



## Facts and stats: modern universities in Scotland

Modern universities educate almost 94,000 students, accounting for more than one in three of those studying in Scotland, making them a vital component of the country's higher education landscape;<sup>1</sup> from large cities to the Highlands and beyond, their reach is wide in every sense of the word.<sup>2</sup>



### Aspiration, opportunity, inclusion

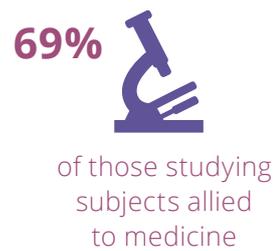
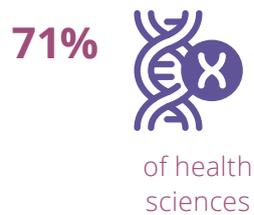
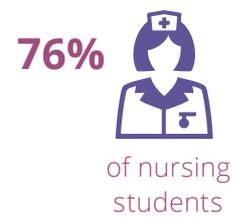
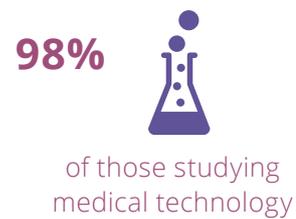
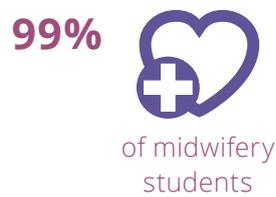
Modern universities have a fundamental role in all local communities in Scotland, making higher education an option for people for whom it was previously out of reach.

- While a third of Scottish universities are modern, they account for 47% of undergraduates from the lowest participation neighbourhoods as well as 47% of all mature students.<sup>3</sup>
- Students articulating from college to university has widened access and progression within higher education. 95% of UK domiciled full-time entrants to Scottish modern universities went to State-funded schools or Colleges.
- 46% of first-degree students from the most deprived parts of Scotland come through the HNC/HND college-to-university pathway.<sup>4</sup>
- One in four (26%) of all Scottish modern undergraduates have a known disability.
- The reach of Scotland's modern universities extends internationally with 49% of undergraduate transnational education (TNE) and almost a third at postgraduate level delivered by modern universities.
- Almost 25,000 people attended paid exhibitions or arts events at Scottish modern universities.
- Almost 125,000 people attended free public lectures at Scottish modern universities, with more than 61% of public lectures in Scotland's universities held at a modern institution.



## Strengthening and enhancing public services in Scotland

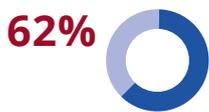
- Modern universities are fundamental to the success of public services, with high numbers of students in education that leads to a position as a public services key worker.
- More than two-thirds (69%) of those studying teacher training do so at a modern university.
- Modern universities have partnerships with all NHS Boards in Scotland and educate:





## Research and innovation with impact and reach

- 57% of research that takes place at modern universities is judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent.<sup>5</sup>
- 56% of the research that takes place at modern universities is judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent in respect of its impact in the real world.<sup>6</sup>
- Percentage of Scottish modern university research found to be world leading or internationally excellent in key sectors in REF2021:



Overall in terms  
of impact



in Architecture,  
Built Environment  
and Planning



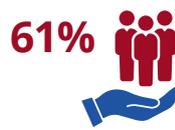
in Allied Health  
Professions, Dentistry,  
Nursing and Pharmacy



in Art and Design:  
History, Practice  
and Theory



in Communication, Cultural  
and Media Studies, Library and  
Information Management



in Social Work  
and Social Policy



in Engineering



## Business partners and economic drivers

- Modern universities account for 40% of all Scottish graduate startups and 26% of all social enterprises in higher education.
- In 2023–24, modern universities provided £1.1m of consultancy and £5.8m in contracted research services to non-commercial organisations and over 30,000 hours of training to SMEs, non-commercial organisations and individual learners.
- Modern universities in Scotland provided £1.9m in contracted research services to commercial organisations in 2023–24 and £2.9m worth of consultancy to 572 commercial organisations (these figures includes SMEs and non-SME commercial businesses).
- 58% of all graduate apprenticeships in Scotland are done at a modern university.<sup>7</sup>
- All modern universities provide entrepreneurship training and seed corn investment to support startups either on campus or through a partnership.
- It is estimated that, just based on their expenditure, Scottish modern universities contribute over £1.2bn to their regional economies per annum and are responsible for over 9,000 jobs.<sup>8</sup>
- Scottish moderns estimated revenue from graduate startup is £20m.



## Educating students for the industries of tomorrow

- Modern universities offer a broad portfolio, blending traditional subjects such as engineering, science, healthcare, but also pioneering the offer of new and emerging subjects.
- In 2024, technology sector businesses were valued at £6.87bn, making up 4.7% of the country's total economic output. The sector is forecast to grow by an average of 2.6% per year between 2024 and 2034.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2024, the creative industries contributed £5.7m in Gross Value Add to the Scottish economy. By 2034, the creative industries sector is forecast to account for 4.1% of Scotland's total economic output.<sup>10</sup>
- Modern universities educate:



**80%**

of computer games  
and animation  
students



**63%**

of software  
engineering  
students



**51%**

of drama  
students



**45%**

of cinematography  
and photography  
students



**43%**

of music  
students



**40%**

of design  
studies students



**33%**

of computer  
science students

<sup>1</sup> The term "modern" is used to describe any institution that acquired university title after 1992.

<sup>2</sup> University of the West of Scotland and Glasgow Caledonian University both also have a campus in London.

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Funding Council, Report on Widening Access 2020–21, most deprived parts here is defined as the SIMD20 or most disadvantaged quintile.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Research Excellence Framework (2021).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Graduate Apprenticeships Supplementary Tables. (2022). Skills Development Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> MillionPlus Universities as Placemakers (2022).

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Technology Industry Survey (2025)..

<sup>10</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2024).

All statistics are generated using data available on [www.hesa.co.uk](http://www.hesa.co.uk) and refer to 2023–24 data unless otherwise stated.