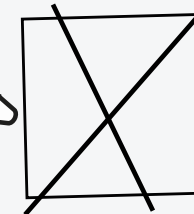
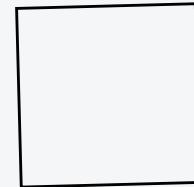
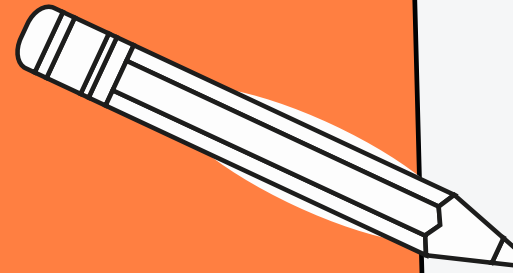




# Maximising Opportunities for Growth

A manifesto from Universities Scotland



## The UK General Election matters to Scotland's universities

Higher education is devolved to Scotland but key aspects of funding and policy, including research, innovation and immigration, are reserved to Westminster and the UK Government. This makes the next UK Government critical to the success of Scotland's 19 universities and higher education institutions and the students, staff and wider communities they support.

There is significant potential to further grow universities' contribution to economic growth, the creation of jobs and prosperity.



## Scotland's world-leading universities are a success story and a major asset for the UK. They support growth and opportunity throughout the UK by:



**Contributing over £11 billion of direct economic impact** to the UK economy every year.



**Driving productivity across the UK**, with increased participation in HE changing the composition of the workforce, as the only consistent factor to do so since 2008.



**Delivering a high return on the public investment in higher education qualifications**, both for the graduate and for the Scottish exchequer. Qualifications which 83% of employers view as meaning their new hires are 'well' or 'very well' prepared for work.



**Producing world-leading research and leveraging global investment.** 85% of university research submitted for assessment was considered world-leading or internationally excellent.



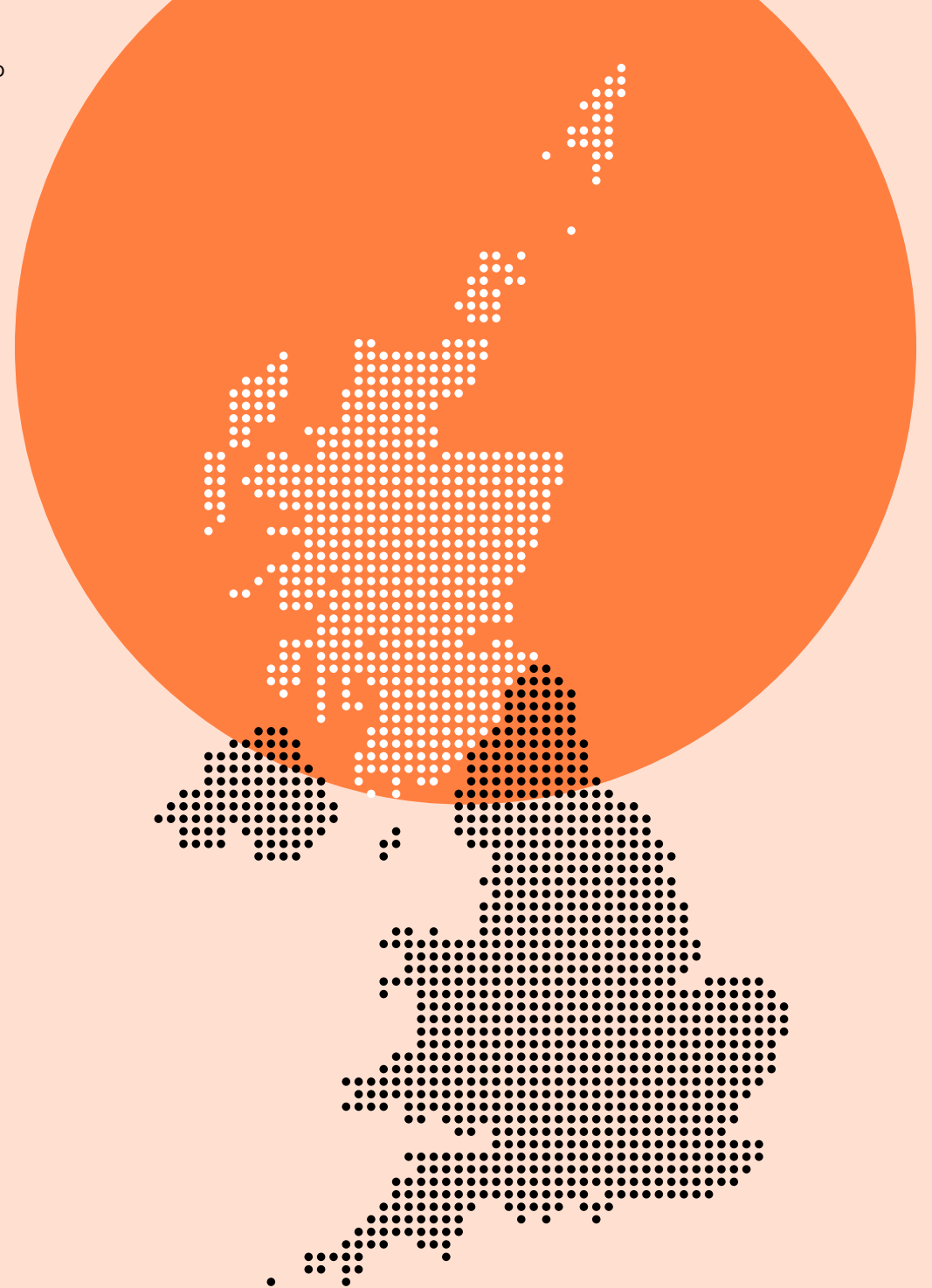
**Partnering over 20,000 innovation projects** with Scottish organisations every year.



