

# THINK MODERN

Innovation, ingenuity and inclusion  
from Britain's modern universities

FACTS AND STATS







## What are modern universities?

Modern universities make up over half of the UK's higher education sector, educating over a million students a year.

These universities are powerhouses for and are anchored in their communities across the length and breadth of the UK.

Since the creation of modern universities in 1992, these dynamic institutions have grown into powerhouses of pioneering teaching and research, whilst retaining their mission of improving access to education and ensuring jobs and growth in their region and place.

Modern universities transform the lives of people and ensure a highly skilled workforce for employers of many kinds.

### MillionPlus universities

- Are forward looking and responsive to change
- Work collaboratively with business and boost the public sector workforce
- Drive social mobility
- Deliver excellent teaching which provides the skills for students to succeed
- Are placemakers in their local area
- Produce innovative applied and translational research

# MillionPlus

The Association for  
Modern Universities

# THINK MODERN

# THINK MODERN

## Modern times call for modern solutions and modern universities thrive at meeting this challenge.

With little fanfare, these universities have an enormous impact across the UK, and do much of the hard work in developing the key skills for the future jobs market.

### Therefore, if government wants:

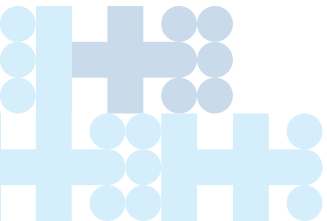
- To boost productivity through strongly work-related education and growing degree apprenticeship

- to address the gap in the recruitment and retention of teachers for schools
- to boost the public service workforce to deliver for the NHS and key services – from nurses, social workers, police, environmental officers, town planners etc
- to help industry innovate and improve through the application of real-world research
- to identify and drive technological advancements to meet tomorrow's challenges
- to increase the aspiration and opportunities for people from all walks of life by ensuring flexible pathways into higher education, supporting them on their learning journey.

...they need to #ThinkModern

#ThinkModern explores this through key facts, case studies, interviews and opinion pieces revolving around six themes – Making Britain Work; Pathways, Partnerships and Productivity; Creative and Technological Skills for the 21st Century; Innovation and Research; Aspiration, Opportunity and Inclusion; and Entrepreneurial, Enterprising, Enriching.

Modern universities are some of the UK's greatest assets in driving growth and social mobility, addressing the challenges we face in society. Across the country, it's time to embrace what they offer and unlock the potential of their students.





## 1. MAKING BRITAIN WORK

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## 4. INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

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## 2. PATHWAYS, PARTNERSHIPS AND PRODUCTIVITY

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## 5. CREATIVE AND TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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## 3. ENTREPRENEURIAL, ENTERPRISING, ENRICHING

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## 6. ASPIRATION, OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSION

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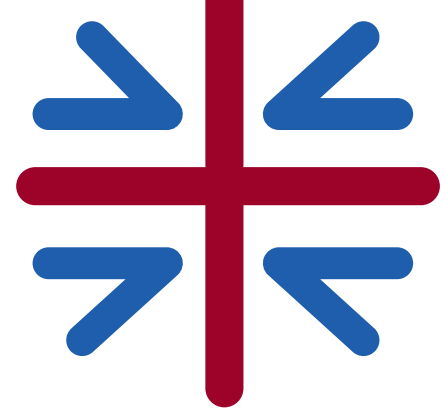


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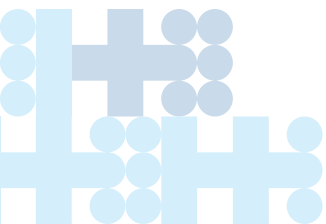
## Making Britain work

Modern universities are directly responsible for training thousands of the backbone public service staff that keep Britain working.

From high-profile roles such as **teachers, nurses, social workers** and **police officers** to the less well acknowledged **town planners, architects** or **environmental health officers**, year after year modern universities create the highly skilled workforce that keeps the economy growing and society thriving.



The Graduate Market 2024 annual review of vacancies and starting salaries predicted that **public sector organisations** will remain the second largest recruiter of graduates, with a record 4,468 entry level vacancies available for university leavers.<sup>1</sup>





## NURSING & MIDWIFERY

Modern universities provide a much-needed pipeline to the NHS in areas of the UK where there is no other local study option, playing an integral role in the regions by providing new cohorts of registered nurses.



