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University Alliance  
**2013-14**  
Annual Report

Connecting Research and Growth

Focusing on the Future

Transforming Lives



UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE

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(August 2012- )

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(August 2012- )

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# Introduction



We believe that a strong university sector will deliver a strong future for the UK. It is encouraging to look back on the past year to see that this message continues to gain traction. There is broad consensus that Britain needs to be a graduate-rich economy to maintain its competitive edge. We know that our university research holds the answers to many of the global issues we face. The evidence keeps stacking up to show that higher education is one of the best routes to a successful career and fulfilling life.

This is why University Alliance exists - to champion the huge opportunities higher education offers to the individuals, industries and communities we work with and to ensure a future where Alliance universities remain leaders within the sector.

This year we have continued to lead the debate on the importance of higher education to the future success of the UK.

We have called for a complete relook at the role of universities in driving social mobility. Our report *Closing the Gap* sent out a strong message that

focusing solely on access to a certain group of universities based on historical prejudice risks stalling social mobility in Britain. We also wanted to challenge the narrow focus of this debate which too often gets stuck on access to higher education, with relatively little attention paid to access to employment beyond university - to redefine what success looks like in the 21st Century. Our *Job Ready* campaign, which ran throughout July, shone a spotlight on the excellent work universities are doing to step up to the challenge of working with employers to produce graduates who can hit the ground running. It showed

that when it comes to both the quality and the job-readiness of our graduates, Alliance universities are competing with the best in the world. This comes down to our deep commitment to deliver excellent practice-based learning for our students, giving us the reputation of being the leading employer-facing universities.

Through our ongoing programme of work on university research we have continued to demonstrate that to remain globally competitive the UK must ensure excellent science is rewarded throughout the university system. The message is clear - open innovation needs open competition: fund excellence wherever it is found. Our input to the Witty Review in Summer 2013 and the Government's Science and Innovation Strategy has demonstrated how university-business collaboration is central to improving our innovation system to promote growth.

In the midst of growing concern about problems with the current funding system for higher education, we applied our solutions-based approach to help tackle the issue and contribute fresh thinking and new ideas. It is clear we need smarter, more sustainable funding for UK higher education. We need to ensure investment is strategic to prevent cuts to student places or underinvestment in high quality programmes. Our *H.E.L.P. UK* proposals, which we launched in June,

put forward a new student loans model to help every student cover the cost of studying.

Global issues are also important to University Alliance. Our partnership with the Australian Technology Network, connection with the Association of Independent Technological Universities and work with the British Council around the world has helped us broaden the horizons in which we are operating and making an impact.

I, along with my colleagues across Alliance universities, continue to be proud of the huge contribution our institutions make to the success of our country and of the influential leadership role University Alliance holds within the higher education sector. As we enter a new academic year and head towards the General Election in May 2015, it will be even more important for us to continue to focus on building a strong future for UK universities through constructive debate and new ideas.



Professor Steve West  
Chair, University Alliance  
Vice-Chancellor, UWE Bristol

# About University Alliance

Together  
we:

Deliver around

**50%**

of all sandwich  
courses

Have a turnover of

**£3.7 bn**

with an estimated  
economic impact of

**£10 bn**

## Our Mission

Our mission is to enhance the capability of the UK's leading universities for enterprise and industry to create an innovative, knowledge economy.

### We do this by:

Shaping higher education and research policy through the collective position of Alliance universities.

University Alliance brings together global universities with excellence in science, technology, design and the professions. Alliance universities are leaders in industry links, delivering work-ready graduates and creating a research-rich, entrepreneurial environment.

Representing Alliance universities nationally and internationally, demonstrating their contribution to the economic and social success of the UK and beyond.

Providing intelligence to members and identifying opportunities for Vice-Chancellors and others in Alliance universities to shape and deliver our mission.

Educate

**20%**  
of all students in the UK

**1/4**  
of all STEM students

**1/3**  
of all design students

**1/4**  
of all nursing students

**1/4**  
of all teacher training students

Have just under

**300** research units undertaking world class research, with over 50% of our research income in STEM-related areas

Employ approximately

**60,000**  
people

including **20,200** research staff  
(15% of all researchers in the UK)

Have

**1/4** of all

research teams undertaking **world class research** in Allied Health

& in General Engineering, Architecture and the Built Environment

Lead the enterprise & entrepreneurship agenda with over

**20,633**  
business links

(including just under 14,000 SMEs) and 44% of all turnover and 39% of all jobs from UK graduate start-ups

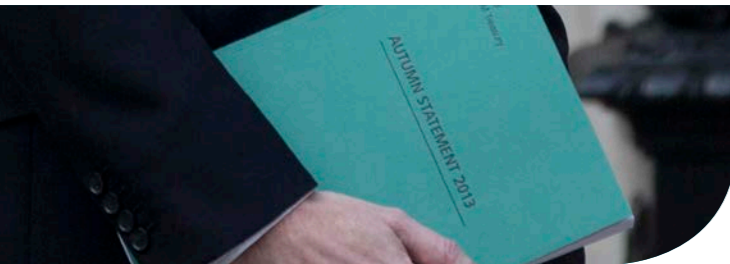
# Shaping higher education and research policy

In delivering our mission we take a very purposeful approach that is:

- collaborative, constructive and innovative, bringing new solutions to UK higher education and research policy;
- evidence-based, using high-quality research and analysis;
- taking a sector-wide view whilst highlighting and promoting the role and value of Alliance universities within it.

Throughout the past year we have continued to demonstrate through our research, commentary and events the value of the excellence that exists across UK universities in creating and sharing knowledge, driving

## Student numbers cap



University Alliance has long held the position that for the UK to remain globally competitive in the future it will need to increase the number and proportion of graduates in the labour market. Our publication from 2012,

economic growth, transforming lives and securing a prosperous future for the UK. We are at the heart of the development of higher education and research policy, meeting regularly with ministers, officials across government, Parliamentarians and funding agencies.

Through our strong networks across Westminster and Whitehall, as well as the higher education, science and business communities, we have convened thought-leaders and decision-makers to build consensus and cultivate fresh thinking about the future of higher education and research. As part of our preparation for the 2015 general election, we have also been raising many of these issues with members of the Shadow Cabinet. Below, we have outlined specific areas of work where we have had particular impact in the past twelve months.

*The Way We'll Work*, continues to be a useful evidence-base for this argument and has been widely seen and used by ministers and officials.

The Chancellor's announcement in the Autumn Statement that the cap on student numbers would be lifted from 2015 was one we welcomed. We worked closely with ministers, Number 10 and HM Treasury colleagues in the lead-up to the Autumn Statement to make the case for lifting the cap and seeing this announcement through.

