

Nine in 100 working in Exeter are employed at the University, new report shows

The University of Exeter contributes almost £1.6 billion of output to the UK economy and supports 15,500 jobs through its economic activities and the impact of student and visitor spending.

A newly published independent economic impact study has revealed the institution generates £900m annually towards national gross domestic product (GDP) and has engaged in hundreds of millions of pounds worth of research and development over the past five years.

Its impact in the South West, including the generation of Gross Value Added (GVA) equivalent to 9% of Exeter's GDP, supporting around 3% of Devon's workforce as the third largest employer in the county, and the creation of more than £125 million in output for Cornwall's economy.

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The study, researched and produced by Oxford Economics, is based upon the University's activities during the 2020/21 academic year, and encompasses both the direct impact of its operations, as well as the subsidiary, knock-on effects experienced by the supply chain.

Among its key findings are that the University supported:

- £1.56bn of output, nationally, amounting to £899.8m in GVA, and 15,540 jobs
- £951.4m of output for the Heart of the South West Local

Enterprise Partnership area, with £582.5m GVA, and 12,300 jobs

- £915m of output for the county of Devon, equating to £563.4 GVA, and 11,920 jobs
- £816.3m of output for the city of Exeter, totalling £509.4m GVA and 9,750 jobs – equivalent to 9% of the city's total, making it the second largest employer in the city
- £125m of output for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, with £73.5m GVA and 1,900 jobs.

Professor Lisa Roberts, Vice-Chancellor, said: “Universities play a vital role in UK society – as places of learning and social mobility, anchor institutions for local communities, and catalysts for innovation, research and development that help our business thrive and grow. This report quantifies the contribution that the University of Exeter makes to the UK economy and the economies of the region and reaffirms the important role we have to play in supporting jobs and economic prosperity in the South West.”

The figures in this new report show a marked growth in comparison to [a previous study conducted in 2017](#), which was calculated along similar – though not identical – lines. Over the course of five years, output nationally has risen by £390m and GVA increased by almost £270m.

In 2020/21, the University generated more than £500m in income across its Exeter and Cornwall campuses and spent £172m on operational goods and services and capital projects. A substantial proportion of this operational expenditure was placed with local firms – some £34m flowed into 600+ businesses located in either Exeter or Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The University's impact on business and industry goes beyond simple procurement, with the report highlighting the value of its provision of specialist facilities and academic knowledge.

Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, the University undertook £604 million of R&D across its campuses. Oxford Economics estimates this R&D will produce £260 million of yearly benefits from 2030, once the benefits of R&D are dispersed across the wider economy.

The subsistence spending of the University's 27,000 students was evaluated to be worth a total of £196.5m in output, generating £101.7m towards GDP and supporting 1,540 jobs in the economy.

The study reveals that the University contributes £970m to UK labour force productivity through increased earnings potential accrued by its undergraduate students, 3,638 of whom graduated during 2020/21.

It also outlines some of the ways in which it supported society during the COVID-19 pandemic, including assisting the production of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with Smart Manufacturing; led research on Long Covid, the presence of the virus in sewers, and the evolution of the virus; and saw many staff and students volunteer to work within local hospitals and NHS facilities.

The full economic impact study/executive summary is available to read on [the University of Exeter website](#).

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