Nomination pack: Alliance Awards 2026

In partnership with the University of Derby

Sponsored by [Duolingo English Test](), [Peridot Partners]() and [Enfuse Group]().

Recognising excellence in the work of individuals and teams across the University Alliance

Nominations open: 00:01, 24 March 2026

Nomination deadline: 23:59, 8 May 2026

Awards ceremony: 3 September 2026

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About the awards

Now in their seventh year, we're excited to announce the return of the Alliance Awards! The awards are our chance to celebrate the hard work and dedication of colleagues and teams across the University Alliance.

This year we're introducing brand new awards categories: we now have 10 in total. You can find a full description of each category, alongside the judging criteria, below.

This year the Alliance Awards will be delivered in partnership with our generous hosts the [**University of Derby.**]()

About the nominations

Who can make a nomination?

Anyone can make a nomination for the Alliance Awards, whether you are part of an Alliance institution or not. [You can see a full list of University Alliance member universities here.]()

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Who can I nominate?

You can nominate individuals, teams or yourself, provided that those being nominated are part of a University Alliance institution **(this does not apply to the DTA Alumni Award, where there are alumni from other institutions who are still eligible for nomination)**

University Alliance colleagues can be considered for any of the following categories. More information about each award can be found below.

- **Industry Partnerships Award**
- **Student Leadership and Enterprise award**
- **Research Communications Award**
- **Teaching Innovation Award**
- **Research and Innovation Impact Award**
- **Regional Impact Award**
- **Heroes Award**
- **Professional Services Excellence Award**
- **DTA Alumni Award**
- **Lifetime Achievement Award**

How can I nominate someone?

Please submit a nomination via our Alliance Awards nomination form. If you are unable to submit a nomination via Microsoft Forms, please contact awards@unialliance.ac.uk.

Information about last year's nominees and winners can be found here.

Guidance for submitting a nomination

Nominations can be for individuals or teams whose work best aligns with each category; they can be for particular projects and pieces of work, or for their personal contribution to your team or organisation.

NOTE: There is a 1,700 character (200-300 words) limit for your nomination

NOTE: You are welcome to make more than one nomination for multiple categories. Please only nominate each of your nominees for one category.

NOTE: Part of the work you are nominating your nominee for must have happened in the past year (September 2025 – 2026) but your nomination can reference work that has spanned previous years as well.

Advance notice for if your nominee is shortlisted

This year, shortlisted nominees will be asked to produce a short video about the work/area for which they were nominated. We'd like them to be extremely short and

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simple: filmed in a vertical layout on a smartphone, running for a maximum of 1 minute 30 seconds.

We'll send over detailed instructions to each nominee for producing their video, and will notify their university communication/marketing teams to assist.

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The Awards categories and judging criteria

We use an independent panel of judges from across the higher education sector to decide on the winners for each award. Please see below the full list of awards and our criteria for judging below.

Industry Partnerships Award

Awarded for innovative university partnerships, with industry, business or with public sector organisations.

Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- The impact the nominated partnership has had, particularly on any of the below:
    o Teaching and learning within the institution, for example how industry expertise has informed and enhanced course curriculum, or any hands-on experience or training students have gained as a result of the partnership.
    o Regional economic growth and the local community, for example through job creation or successful funding bids for local initiatives.
    o Providing solutions that support organisations to better deliver their goals.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible for the partnership went above and beyond what might reasonably be expected of them.
- Any measurable achievements or milestones.

Student Leadership and Enterprise award

Awarded to standout students and graduates who have demonstrated remarkable achievement in leadership and/or enterprise.

Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- Positive impact the nominee has had, particularly on their university community and the wider local community.
- Evidenced examples of exceptional leadership within an academic, student union or enterprise contexts.
- Evidence of initiatives or programmes they have established or had an influential hand in, which have been of benefit to fellow students, the university or the local community.

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- Evidence of an innovative enterprise established by the student or graduate, particularly those with an emphasis on:
  - Health and wellbeing.
  - Environmental impact.
  - Training and upskilling.
- Any standout achievements or milestones reached by the nominated team or individual in their work within this area.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible went above and beyond to achieve this work.

