



Universities have an important role to play in the Covid-19 recovery process.

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## North East universities vow to help region bounce back stronger from Covid-19

**Universities, employers, and local leaders in the North East will be working together to create thousands of local jobs as the recovery from the pandemic gathers pace.**

New research published today by **Universities UK (UUK)**, 'Universities and the UK's economic recovery: an analysis of future impact', which was compiled by the National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education (NCEE), predicts that over the next five years universities in the North East will:

- Be involved in research projects with partners worth almost £1 billion.
- Help 725 new businesses and charities to be formed.
- Train over 10,000 nurses, almost 4,000 medics and 8,000 teachers.

The research is published as UUK launches **#GettingResults** - a campaign to put universities at the heart of the economic and social recovery - with a renewed commitment from universities to do even more to reach out to new partners locally and nationally and deliver even greater impact than currently estimated.

**Professor Andrew Wathey CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University**, said:

“We are more strongly enthused than ever by our roles as anchor institutions, as major employers and as key partners in driving regional economic and social recovery. It has never been more important, given the enormous challenges created by Covid-19, and the huge opportunities to shape the North East’s economic landscape through our research and our graduates, that we work together to address need and maximise impact.

“We know that Northumbria’s investments in high-level skills, research, entrepreneurship and economic growth, and improving employment opportunities, are key to helping the North East build forward better and shape a better future. As the largest provider of graduates in the North East’s professional and managerial jobs market we are also strongly placed to deliver highly-skilled graduates to the regional workforce as it grows, modernises and develops.”

The work is being overseen by a newly created **Universities UK Economic and Social Taskforce**, which is led by Professor Chris Day, Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University, and a board member of Universities UK.

**Professor Day said:**

“Universities are at the heart of the nation’s recovery from the pandemic. Over the past year we have seen first-hand what can be achieved through strong collaboration between our universities and their partners.

“Now universities want to do more, to help the UK to bounce back stronger, with opportunity and prosperity spread across the country. We are looking to form strategic partnerships with employers and sector bodies throughout the UK to strengthen collaboration between universities and their partners.

“A great example of this is the Newcastle Helix, a £350m development with 2,600 jobs in 65 different organisations on the site. This true coming together of academia, business, public sector and more has been innovating and collaborating to support the global fight against COVID-19. Not only to combat the immediate impacts but preparing cities and regions for our post-covid world.”

Throughout the pandemic, businesses, and a wide range of sectors not just within the North East region, but across the UK, have suffered greatly, leading to economic and social damage. The contributions made by universities and their students through knowledge and skills exchange, partnerships and support for local employers have huge potential to help businesses, industries, and other partners to continue, recover and thrive following the pandemic.

The skills of graduates from Northumbria, Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland and Teesside universities will also have an important role to play in the future success of businesses and sectors during the Covid-19 recovery process.

- **Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University**, has worked with the Small Business Charter over the past year to provide a government-funded programme for leaders of small businesses across the North of England to survive and thrive following the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this [Small Business Leadership programme](#) Northumbria supported more than 180 businesses across the North East and Cumbria. Based on its success, Northumbria has now been selected as the only university in the region to deliver a follow-up programme called [Help to Grow Management](#). The new programme is backed by £150 million of additional Government funding to help up to 30,000 SMEs across the UK - including a significant number in the North East.
- **Newcastle University** has been running bootcamps for student or graduate entrepreneurs. One successful enterprise has been the creation of the '[Spareable](#)' app which enables individuals to

donate to their local food bank remotely to save time and food waste. The platform is now providing 25% more food for food banks and its founder - Electronic Business and Information Systems MSc graduate Masitano Sichone - was recently named a 'Top 100 Changemaker 2020 Defeating Poverty.'

- **Durham University**, [Sphera UK](#) is a student spinout based in Stockton-on-Tees that is focussed on developing carbon zero and carbon negative concrete blocks. Their innovation pipeline includes a concrete accelerant to speed up concrete curing rate and decrease cement content. These pioneering solutions are developed to help tackle climate change by offering the industry low carbon material alternatives that specifically focus on embodied carbon content.
- Over the past year, **Teesside University** has assisted more than 220 small and medium sized businesses with 339 projects. It has also helped launch 11 new businesses, worked with a total of 34 start-ups, and prepared 26 budding entrepreneurs through the Microbiz Academy programme. The University has also matched 156 graduate interns with work in Tees Valley businesses and provided digital skills training for 276 people.
- **The University of Sunderland** has recently established the new £1.6million Digital Incubator at St Peter's Campus, which is already playing a key role in supporting entrepreneurial students who want to establish their own online businesses, many of which will be based in the north-east.

**Durham University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Stuart Corbridge** said: "At Durham University we've been part of the North East landscape for nearly 200 years and we make a significant positive contribution to the regional economy.

"We're proud of the support we offer our academics and students in their launching of innovative businesses here in the North East, creating high-quality jobs and driving the economy. From electrochemical wound healing to efficient electrical circuits in space, our departments are at the forefront of innovation."

**Sir David Bell KCB DL, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University**

**of Sunderland**, said: "As we begin to rebuild from the pandemic, the role of universities is more relevant than ever.

"Data released recently in Research England's first Knowledge Exchange Framework revealed the University of Sunderland to be in the top 10% of universities nationally for contributing to local growth and regeneration, through projects like the Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (SAM) initiative, which has just been evaluated as contributing a gross £43 million to the regional economy."

**Teesside University Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Professor Paul Croney** said: "Teesside University has worked tirelessly during the pandemic to support and strengthen communities.

"The University has offered skills, expertise, facilities and time, producing much needed PPE, training healthcare workers, bolstering the frontline and volunteer response and enabling businesses to pivot to online operating models. Our commitment to working in partnership to deliver social impact powers our mission to transform lives and economies, and we will continue to deliver this as we support the UK to build back better."

Find out more about Universities UK's **#GettingResults** campaign  
[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)

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