## Protecting the Student Opportunity Fund

While cuts to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) budget were significant, they were lower than first expected. University Alliance put substantial effort into making the case for the protection of the Student Opportunity Fund. In the week's prior to the HEFCE Grant Letter being written, University Alliance had numerous meetings with the Universities and Science Minister, Rt Hon David Willetts MP, officials in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), HM Treasury, Number 10 and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to present our evidence for the value of this fund in widening access and maintaining retention. We were delighted that widening participation funding was one of the three areas specifically listed for protection in the HEFCE Grant Letter.

## Spreading growth through the Research Partnership Investment Fund (RPIF)

Following months of work with HEFCE, BIS and HM Treasury to demonstrate the value of investment in research facilities across UK universities, HEFCE's new guidelines for the RPIF have allowed access for bids below the £10 million threshold in many subject areas.

## Our key areas

Alongside our ongoing efforts to secure a strong future for our members the past year has seen us develop a clear focus on three key areas:

Connecting Research and Growth

Focusing on the Future

Transforming Lives

# Connecting Research and Growth

Research at Alliance universities forms an essential part of the UK's research and innovation landscape. They have a distinct approach to combining science, engineering and technology with design and the creative industries. As part of a global-knowledge network, Alliance universities are delivering research in new and distinct areas.

Alliance universities support around a quarter of all UK research teams undertaking world-class research in Allied Health and over a quarter of those in General Engineering, Architecture and the Built Environment.

They have been in the business of meeting economic need for over 100 years, most established as institutes of engineering and design during the industrial revolution. This continues today with over 50% of their research income in STEM-related areas. With strong industrial links they have a deep understanding of the strengths and needs of their local economy.

Alliance universities have just under

# 300

 research teams

undertaking world-leading research, and employ 15% of the UK's university researchers.

This area of work has focused on making the case for the UK to maintain its position as a world leader in research, both to drive our own knowledge economy and to attract inward investment.

**To do this, we have called for recognition of strengths across the system by continuing to fund research according to excellence, wherever it is found. This principle has been shown to drive quality and will future-proof the science and innovation system.**

## Sir Andrew Witty's review of universities and growth

Constructive interventions from University Alliance to Sir Andrew Witty's review broadened the range of indicators for universities' role in driving growth, particularly by the inclusion in the final report of our heat maps. Based on HE-BCI data, the maps captured the critical work of disseminating knowledge and best practice through knowledge transfer partnerships, graduate start-ups, and interactions with other economic stakeholders. This work was welcomed by the review team as offering a more nuanced picture of economic and research activities and demonstrated the wider role of innovation and collaboration taking place across the sector, including in Alliance universities.

## Roundtable with the Technology Strategy Board and the National Centre for Universities and Business – maximising the contribution of the UK HE research base to the Industrial Strategy and economic growth

In June, together with the National Centre for Universities and Business, and the Technology Strategy Board (now Innovate UK), we organised a roundtable bringing together key partners from government, academia and business to discuss how to maximise the vital role of HE in delivering and driving economic growth to the UK, and support the innovators driving business-led innovation.

Discussions, and the accompanying report, covered the full spectrum of HE research activities that are contributing to UK economic growth, from direct commercialisation of research to strategic partnerships with key businesses. The report also outlines key strategies for generating economic reward from research.

## The contribution of university research to economic growth



## Science and Innovation Strategy

With the expectation that the government will publish a new Science and Innovation Strategy alongside the Autumn Statement in December 2014, informing the thinking has been a priority for University Alliance. We submitted evidence to a number of reviews and consultations during the process. The BIS Consultation on Science Capital, the joint HEFCE/Research Council consultation on the Strategy and the BIS Science and Innovation Strategy Survey were particularly pertinent. University Alliance also submitted formal responses to these consultations informed by input from our Research and Innovation PVC Network.

The key arguments we made included the need for long-term certainty on investment and real terms increases to the science budget to bring the UK's investment in line with international R&D averages. We underlined the need to take steps to future-proof the research ecosystem. This will require recognising and supporting excellent science throughout the system, which has been proven to drive quality. It will also enable the UK to maintain its position as a world leader in research, helping us to drive our own knowledge economy and to attract inward investment. Government should also make better use of the UK's world-leading performance in university-business collaboration to drive the innovative capacity of SMEs, particularly through reforms to the Higher Education Innovation Fund. Finally, we must ensure that the pipeline of future high-level skilled workers and researchers is sustainable, by ensuring access to finance for taught postgraduates and reversing the trend of concentrating funding for postgraduate researchers. Otherwise we risk narrowing the pool of people, skills and expertise, which will harm the future adaptability and resilience of the research base.

## Hermann Hauser Catapult review

Hermann Hauser's review of the Catapult system forms an important part of the government's consultation feeding into the Science and Innovation Strategy. It looked at how Catapults can be fully exploited to the long-term benefit of the economy. We have worked with key individuals within BIS and the Technology Strategy Board close to Hermann Hauser's review of the Catapult system and took part in the launch consultation workshop on 1 May.

Our response was formed with input from the PVC Research and Innovation network and underlined the need for existing Catapults to become more collaborative so that resources are shared for maximum economic benefit. If there is to be a recommendation that they should expand – introducing the idea of “feeder Catapults” based on the German model - these must take into account strengths across the system to ensure that these neutral spaces are used to the best national benefit.



## BIS Select Committee review into business-university collaboration

We worked closely with the BIS Select Committee on their business-university collaboration and were invited to give oral evidence on a panel alongside the Russell Group on 10 June 2014. Our written response highlighted the range of mechanisms that are supporting effective business-university collaboration using examples from across Alliance universities. Our response also emphasised that the ability of the UK to respond to future global challenges and industrial opportunities relies on maintaining the strength and depth of the research base in both subject areas and research activities.

We also worked with the Committee to organise fact-finding visits and evidence panels involving Alliance universities and their representatives, which have resulted in raising their profile significantly within the Committee and its work.

## Independent review of the role of metrics in research assessment

We worked closely with HEFCE on the research metrics consultation to ensure metrics reflected research excellence in all its forms. The review followed previous HEFCE work in this area, which included two pilot exercises run in 2008 and 2009. At that time it was concluded that citation information was not sufficiently robust to be used formulaically or as a primary indicator of quality, but that there might be scope for it to inform and enhance processes of expert review.