Modern universities have a long and well-established tradition of training a major part of the nursing workforce in the UK.



**76%** of nursing students were at modern universities in 2022–23.

**70%** of midwifery students were at modern universities in 2022–23.

Modern universities have partnerships with 209 NHS Trusts in England, **93%** of all NHS Trusts.

**64%** of all the universities with adult nursing courses approved by the Nursing & Midwifery Council are modern universities.<sup>2</sup>



Modern universities have partnerships with every NHS Board in Scotland, covering the full length and breadth of the country's healthcare provision.



# ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Allied Health Professionals (AHP) are the third largest workforce in the health and care sector in England.

There were **335,502 registered allied health professionals** working for the NHS (more than the number of GPs) in 2023.<sup>3</sup> They are a vital pillar in the delivery of healthcare and support, upon which the NHS and the citizens of the United Kingdom rely.

In 2022–23...

**76%** of environmental and public health students...

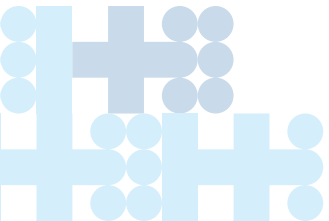
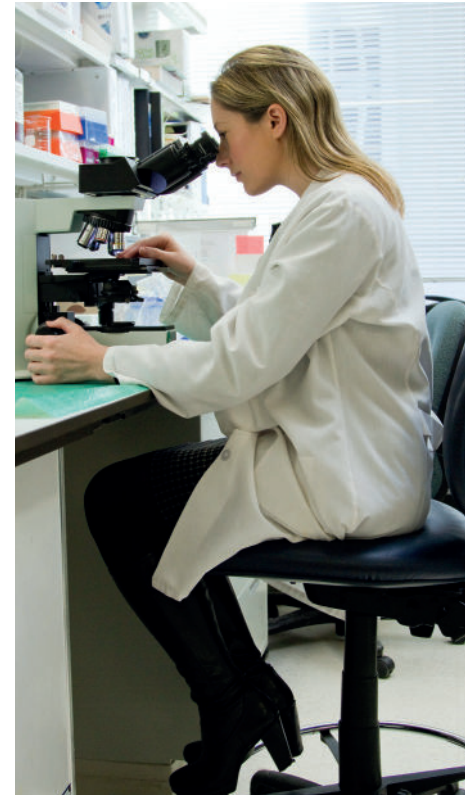
**72%** of those studying nutrition...

**67%** of those studying subjects allied to medicine...

**63%** of medical technology students...

Over **2,220** postgraduate research students in fields allied to medicine...

...were at modern universities.







Modern universities have a long history of teacher education, and despite a diversification of routes into teaching over recent years, these institutions continue to be at the forefront of the field, both in terms of research into pedagogy and the practice of initial teacher training and education.



In 2022–23, modern universities accounted for **67%** of all initial teacher training students in the university sector, and **81%** of those were studying the undergraduate pathway.



In 2022–23, **70%** of all those studying education at university were at modern universities.



In 2022–23, **90%** of HEI-led teacher trainers were awarded Qualified Teacher Status.<sup>5</sup>

In 2022–23, **44%** of Modern university postgraduate students were 25 and over and **20%** were of minority ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup>

**68%** of teacher training university students from the 2022–23 cycle were teaching at a state school within 16 months after completing their course.<sup>6</sup>



## SOCIAL WORK

Modern universities lead in the education of social workers, teaching the majority of the next generation of practitioners, developing students with the skills needed to address regional demand across the UK. Social work is also an area that has traditionally attracted high numbers of mature students, a demographic that has been a key focus of modern universities for many years.

In 2022–23...

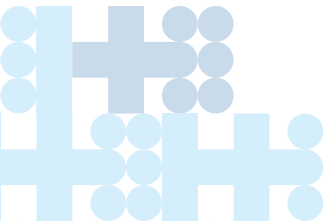
**78%** of social work students...

**51%** of social policy students...

...were at modern universities.