Research Communications Award

Awarded to individuals and teams who have run impactful campaigns showcasing standout research from their university.

Judges will award based on performance against objective and will look for PESO measurements in judging performance as well as real world outcomes (for example measurable public awareness changes, policy change or funding being secured).

Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- Innovative, high-impact methods for sharing research.
- Broad coverage of the story through a variety of channels including: broadcast media, print media, trade or specialist press, social media and other platforms.
  - Particularly highly specialised coverage with high levels of engagement.
- Evidenced establishment of researcher as a thought leader in their field.
- Showcasing research from a research field within the Industrial Strategy 8 areas.
- Showcasing researchers from diverse backgrounds.
- Any standout achievements or milestones reached by the nominated team or individual in their work within this area.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible went above and beyond to achieve this work.

Teaching Innovation Award

Awarded for innovative teaching practises that have markedly benefited students and the institution.

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Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- The impact the nominee/nominated team has had, particularly on any of the below:
    o Teaching and learning practises within HE more widely – with influence stretching beyond their own institution.
    o Student participation and engagement.
    o Improving the accessibility of teaching and assessment within their institution for students of all backgrounds and learning needs.
    o Supporting students to develop career-ready skills.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible went above and beyond to deliver innovation in their teaching practise.
- Any measurable achievements or milestones.

Research and Innovation Impact Award

Awarded for research and innovation which has had a tangible impact on the world around us.

Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- The impact the nominee/nominated team has had, particularly on any of the below:
    o Bolstering prosperity and growth in the local region.
    o The research has provided a solution to a pressing problem.
    o The research has the potential to improve lives.
    o The research has significantly advanced knowledge in particular area.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible went above and beyond to deliver the research project.
- Any measurable achievements or milestones.

Regional Impact Award

Awarded to an individual or team who have developed projects or initiatives that benefit their local or regional communities.

Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- The positive impact the nominee/nominated team has had, particularly on any of the below:
    o The local economy and/or regional workforce.
    o The local community, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or in areas of deprivation.

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- o Partnerships with local business or industry.
- Projects or initiatives with a focus on the Industrial Strategy 8 areas.
- Any standout achievements or milestones reached by the nominated team or individual in their work within this area.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible went above and beyond to achieve this work.

Heroes Award sponsored by Duolingo English Test

Awarded to an individual or team who have gone above and beyond to help their institutions, staff and students to thrive.

Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- The impact the nominee/nominated team has had, particularly on any of the below:
  - o Initiatives that are sector-leading
  - o Creating and supporting a vibrant university community
  - o The mental and emotional wellbeing of staff and students.
  - o The smooth running and sustainability of the institution.
  - o Improving the cause of equality, diversity and inclusion within their institution.
- Any standout achievements or milestones reached by the nominated team or individual in their work within this area.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible went above and beyond to achieve this work.

Professional Services Excellence Award sponsored by Peridot Partners

Awarded to an individual or team who have delivered exceptional work across professional services within their university.

Here are examples of what judges will look for when selecting award winners:

- Any impact the nominee/nominated team has had, particularly on any of the below:
  - o Streamlining existing systems to improve efficiency at their university.
  - o Creating innovative solutions to ongoing challenges.
- Innovative programmes that have improved the overall work of the university.
- Campaigns or projects with significant impact on the university and the higher education sector more widely.

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- Any standout achievements or milestones reached by the nominated team or individual in their work within this area.
- The extent to which the individual or team responsible went above and beyond to achieve this work.

DTA Alumni Award

Awarded to the Doctoral Training Alliance (DTA) alum who has demonstrated their commitment during and beyond their PhD to one of the following UA strategic pillars:

1) Innovation: taking an innovative approach and outlook to their doctoral studies and career pathways

2) Community: contributing to a sense of community during and/or beyond their PhD through supporting peers and local or global communities.

Lifetime Achievement Award

For the individual who has delivered a lifetime of exceptional service to their institution, students and to the higher education sector as a whole.

**Please note, we're asking University Alliance Vice-Chancellors to suggest nominations for this award to their teams. Nominations cannot be made through the standard nomination form. If this applies to you, please email awards@unialliance.ac.uk*.*

[MAKE A NOMINATION HERE](#)