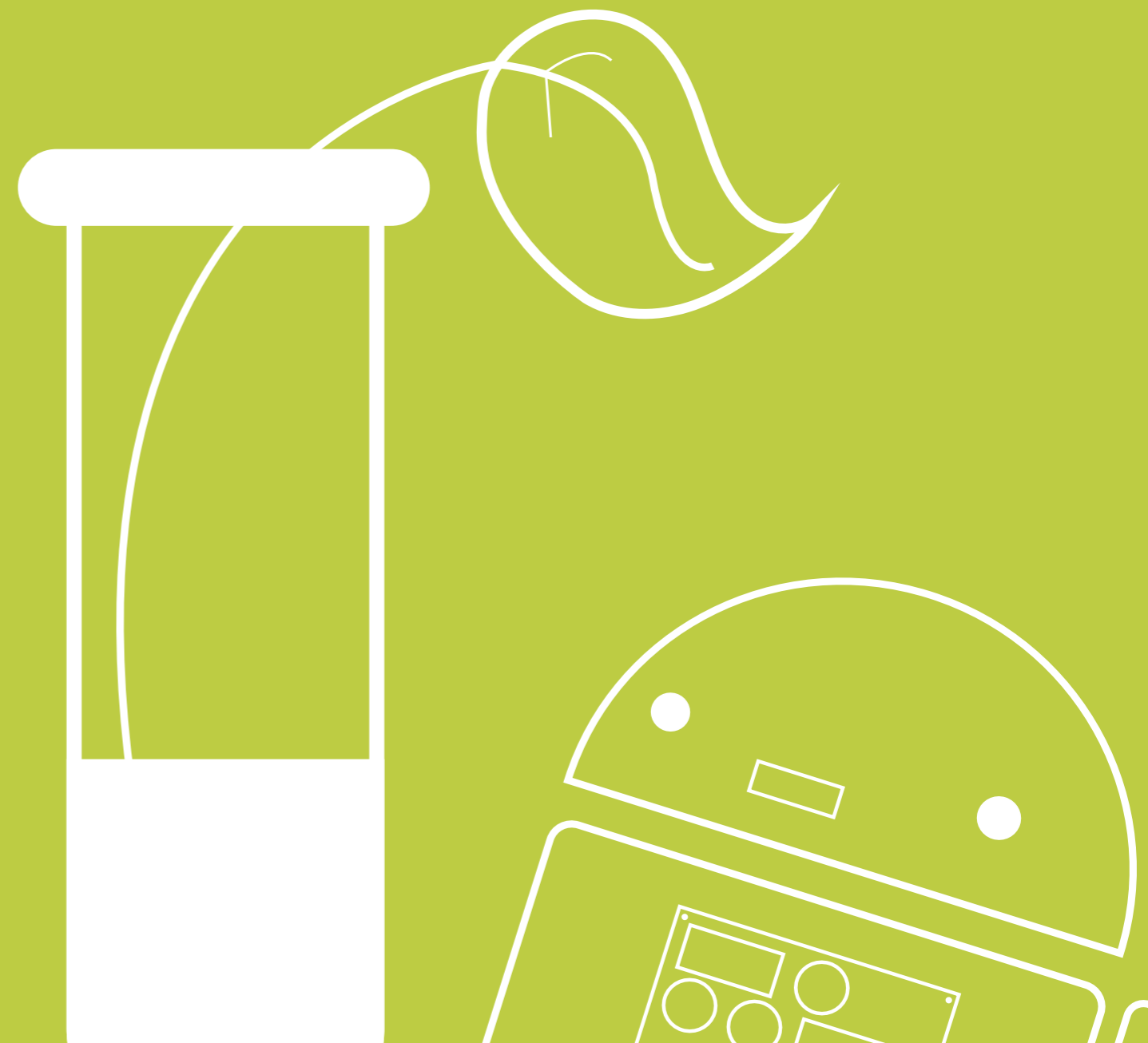
Renewed interest in this area was partly driven by the development of an increasing array of social media and web-based alternative metrics with potential to capture relevant dimensions of quality or impact. There is also interest in the increasing capacity for real-time analysis based on large, linked datasets ('big data'). As a result metrics could play a greater role in the assessment of research.

The review was chaired by James Wilsdon, Professor of Science and Democracy at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), University of Sussex. It considered the role metrics-based assessment could play in determining quality, impact and other key characteristics of research undertaken in the higher education sector.

We submitted our response, informed by input from our Research and Innovation PVC Network, in June. It focused on concerns around maintaining the funding of research excellence wherever it exists.

## University-Business and knowledge clusters: Centre for Cities report influence

Following our input to a consultation by the think tank Centre for Cities on 20 March 2014, we were able to link up researchers on their Universities and High-Growth Firms report with Alliance universities to provide case studies to use within their publication. Again, this activity raised the profile of University Alliance and Alliance universities within an influential organisation, building a stronger relationship for the future.





# Transforming Lives



With 80% of new jobs in high-skill areas it is vital that we have a higher education system that enables all those who have the ambition and ability to succeed at university to do so. Alliance universities work closely with employers to provide almost 50% of year-long work placements, and have a reputation for addressing barriers to access and equipping graduates with the skills and abilities needed to secure employment. They take a diverse range of students and offer them a research-rich and practice-informed learning experience. This enhances their employability skills and, as a result, Alliance graduates have some of the highest rates of graduate-level employment in the UK.

Our work in this area brings together social mobility and future workforce activities, two significant strengths of Alliance universities. Our approach over the past 12 months has been a deliberate part of our strategy to move the social mobility debate beyond the focus on access and to make the link with the excellent work Alliance universities are doing to support employability and graduate success.

## Job Ready: universities, businesses and students creating success

In July we launched our *Job Ready* campaign with a new study based on 50 in-depth interviews with small and large employers around the UK, including British Airways, IBM, Marks and Spencer and Bank of America. The report captures a snapshot of the 21,000 interactions with business that Alliance universities undertake each year.

The interviews show that employers are demanding more from their graduates with modern jobs increasingly requiring employees to be forward-thinking, problem-solving and entrepreneurial. It is clear from the interviews that universities are good at preparing students for this future reality, but that it works best when they partner with employers.

The report highlights that a partnership approach between universities and employers helps to ensure course content – and therefore skills learnt – are relevant to the changing demands of local labour markets. Alliance universities undertake considerable collaboration with employers. **Half of all sandwich courses – where 24 weeks or more of a course is spent outside of the university, working directly for an employer – are delivered at Alliance universities.**

The *Job Ready* campaign was launched in Parliament with the Universities and Science Minister, Rt Hon David Willetts MP, Parliamentarians and stakeholders who were all invited to sign our pledge to do more to build strong links between universities and employers.



