoid the wholesale rewriting of Access and Participation Plans.



## Political influence

UUK has continued to be the go-to organisation for UK government and opposition teams when it comes to influencing higher education policy and being the leading sector voice.



## All-Party Parliamentary University Group

We secured the renewal of our contract with the All-Party Parliamentary University Group for another three years (until December 2024). University membership of the group reached a record high of 95 in 2021–22. The group published research on perceptions of fees and student finance while our meetings attracted high profile speakers including Research Minister George Freeman MP and OfS Director for Fair Access, John Blake.

# Coronavirus response

As with 2020–21, much of the year has been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. The early part of 2021–22 started with cautious optimism as students returned to in-person teaching and learning. However, the emergence of the Omicron variant resulted in further restrictions and uncertainty stretching across the winter months. We prioritised influencing official guidance across the UK nations, advocating for a proportionate response, and ensuring members remained informed of developments. Key outcomes included:

- securing a smoother admissions process for 2021 avoiding a repeat of the chaos and uncertainty of the 2020 process
- influencing government plans throughout the 2021–22 academic year including avoiding restrictions on students returning to campus in January 2022
- ensuring relevant ministers, parliamentarians and officials were fully briefed on the in-person, online mix on campus this academic year including publication of a briefing on what teaching and learning would look like in England in 2021–22
- securing extensions to key visa concessions for international students
- promoting how universities will drive economic and social recovery from Covid-19 across all UK nations and regions with the launch of our #GettingResults campaign
- informing the narrative on how the use of digital technology during the pandemic may impact teaching and learning by publishing a new briefing on Lessons from the pandemic: making the most of technologies in teaching
- encouraging and achieving high vaccination uptake in university populations including a sector statement highlighting our collective commitment to get students fully vaccinated as soon as possible.
- securing a solution to the vaccination recognition issue affecting international students.
- supporting the sector to plan for the autumn by convening two webinars on the Step 4 guidance and circulating a briefing of key themes emerging.
- influencing policy linked to asymptomatic testing including raising concerns about the ongoing supply of lateral flow tests to universities and receiving assurance that there was sufficient capacity to meet demand
- supporting UUK members to understand changes to quarantine requirements including the removal of many countries from the UK government's red list
- working with the Home Office to ensure visa policy can allow for innovations in learning and teaching following the pandemic
- working with the Council of Deans of Health and the Medical Schools Council to understand and respond to the implications of the proposed mandatory vaccination requirement for healthcare students





# Our work in numbers

## 35

Higher education themed events, attracting:

