

Why and how do businesses collaborate with universities?

Key findings from 'The Changing State of Business-University Interactions in the UK 2005-2021'

Universities and businesses both recognise the importance of collaboration. Improving collaboration is only possible when we understand the drivers and 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?

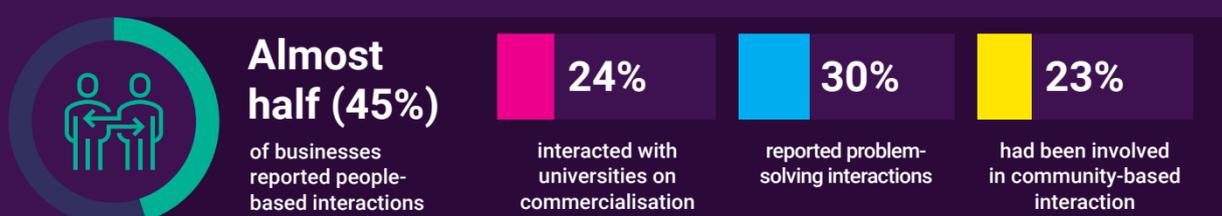


Satisfaction rates:



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

How businesses interact with universities



Businesses of all sizes engage with universities, but interaction activity increases with business size:

63% of large businesses engaged in people-based interactions and 38% in commercialisation interactions.

By comparison, just **35%** and **18%** of smaller firms engaged in people-based and commercialisation interactions respectively.



SMEs significantly increased people and problem-solving interactions with universities between 2009 and 2021:

SMEs were more likely to report people and problem-solving interactions with universities in 2021 than they were in 2009, whereas levels were the same for larger firms.



Geography

There is no single part of the UK that stands out for having significantly more business interaction.



Businesses don't just interact with their local university – instead they interact with regional, national and overseas universities.

For example, **36%** of companies engage in commercialisation interactions with overseas partners.

University partners

Does size matter?

Businesses most frequently mention very large and highly research-intensive universities as key interaction partners. However, businesses of all sizes and sectors interact with smaller and more specialist and teaching focused institutions.

Businesses interact across academic disciplines

Businesses interact with universities across a diverse range of academic disciplines, from the natural sciences and engineering, through to the social sciences, arts and humanities, to business and management.

What are the barriers to interaction with universities?

Top barriers include:

52% of businesses say an important barrier is lack of their own resources

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

For businesses who reported no interactions with universities, the most important reason was a lack of information on how and why to interact with universities. The amount of businesses that think collaboration is relevant to them has almost doubled since 2009.

The impact of Covid-19

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

42% said that the Covid-19 pandemic 'made it difficult to form new interactions with universities.'

