At a time of global economic crisis, governments are increasingly looking to universities to support regional and national economies, to generate new ideas, products and services and create skills and knowledge in the next generation of citizens.

In the UK, higher education forms a core part of the economic infrastructure, generating employment and output, attracting export earnings and contributing to GDP. The work that goes on in our universities benefits everyone – not just those who study there – and the opportunities they offer help make the UK a fairer place and can transform the lives of many.

‘By employing substantial numbers of people, occupying sizeable amounts of land, generating demand for and purchasing local goods and services and acting as recognisable ambassadors for a particular town or city, anchor institutions – cultural and intellectual institutions such as universities – have always been key actors in the economic, social and cultural life of a town or city.’ (‘Anchoring Growth’)

Benefits of universities
- The higher-education sector as a whole is estimated to generate over £59 billion of output
- The gross output of the higher education sector is comparable to the printing and publishing industry and considerably larger than the pharmaceuticals industry in the UK.
- Over 668,500 jobs are dependent on higher education in the UK economy.
- For every 100 full time jobs within universities, more than 100 other full time jobs are generated through knock-on effects.
- Over 2.5 million people, including over 2 million UK residents, are registered as students in UK universities and other higher education institutions.
- UK invests 4% of OECD gross expenditure in research and development and produces 14% of the world’s most highly cited academic papers.
- The UK is second only to the USA in the share of world research citations.
- In 2011–12, the Higher Education Council for England (Hefce) distributed £1,558 million quality-related research (QR) funding, which is public funding for research.

£59 billion
the value of higher education to the UK economy

Sources
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