Why and how do businesses collaborate with universities?

Universities and businesses both recognize the importance of collaboration. Improving collaboration is only possible when we understand the diverse motivations for both parties to partner. Our new survey delivered by the Centre for Business Research at the University of Cambridge, looks into why and how businesses collaborate with universities. This fact sheet looks at what almost 4,000 business respondents had to say.

Why do businesses interact with universities?

Satisfaction rates:

Over 80% of businesses indicated that interactions met or exceeded their expectations.

How businesses interact with universities

Most businesses reported people-based interactions almost half (45%) of businesses interact for technology-based innovation-related factors.

60% of businesses interact because of business operations and management factors.

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63% of large businesses engaged in people-based interactions.

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How businesses interact with universities

Almost half (45%) of businesses reported people-based interactions.

24% of businesses interacted with universities on commercialisation.

30% of businesses reported problem-solving interactions.

23% of businesses had been involved in community-based interactions.

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University partners

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Does size matter?

Businesses most frequently mention very large and highly research-intensive universities as key interaction partners, however, interactions of all sizes and sectors increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

What are the barriers to interaction with universities?

Top barriers include:

52% of businesses say an important barrier is lack of information on how and why to interact with universities.

46% of businesses say an important barrier is difficulty in identifying a partner.

42% of businesses indicated that Covid-19 had impacted their interactions.

The impact of Covid-19

34% of all businesses reported that Covid-19 had impacted their interactions with universities.