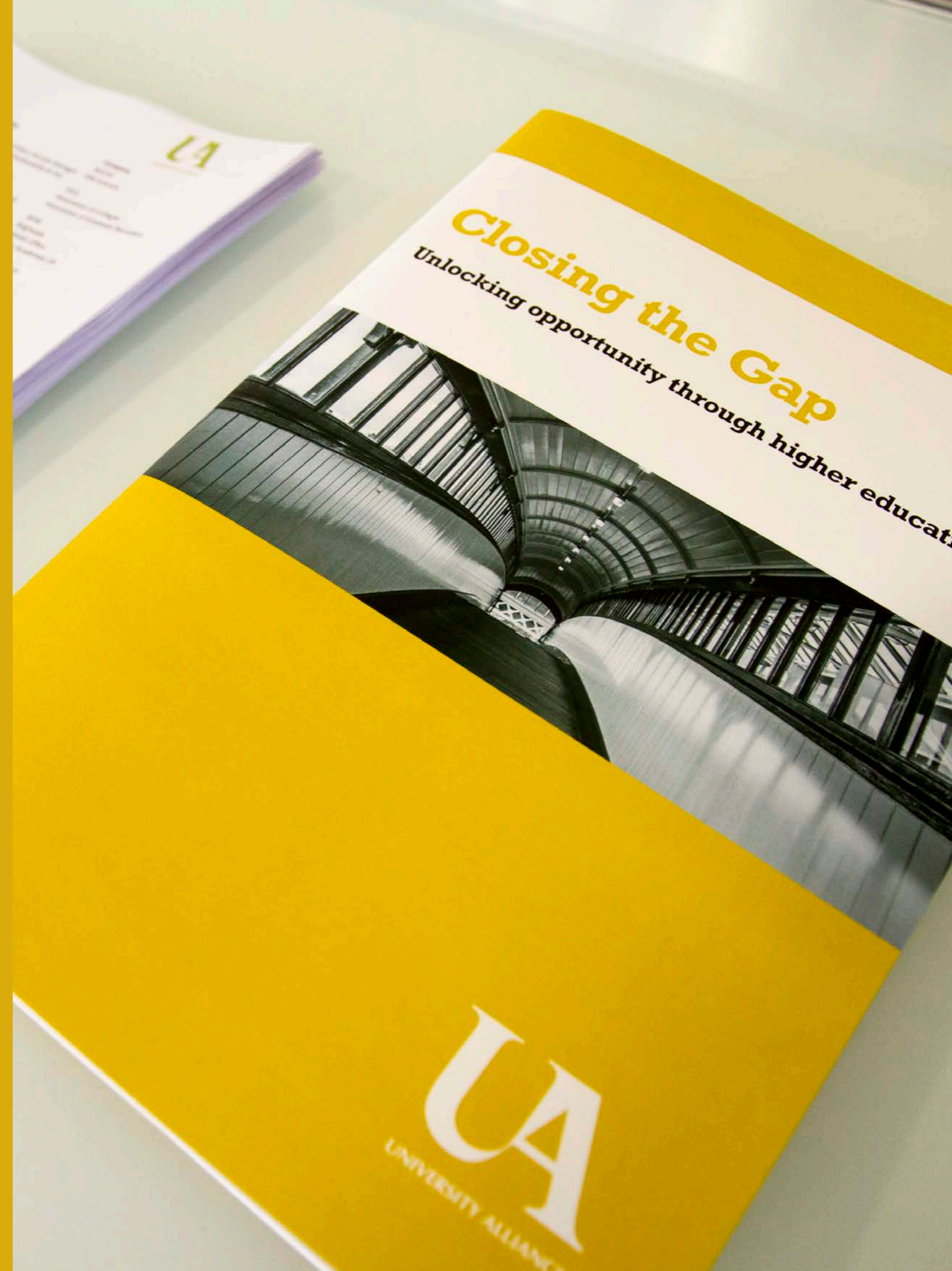
## Closing the Gap: unlocking opportunity through higher education

On 14 May we published our social mobility report, *Closing the Gap: unlocking opportunity through higher education*. The report, led by Professor Mary Stuart, found that the debate on social mobility and higher education in the UK has been too focused on access and, within that, access to a very small number of universities. The report broadened the debate to demonstrate the economic and societal case for social mobility through higher education as well as the need to move beyond a focus on access. It argued that this narrow focus results in misinformation reaching whole swathes of the population, particularly young people, and needs to change. The report highlighted the key issue that while graduate careers are constantly changing, public discourse and information is not keeping pace.

The report called for more effective and joined-up careers guidance, stating that this is patchy at best and biased and uninformed at worst – resulting in a mismatch of aspiration and labour market opportunities. For example, one third of teenagers want to do just ten highly competitive jobs, while the ten least popular jobs pay above median wage and offer good ongoing career opportunities.

The report concluded that information, advice and guidance about higher education choices needs to take into account changes in higher education and the labour market.

The report was endorsed by OFFA and NCUB and was covered in the BBC, Times Higher Education and Huffington Post.



## Social Mobility launch

We held a high level event in partnership with Deloitte, who support our position on social mobility and the importance of diversity in the workplace, to launch this report. The event was quickly oversubscribed with high-level attendees including representatives from the Department for Education, BIS, The Bridge Group, AGCAS, AGR, Clifford Chance, Lloyds Banking Group and the Law Society.

Phil Collins, Chief Leader Writer at The Times chaired the event which included a panel made up of Professor Mary Stuart, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lincoln, Julie Mercer, Partner at Deloitte, and Anne Spackman, Executive Director at Career Academies UK. There was lively discussion on tables, which focused on the key themes of the report: access; retention; graduate success, and wider societal impact.



## HEFCE roundtable on social mobility

In June 2014 we were invited to take part in a high-level roundtable discussion at HEFCE to help them map out their work on the theme of social mobility. This was the second in a series of external roundtables hosted by HEFCE on priority agendas in higher education. The focus for this discussion was the role of higher education in social mobility and, in particular, whether we need to re-frame the debate for the future. It particularly reviewed the ways in which we can effectively demonstrate return-on-investment for funding for widening participation in future.

Other attendees included Vice-Chancellors from across the sector, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, senior academics and senior representatives from third sector organisations.

## Partnership with Clifford Chance

Also in June we partnered with global legal firm Clifford Chance to host the first ever open day for students at Alliance universities. A handful of students attended from each Alliance university, generating highly positive feedback from the company:

**“...we thought they were a great group. Hopefully we’ll get some applications from them. Definitely something we would like to do again.”**

(Jackie Trench, Graduate Recruitment Specialist)

Student feedback was also equally positive, with one saying:

**“I went with some reservations, thinking my non-conventional background would mean a Training Contract at Clifford Chance would be out of reach; however, these fears were allayed and they are now my first choice, so the day has definitely changed by impression of the firm.”**

The day was such a success that another has been arranged in December 2014.

## Access Alliance

Teach First and the Progression Trust have set up a group called the ‘Access Alliance’ with the aim of collaborating to support schools to champion progression to higher education. We were asked to be part of this small select group which includes representatives from OFFA, IntoUniversity, Association of Colleges, the Brilliant Club, Sutton Trust and the Brightside Trust.

The June meeting was kindly hosted by Oxford Brookes University and we continue to engage actively in the groups’ work, with a particular focus on supporting improved advice and guidance for schools and colleges.

## Focusing on the Future



It has been a dramatic few years for universities. There have been significant changes in the way universities are funded and regulated alongside increasing global competition and the impact of technological change driving new forms of delivery.

Alliance universities recognise the need to adapt, often rapidly, to the changing environment, so as to maximise the opportunities for their students and staff.

Following suit, at University Alliance, we have been running a number of projects that aim to tackle some of the big questions about the future of higher education and where universities need to position themselves to deliver the knowledge, networks and communities that our country needs in the future.

