

Key findings from the State of the Relationship 2021 report

University-business collaboration will be critical to the UK's future success. In order to examine annual changes and track long-term trends in collaboration, the National Centre for Universities and Business produces an annual Collaboration Progress Monitor as part of the State of the Relationship.

See some of the key findings here.

Collaborative activity *

78,347

interactions between universities and businesses recorded in 2019/20

The total number of interactions between universities and businesses fell by 31% between 2018/19 and 2019/20.



2%

fall in the number of interactions with large businesses ↓

39%

fall in the number of SME interactions ↓

A decline in the number of interactions with SMEs largely caused the overall decline in interactions.

Why? There is evidence that Covid-19 impacted SMEs more than large businesses. However, Covid-19 is unlikely to explain this drop entirely and it will be important to monitor in years to come.

Investment in collaboration



7% decline in UK business investment in university R&D ↓

6% decline in overseas investment in university R&D ↓

Investment by UK business and foreign sources in university R&D declined for the first time since 2011 and 1999 respectively.

812

Innovate UK grants awarded to UK universities

Over 800 Innovate UK grants were awarded to UK universities to support collaboration for the fourth year in a row.



The products of collaboration



Increase in the number of licenses granted

16,505 total licenses were granted. This was the second year in which significant growth was observed, after a 80% increase observed between 2017-18 and 2018-19.



1,316

Academic Spinouts existed that had survived at least three years

Increases were observed in Wales and Northern Ireland.



2,027

Patents granted

An increase of 9% from 2018/19, and the fourth year in a row with recorded growth

What does this mean? This demonstrates universities' strong commitment to translating ideas into solutions, even in the challenging context of the pandemic. The pandemic may have opened new opportunities to accelerate research commercialisation in areas like healthcare and technology



Skills and Talent

Joint people development



20,175 degree apprenticeship starts

A staggering increase of 114% from 2017/18, 87 UK universities now offer higher or degree apprenticeships, up from just four in 2014/15



26% of undergraduates

were on sandwich courses with an integral employment placement



20,597 CPD/CE learner days

were delivered by an average higher education institution. Down from an average of 22,714 in 2017/18

Why? Since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, more businesses appear to be training their teams through apprenticeship routes rather than Continuing Professional Development or Continuing Education routes.