

MillionPlus

The Association for
Modern Universities



'Loyal' graduates key to regional economic growth in Scotland

Modern universities play a critical role in retaining graduate talent within Scotland's regions. By producing a high proportion of 'Loyal' graduates, they directly support regional economies, reduce skills inequalities and help deliver national economic priorities.

'Loyal' graduates are those who are from a region, study at a higher education institution in that region, and work in the same region after graduation.

MillionPlus's report [The Value of 'Loyalty'](#) demonstrates that 'Loyal' graduates reduce skills inequalities by retaining talent locally, support key public services and industries such as education and healthcare, and strengthen local economies by keeping skills and earnings within regional labour markets. They are central to delivering the Scottish Government's ambitions for regional economic growth and devolved approaches to skills.

Analysis of the 2021-22 Graduate Outcomes Survey shows that almost **double** the number of graduates (**31%**) from modern universities in Scotland are 'Loyal', compared with **16%** from pre-92 universities, demonstrating the disproportionate role modern universities play in retaining graduate talent locally.

How modern universities produce 'loyal' graduates



RECRUITING LOCAL STUDENTS

The **University of the West of Scotland (UWS)** plays a vital placemaking role in the communities it serves. The joint UWS-New College Lanarkshire Undergraduate School, a first in Scotland, brings degree-level study closer to local communities and is designed around regional workforce needs. Early outcomes show strong impact, with **40%** of the first cohort drawn from SIMD20 areas. The UWS Foundation Academy is also pivotal in further strengthening local talent pipelines in communities with historically low progression rates, supporting more than 4,000 senior pupils across 40 schools in 11 local authorities. These and other initiatives demonstrate UWS's pivotal role in enabling students to study, graduate and make an economic and civic contribution to their local communities.

Edinburgh Napier University aligns recruitment, curriculum design and employer engagement with regional labour-market demand. Programmes are developed in close partnership with employers, embedding work-related learning and employability throughout the curriculum to support progression into local and regional employment after graduation.

UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND

Edinburgh Napier UNIVERSITY



RETAINING GRADUATES LOCALLY

Abertay University works closely with local employers to deliver structured, credit-bearing placements for engineering students. These placements are integrated into degree programmes and frequently lead to graduates being retained by employers on a full-time, part-time or contract basis, strengthening local skills pipelines and workforce stability.

Queen Margaret University embeds employability and employer engagement throughout the student journey via its institution-wide employability strategy. This approach supports sustained relationships with local and regional employers, improving graduate transitions into key sectors such as health, social care and the creative industries.

 **Abertay** University

 **Queen Margaret** University EDINBURGH



The Scottish Government should:

- Recognise the value of 'Loyal' graduates in higher education, skills and regional economic policy
- Protect a broad subject mix within regions
- Embed graduate retention strategies within the delivery of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