**7,408** delegates

**72** sponsors

**598** speakers

## 498

Membership attendees at four UUK members' meetings

## 966,000

Unique visitors to the website

## 100

% of new VCs engaged with at least one meeting of the new VC group

## 91

Oral and written Qs in parliament

## 25

Virtual/in person delegations inbound and outbound

## 37

Meetings and events with UK government and shadow ministers

## 35

Positive public references to UUK's work from parliamentarians and government

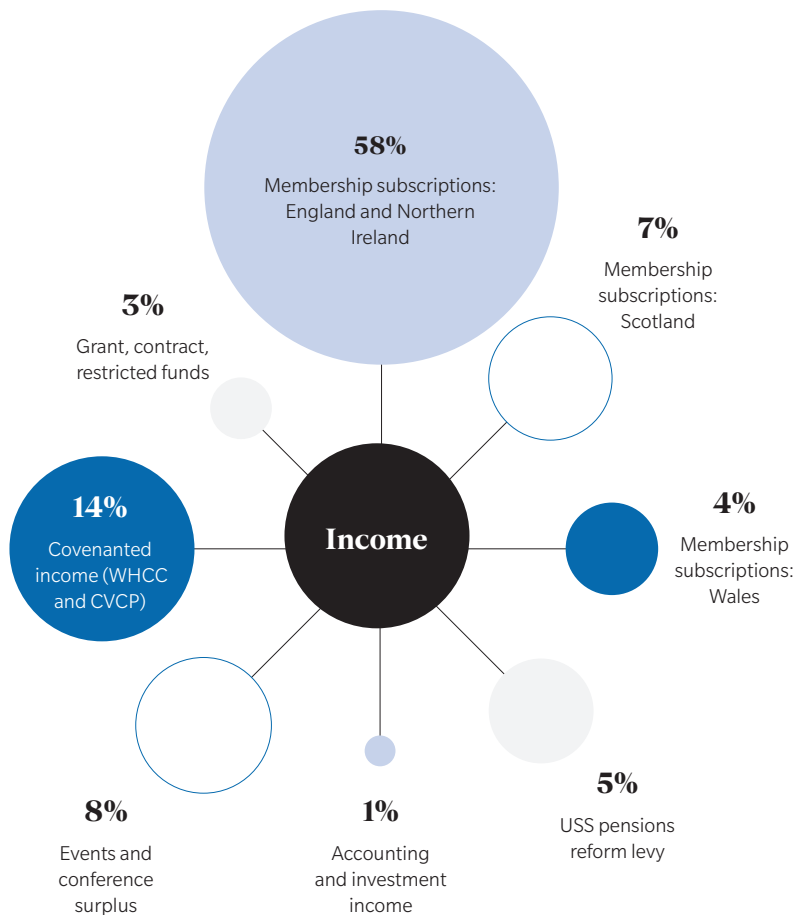
Member communications:

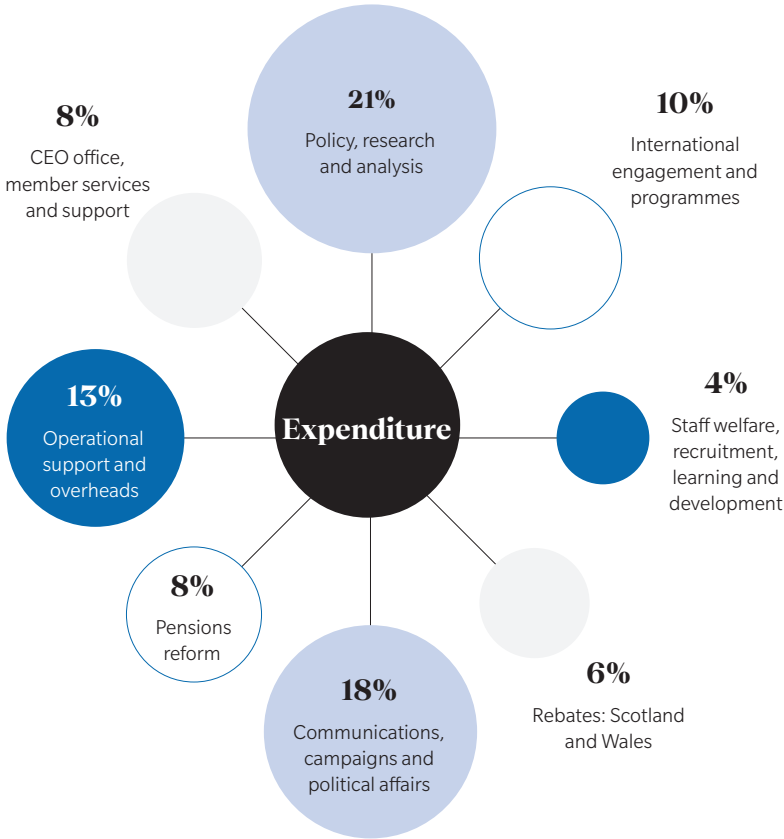
**40** Monthly VC group calls

**121** Member institutions represented at the calls

**61** Email briefings including CEO news

# Financial statement





Universities UK is the collective voice of 140 universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Our mission is to create the conditions for UK universities to be the best in the world; maximising their positive impact locally, nationally and globally.

Universities UK acts on behalf of universities, represented by their heads of institution.



Woburn House  
20 Tavistock Square  
London, WC1H 9HQ

☎ +44 (0)20 7419 4111

✉ [info@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:info@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

🌐 [universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://universitiesuk.ac.uk)

🐦 📷 📺 @UniversitiesUK