### HELP from Down Under? HEPI report

In April 2014 we launched a report in partnership with the Higher Education Policy Institute, comparing the higher education funding systems in England and Australia. The report followed growing interest in the Australian system as current concerns about the sustainability of higher education funding in the UK grew more intense. The report identified a number of lessons we can learn from Australia; in particular, addressing the high and growing cost of non-repayment of student loans and the lack of access for postgraduate students and part-time students to student loans. University Alliance are seen as experts on this issue and have communicated key messages in numerous articles and at conferences since the launch of this report.

**H.E.L.P. UK**  
A new higher education loan programme:  
adding to the debate on funding

### The future of higher education funding in the UK

In Summer 2013 we launched a programme of research to explore sustainable funding models for higher education. This was followed in November by a series of four workshops as part of our future funding work. Representatives from organisations including Google, Deloitte, Lloyds Banking Group, Brightside and Policy Exchange took part in these discussions on developing an alternative funding model for higher education. These workshops proved informative and benefitted from having a range of different voices from the sector, finance, technology, think tanks and charities. One thing made clear from these workshops was that there is a consensus that there are considerable uncertainties about the sustainability of the current system. These discussions later provided crucial feedback for the *H.E.L.P. UK* proposals.

### H.E.L.P. UK - a new Higher Education Loan Programme: adding to the debate on funding

In July 2014 we launched *H.E.L.P. UK*, a new Higher Education Loan Programme, the culmination of our long-term project looking at ways to improve the sustainability of higher education funding in the UK for the future. *H.E.L.P. UK* offers clear thinking and simple steps to enabling universal access to student loans for the first time while bringing down the massive cost of the current loans system.

This project followed on from the open process of collaboration with many people across the sector and beyond. The process incorporated extensive modelling and research into higher education funding systems across the globe. The resulting proposals were tested, and shaped, by the views of students and parents through workshops and from newly commissioned research by Ipsos Mori.

## Ensuring Quality in an Expanding System

In May 2014 we launched our report *How do we ensure quality in an expanding higher education system?* The report considers what kind of quality assurance system is going to be suitable for a more complex new world of expanding higher education which is changing at an unprecedented rate. Quality assurance does, and should, sit within a broader framework for regulation of providers.

We launched the report at two conferences, the HEPI HEA Spring Conference and at an Inside Government conference, *Higher Education Provision 2014: Advancing Choice, Enhancing Quality* forum.

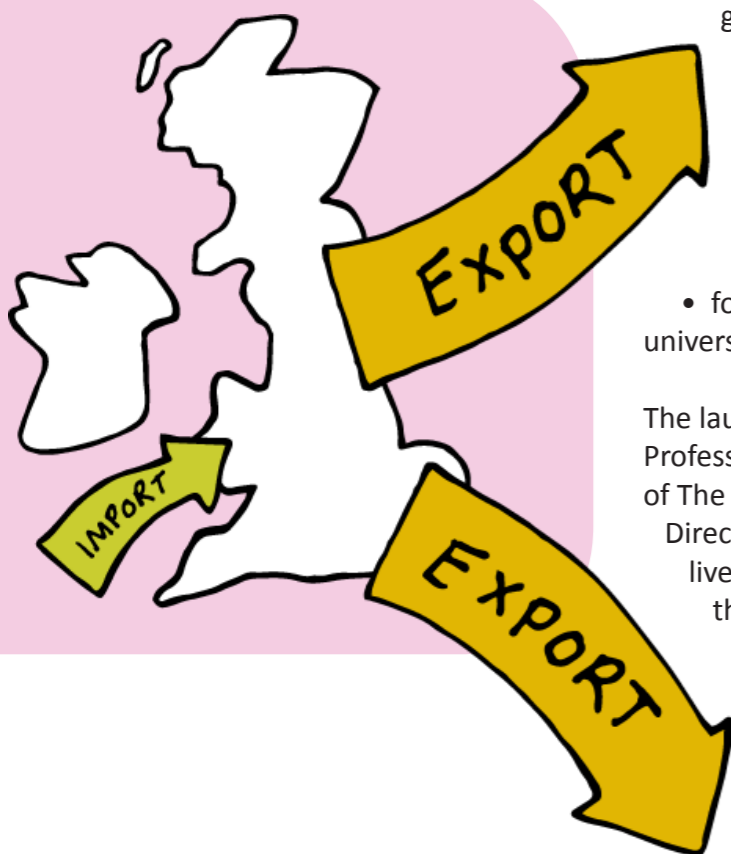
## Design&: Creating the Future

In March 2014 we launched our report, *Design&: Creating the Future* at the Design Council Head Office in London. This project, led by Professor Julius Weinberg, was run in partnership with the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) and focused on the importance of UK design as a vital part of our innovative future.

This report sets out how Alliance universities are helping UK industry stay at the forefront, particularly through the unique approach to blended learning at Alliance universities and cutting edge design-led research which considers the big challenges facing society. In the report we made four recommendations asking for:

- UK design to become key to the government's Industrial Strategy;
  - increased support for design-led research;
  - for creativity and problem solving to be embedded into the national curriculum; and
- for IP teaching to be further embedded into university teaching.

The launch event featured speakers including Professor Weinberg, Sir John Sorrell, Founder of The Sorrell Foundation and Rosa Wilkinson, Director of Innovation at the IPO. There was a lively discussion and debate at the event and the report was featured in the leading sector magazine Design Week.



## Immigration

Current immigration policies - in particular the removal of the post-study work visa - are having a profoundly negative impact on the UK's ability to compete in the global higher education market. The number of non-EU students at UK universities fell by 1% last year, the first decline ever recorded. Some Alliance universities have reported as much as a 50% reduction as a result of post-study work visas being removed.

In March we presented evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology on the impact these changes have had on STEM courses in the UK. As well as making the case with Home Office ministers, we have provided briefings and hosted events for Parliamentarians outlining the main issues, key statistics and our policy proposals around the re-introduction of post-study work and other changes to immigration policy.

## Women in STEM

Women continue to be grossly under-represented in STEM subjects, with only 7,000 girls taking Physics A-Level compared to 25,000 boys. At the same time very few women hold senior scientific positions or academic roles.

Following the University Alliance Chief Executive's speech on women in STEM at a high-profile roundtable at Number 10 in December 2013, we have been supporting BIS, Number 10 and DfE's *Women into Technology and Engineering Compact*. We will continue to act as higher education advisers as the campaign develops. The Compact aims to support a step-change in how women and girls are encouraged to consider technology and engineering careers and the subject choices or vocational pathways – especially maths and physics – that lead to them. We participated in the launch event of the

*Your Life* campaign, which was attended by George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and leading businesses and entrepreneurs. University Alliance is one of the 176 signatories for the campaign which includes leading companies such as Google, IBM and Microsoft.



# Representing Alliance universities

In addition to our work across Westminster and Whitehall, we have an active strategy to increase our reach and raise the profile of University Alliance. This involves building partnerships and links with key stakeholders, increasing our digital presence and collaborating on key projects, particularly with businesses.

nationally and internationally, demonstrating their contribution to the economic and social success of the UK and beyond

## In the news

University Alliance is a regular contributor to national media coverage about higher education and the economy. Our key messages are captured in the following selection of quotes from articles over the past year.