**Being the UK's strongest performing region, outside of London**, for the attraction of foreign direct investment and for growing the UK's success in R&D-based FDI.

# We ask

The next UK Government to shape and make policy and funding decisions in ways that maximise the positive impact Scotland delivers as part of the UK.

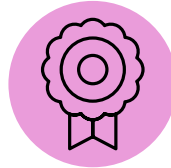


# Supporting growth through talent attraction and retention

**Scotland's universities are a world-leading destination for international students, seeking a high-quality educational experience. This benefits the sector, and Scotland, culturally and economically with an annual economic impact estimated at £4.75 billion.**

We need to ensure that the most inquisitive minds in learning, teaching and research can come to Scotland. Academics from Europe and the rest of the world are fundamental to our talent base at 38% of all academics, rising to 55.6% of academics in engineering and technology.

In their manifestos, we want political parties to commit to:



## **Attract the brightest and the best talent**

– both students and staff – through a skilled worker's visa regime with salary thresholds set at levels that support early career progression within higher education, and other key sectors.

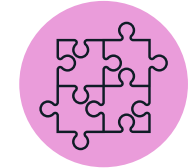


## **Retain the Graduate Route visa as an internationally competitive post study work offer**

as an essential component of ensuring that Scotland, and the UK, remains an attractive destination for international students.



**Increase public trust and confidence in the UK's immigration system** by separating temporary migration figures from permanent migration in migration figures.



## **Introduce regionally differentiated immigration policy**

which addresses Scotland's need to attract more international talent, to help drive innovation and productivity and to address the demographic challenges of an ageing population.

# Supporting growth through research and innovation

Scotland is home to research breakthroughs like the MRI scanner, flat screen TVs and Dolly the Sheep as the first successfully cloned mammal. Our universities are also highly successful at the translation of that research into commercial opportunity. Scotland is the most successful part of the UK for spin-out company formation and creates new companies at a rate second only to the golden triangle of Oxford, Cambridge and London.

However, we cannot stand still if we are to remain globally competitive. The UK needs to commit to ambitious investment targets for research and development (R&D) and ensure UK frameworks to catalyse research and innovation support all parts of the UK.

We want political parties to commit to take the following action in support of Scotland's universities:



**Build on recent place-based, investment initiatives** like the City/Region Deals, in support of regional economic growth and social wellbeing, with flexibility to meet regional need. Such initiatives should work in partnership with the Scottish (and Welsh) Government and focus on leveraging additional resources into Scotland.



**Ensure that pan-UK bodies with responsibility for research and innovation, such as UKRI, Innovate UK and ARIA, are structured and deliver in ways that widens their impact across the UK**, including investing in university and business research and innovation in Scotland. This should include measures such as:

- Broader, UK-wide mapping and consultation exercises as led by UKRI, Innovate UK and ARIA to ensure that the development of partnerships, funding models and investments are informed by key regional differences in the business base and infrastructure so that all parts of the UK have equal potential to benefit.
- extending UKRI's Executive Committee membership to include other pan-UK Research Councils on the same basis as Research England and expanding the unique model of regional engagement contacts as found in EPSRC, to all Councils. This would support an equal strategic focus on Scotland.



**Extend and expand the Regional Innovation Fund (RIF)** which is currently a UK-wide resource. The fund should build on the success of university projects supported by EU development funds, and the pilot RIF. We'd like political parties to commit to ensure that the consequential that flow to Scotland from RIF investments go directly to Scottish universities.

## We also support a suite of research and innovation policies that would support all UK universities including:



**Set a target for GDP invested in R&D by 2030** which matches the most innovative and competitive economies around the world.



**Treat R&D as long-term capital investment through 10-year funding cycles.** This will maximise the UK's ability to secure private investment by creating increased certainty.



**An early-stage R&D intensive venture capital fund to enhance business finance interventions by:**

- Investing in R&D intensive university spinouts with long-term production cycles or “deep tech” with the aim of increasing the total funding available for R&D intensive spinouts via the British Business Bank.
- Supporting co-investment with other spinout venture capital funds providing a cornerstone investment only, thereby increasing the funding available.
- Prioritising investment in ecosystems outside of the Southeast and London, to support inclusive growth across the UK.

## About Universities Scotland

Universities Scotland represents Scotland's 19 universities and higher education institutions.

We are their collective voice, bringing them together to pursue a common cause: thriving universities, serving society.

For more information:

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