“Proposals to reward universities or courses that lead to high-earning careers risk reinforcing recruitment to City-based firms when we need to build a more dynamic economy such as in the creative and digital industries. A study last week found the UK digital economy was 40% bigger than estimated, with at least 270,000 digital companies. We should be looking to create a diverse university sector that provides firms with the capacity they need in a competitive global arena.”

The Sunday Times, 28 July, 2013

“The often quoted statistic, that more people from poorer backgrounds are attending university under the new fee regime, masks important variations in participation such as the 40 per cent decline in part-time entrants. This evidence suggests there has also been a decline in participation in areas of the country that have been hit particularly hard in current economic climate.”

The Telegraph, 24 October, 2013

## Digital

This year we undertook a total refresh of the website to offer a more modern platform to present our work and engage with stakeholders. The new site allows us to reach new audiences and more successfully and effectively communicate the top messages of key projects that we have launched.

The number of people following us on Twitter has also increased considerably with 38% more followers over the past 12 months. We are increasing the number and breadth of our tweets, and are actively engaging in online discussions to get our messages across – particularly to tweet out what our members have been up to. For *Job Ready* we used our 40 plus case studies to tweet every day for a month to keep up the campaign throughout July, which helped drive traffic to our website and increase the number of followers.



“[International students] should be allowed to stay long enough to put their new skills to use and give back to the UK. That can be achieved with one simple fix: reintroduce two-year post-study work visas... This would enable the UK economy to benefit from their skills, without adding to the burden of long-term migration...”

“Human capital is now the primary indicator of economic growth, and while other developed economies are investing heavily in their higher education sectors, the UK must resist the temptation to go the other way.”

The Guardian, 21 November, 2013

On the removal of the student numbers cap: “These extra places will ensure the UK can meet the need for additional highly-skilled graduates helping us meet the demands of the future economy.”

Financial Times, 5 December, 2013

“The growth in applications shows that despite a minority questioning the value of a degree, individuals still see it as a smart choice to ensuring their resilience and success in an increasingly competitive world.”

Evening Standard, 31 January, 2014

Financial Times, 10 April, 2014

“We hope to offer some clear thinking and simple steps to improve the loan design, bring down the massive subsidy on loans from the government and re-balance the contribution between the state and individual to higher education.”

The Times, 2 April, 2014

“We now have a chance to examine how to put funding of the higher education sector on a sustainable footing with a better student loan design — and not just relying on selling off the loans book. The public subsidy on existing student loans is too high, at 45 per cent and growing. It is possible to design a loan system that does not carry a subsidy (or a radically reduced subsidy) and can be offered to every student.”

The Times, 24 July, 2014

## International

### Australian Technology Network (ATN)

As part of our ongoing partnership with the Australian Technology Network (ATN) we have regular dialogue with them on a number of issues including research innovation and funding. In particular, we worked closely with the ATN to develop the British Council Global Education Dialogue event in Indonesia and David Willetts' ministerial visit to Australia in February.

### Association of Independent Technological Universities, USA

In January 2014, a delegation from University Alliance was invited to present to the annual meeting of the Association of Independent Technological Universities (whose membership includes MIT and CalTech) in Florida, USA. This gave us the opportunity to discuss the similarities between our two groups and where partnerships could be developed. Since this meeting there have been several opportunities to work together which we are actively exploring for 2014-2015.

### British Council Going Global, Florida, USA

As a member of the Going Global Steering Committee, University Alliance was involved in a number of events at this year's British Council's Going Global conference in Florida. Our session, *Creating highly employable, innovative and entrepreneurial graduates* proved a huge success in terms of discussion and attendance. As with all of our work, the event's purpose was to highlight the strengths of Alliance universities. In particular this event was an opportunity for us to focus on our strengths in employability and entrepreneurialism. Drawing on the expertise of leaders from the UK, US, Australia and South America, this workshop explored how universities can:

- create a culture of entrepreneurialism that prepares students for a changing global economy;
- develop highly employable, innovative and entrepreneurial graduates;
- work with employers to keep courses relevant to the needs of business and professions.

## British Council Global Education Dialogue, Vietnam

In November 2013 we gave a keynote presentation and ran a workshop with the 200 delegates at the British Council Global Education Dialogue in Vietnam. The event was part of a series of East Asia policy dialogues held in China, Vietnam, UAE, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Japan. Each Education Dialogue had a specific and focused agenda, which framed the debate on the issues affecting higher education in East Asia and the UK. As global power shifts east towards the Asia-Pacific region, the economies of the East have become more central to the world economy. In 2015, ASEAN economic integration meant a more coordinated approach and increased competitiveness from the region. This emphasis on higher productivity and competitiveness in an increasingly global market relies on investment in human capital, research and development and technological progress. Investing in education - particularly higher education and skills - is a crucial part of East Asia's drive toward greater productivity, growth, and technological development.

Our presentation focused on our *university\_vision* project and highlighted some of the ways scenario planning can be used to identify the challenges and opportunities faced by the higher education sector in East Asia.



## British Council East Asia ASEAN Future of Higher Education Project



University Alliance worked with the British Council in East Asia to help them explore the potential opportunities and challenges facing the region in the future. Drawing on our experience from running a similar process in the UK (our *university\_vision* project) we brought together key policy-makers and influencers with leaders from universities and business to identify potential scenarios of what the future might look like for the region.

Scenario planning is a valuable tool for understanding the factors that may affect the future, by exploring possibilities and interactions within different social, economic and political environments. Rather than being a process to predict the future, it is more about identifying different and extreme scenarios that can better inform current policy planning and debate. Our hope is that the project will identify how higher education systems and policy-makers in the region can make the most of the opportunities that lie ahead, serve society and the economy, and seek out new and innovative ways to anticipate, approach and tackle the challenges of the future.

## Ministerial visit to Australia

In February 2015 University Alliance's Chief Executive (Libby Hackett) joined a BIS delegation to Australia with the Universities and Science Minister, Rt Hon David Willetts MP, and other key stakeholders. The exposure this gave to University Alliance in spending time with the Minister, officials, members of the International Unit, FCO and British Council – alongside meeting Australian university leaders – made a significant contribution to our visibility and credibility.

## Partnerships

### Innovate UK and NCUB



In June 2014 we partnered with the Technology Strategy Board (now Innovate UK) and the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) to develop an event to highlight the role of university research in driving growth.

### UNITE (student accommodation) report

University Alliance worked with the student accommodation group UNITE to extend our *university\_vision* scenarios to look at the way students will live and learn in 2030. This project is further evidence of our position as thought-leaders within the sector, particularly in looking at the future of higher education in the UK.

## Party Conferences



Higher Education, Higher Return

In Autumn 2013 we partnered with five other sector bodies to deliver our Party Conference events. The partnership sent a strong and united message, as a sector, that universities are key players in building a prosperous and fair society and economy in the UK. The other partner organisations were Universities UK, 1994 Group, GuildHE, NUS and QAA. The events were run in partnership with The Guardian (Liberal Democrat and Labour Conferences) and the Social Market Foundation (Conservative Party Conference). The events were well attended and had good press coverage.

## Robbins Revisted

In October 2013 we joined forces with our Bright Britain partners to sponsor a joint David Willetts/SMF publication celebrating 50 years since the launch of the Robbins Report. The original Robbins Report paved the way for expansion of higher education in the UK and we felt this sponsorship demonstrated our commitment to future expansion in the 21st Century. We also provided case studies which were used in the accompanying pamphlet from Coventry University, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of the West of England.



# Members shaping and delivering our mission

Providing intelligence to members and identifying opportunities for Vice-Chancellors and others in Alliance universities to shape and deliver our mission

The leading role of University Alliance within the sector comes down to the strength of our membership. We work closely with our members, in particular Vice-Chancellors and other senior colleagues, to help shape and deliver our mission. In addition, we have strengthened our internal networks to ensure that colleagues across Alliance universities are kept up-to-date and engaged with our work. These networks include Research and Innovation PVCs, Communications, Teaching and Learning PVCs and International PVCs.

## University Alliance Summit - Shaping the future of HE & research

In June 2014 we held the second University Alliance Summit, kindly hosted by the University of Greenwich. The Summit brought together senior leaders from across Alliance universities to give us the opportunity to build our collective voice in the face of an increasingly competitive and political environment in the run-up to the General Election in 2015:

**Professor Madeleine Atkins**, Chief Executive of HEFCE, was the keynote speaker giving an address about the issues and trends in higher education. In addition, we ran a panel debate about higher education policy before and after

the 2015 General Election with **Giles Wilkes**, Special Advisor to the Business Secretary Vince Cable;

**Nick Hillman**, Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and former special advisor to Universities Minister David Willetts MP;

**Emran Mian**, Director of the Social Market Foundation (SMF) and former civil servant leading on the Browne Review of Higher Education Funding; and

**Mark Leach**, Chair and Editor-in-Chief, wonkhe and former Chief Policy Advisor to the former Shadow Minister for Universities and Science, Shabana Mahmood MP.

This lively debate was chaired by Professor Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University. Alongside the plenary sessions, we ran several workshops covering key areas of work including research and social mobility.



## Board Meetings

University Alliance Board meetings are an opportunity for Vice-Chancellors to meet throughout the year and help deliver and monitor our mission.

The October meeting was hosted by Deloitte at their Head Office and we were joined by Christopher Lockwood, Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister in the No.10 Policy Unit. This was a fantastic occasion in which we were able to hear first-hand how much value Deloitte were putting on Alliance graduates as shining examples of job-ready and innovative employees.

At the Board meetings in March 2014 we were joined by colleagues from UKTI Education to discuss international opportunities for Alliance universities and in June by Dr Tessa Stone from the Brightside Trust. The June meeting was also followed by our Annual Dinner, in the wonderful surroundings of the Painted Hall at the University of Greenwich with a keynote speech from Dr Simon Campbell, co-Chair of the Royal Society Science, Industry and Translation Committee and special guests from government, Parliament, business and the higher education sector.

## Research & Innovation Network

The University Alliance Research & Innovation Network met in January, March and June 2014.

In January 2014 the group heard from Dr Graeme Reid, Head of Research Funding at BIS and David Sweeney, Director of Research at HEFCE, who both discussed current and future priorities and opportunities in research funding. It was a very positive meeting attended by Pro Vice-Chancellors from many Alliance universities. Discussions focused on current policy projects relating to research and university-business collaboration, in particular research strengths within University Alliance, postgraduate funding and upcoming opportunities for showcasing Alliance research.

In the March meeting, the group heard from Simon Edmonds, Director of Catapult Programme at the Technology Strategy Board who discussed potential collaborations with Catapult Centres. Other discussions focused on common research interests for the ATN meeting and about the PGR funding project as outlined below.

In June, the network met prior to the University Alliance Summit to discuss a collective action in doctoral training and the various consultations which fed into the government's science and innovation strategy – for this, the network was joined by Steven Hill, Head of Research Policy, HEFCE.

## Communications Network

The University Alliance Communications and Public Affairs Network, chaired by Michael Lavery from Teesside University, met in November 2013 and March 2014. In November the network was kindly hosted by University of Greenwich, London. The group was welcomed by Professor David Maguire. This was followed by sessions led by Lucy Findlay from the Social Enterprise Mark, Alison Kershaw from the Press Association and Claire Shaw from the Guardian. It was a very productive meeting with discussions on the 2015 General Election Strategy to help shape our approach for the next year.

The March 2014 meeting was kindly hosted by Erika Coghlan at Coventry University. The group were joined by Vice-Chancellor John Latham who provided fascinating insight into enterprise alongside Adam Dent from an agency working with their local LEP. The meeting was followed by an insightful tour of the Engineering and Computing building to see first-hand the innovative work they do.

## International Network

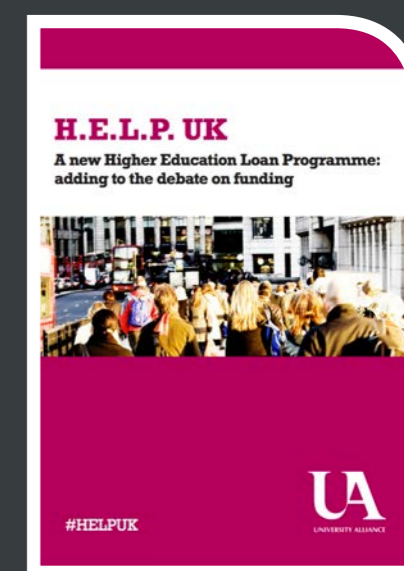
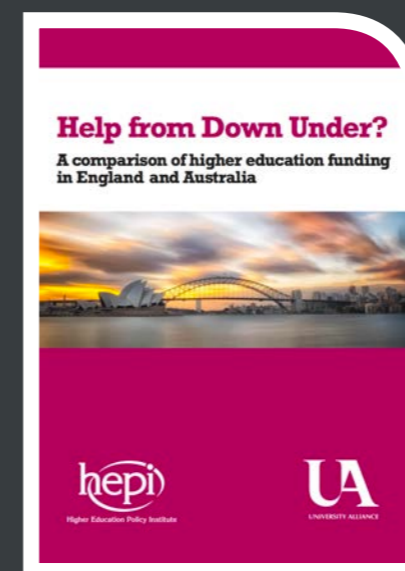
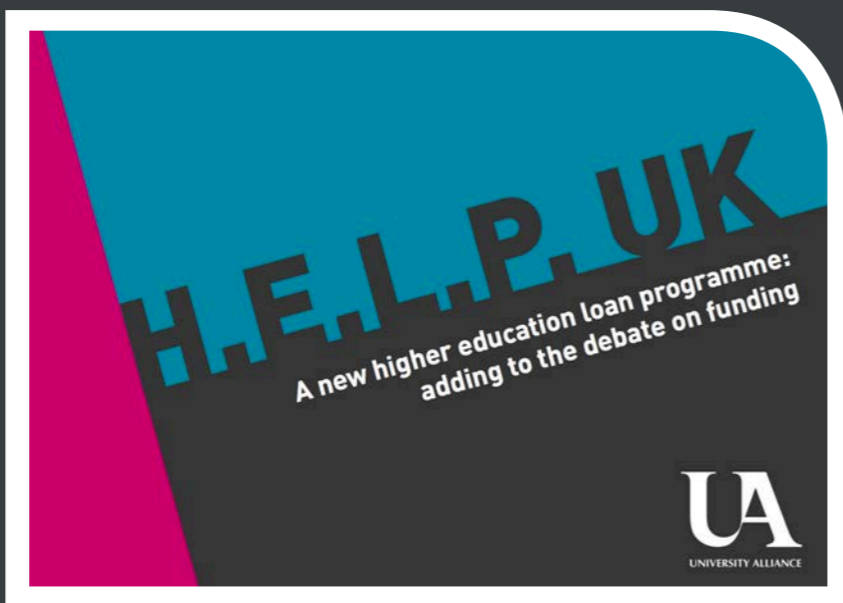
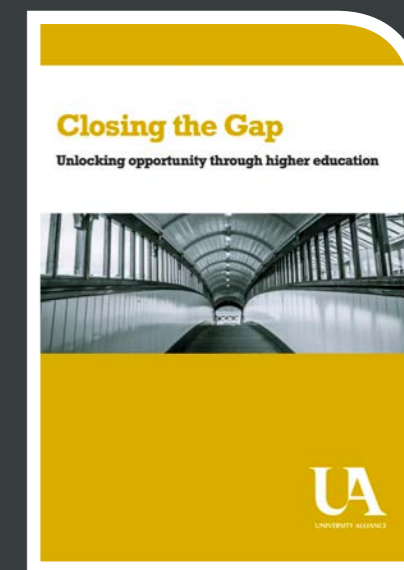
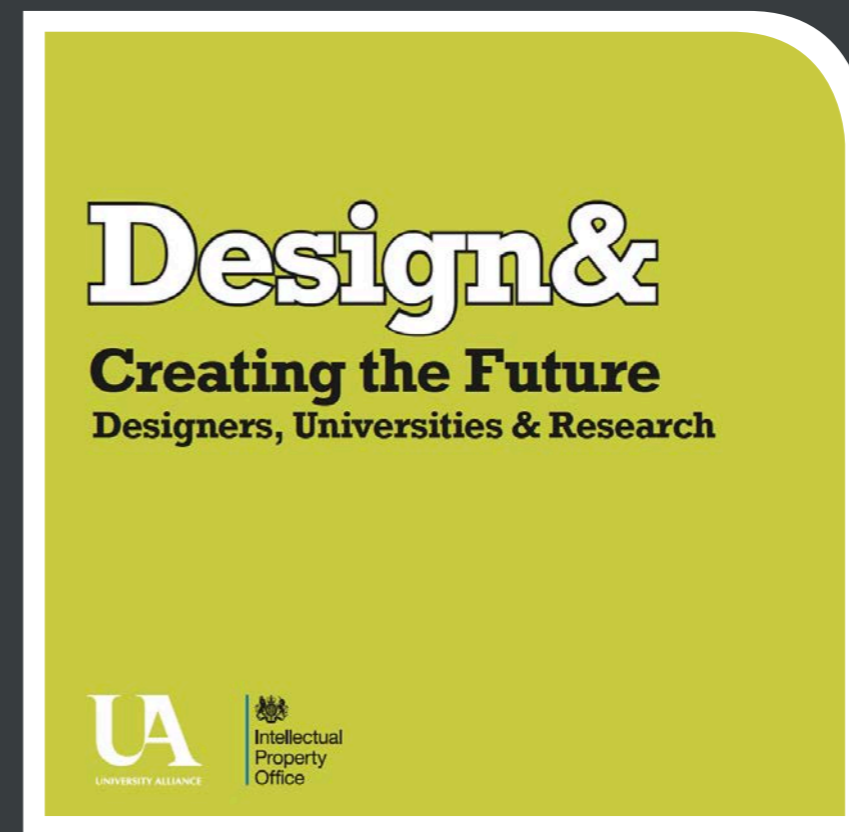
In February 2014 we brought together for the first time International PVCs at Alliance universities. Professor Janet Beer in her capacity as lead Vice-Chancellor for International chaired the meeting. There was a lively exchange of ideas between the group followed by presentations from UKTI, the International Unit and the Career Development Organisation.

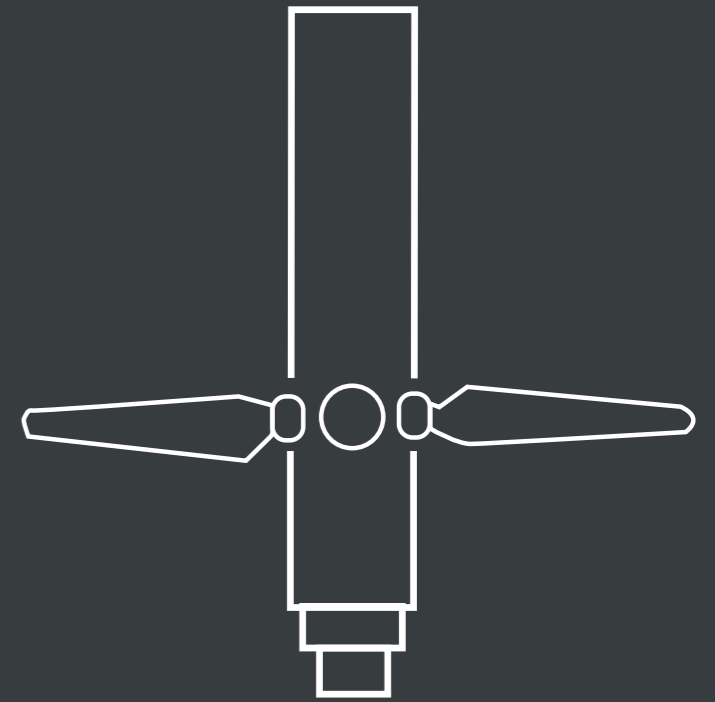
The network met again in May 2014 to discuss development of the University Alliance international strategy to educate key constituents in the UK and abroad about Alliance universities and facilitate opportunities for partnerships to be built.

## PVCs Teaching and Learning Network

This year we have carried out stronger engagement with the Alliance PVCs Teaching and Learning Network which has allowed us to collate more case studies and make these case studies visible to relevant stakeholders. They have fed into a significantly increased output in this area, as detailed under the Transforming Lives section.

# 13/14 Publications







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