**59%** of research carried out at modern universities in social work or social policy was judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent.<sup>7</sup>





## ARCHITECTS & TOWN PLANNERS

Modern university graduates go on to make up a substantial proportion of the workforce that design, construct and shape our public urban environment.

Modern universities equip students in these areas with skills and knowledge that are used in **urban development, regeneration and infrastructure projects** across the UK.

In 2022–23...

**60%** of architecture students...

**37%** of urban, rural and regional planning students...

...were at modern universities.



<sup>1</sup> High Fliers (2024), the Graduate Market in 2024 annual review of graduate vacancies and starting salaries at the UK's leading employers

<sup>2</sup> Nursing & Midwifery Council list of approved courses

<sup>3</sup> Health and Care Professions Council, Registrant snapshot 4 December 2023

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education, Initial Teacher Training Census 2022–23

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education, Initial Teacher Training performance profiles: 2022–23

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Overall averages calculated from REF 2021 results

\*HEI = Higher Education Institution. All data taken from HESA records 2022–23 and refer to undergraduates unless otherwise stated. Throughout, KEF data relates to KEF4 published in September 2024.

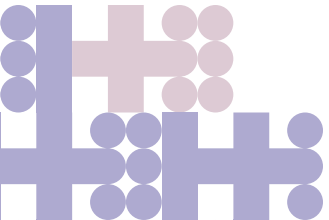
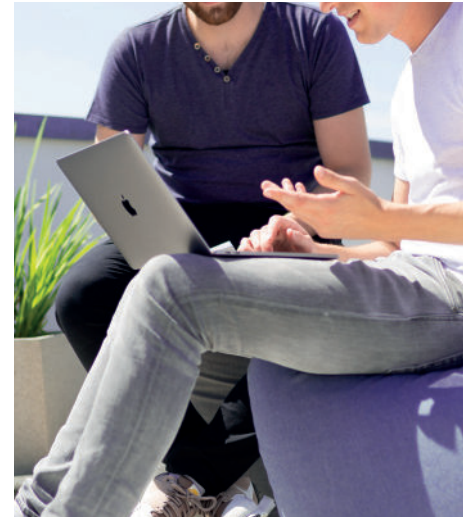
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## Pathways, partnerships and productivity

Vocational, technical and professional education has been the beating heart of modern universities from the very start.

Working in partnership with employers, often in their local regions, they have created **high-quality, work-focused courses** that ensure graduates are fully equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be job-ready on day one. These modern universities are driving forward the degree apprenticeship agenda that will create **new opportunities for young people**.





In 2022–23 modern universities received...

...**£24 million** in income from regeneration and development programmes.

...over **£47 million** in European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) income.



Modern universities are vital actors in their local areas, with the latest KEF data showing strong performance in contributing to local growth and regeneration with a score **65.1%** (3.25 out of 5).

The data also shows that these universities are playing a significant role in driving local regeneration and development projects, again scoring **65.1%**.



## BUSINESS INTERACTION

All modern universities offer professional business advice to start ups, provided by the university or in collaboration with a partner organisation.

In KEF, modern universities scored **52.3%** (2.61 out of 5) for working with the business sector.

In terms of public and community engagement, these universities scored **54.1%** (2.71 out of 5).

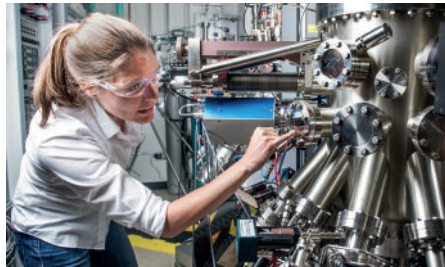


# DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

**61%** of universities on the apprenticeship training provider register are modern universities, showing that these institutions are at the forefront of the development of degree apprenticeships.<sup>1</sup>



Across modern universities in England and Wales, the number of students beginning degree apprenticeships in 2022–23 is **18,385**, representing year-on-year growth of more than **6%**.



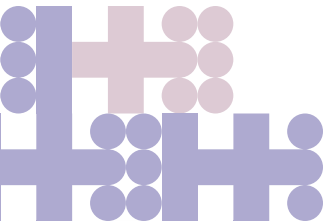
# HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

Modern universities have partnerships with...

...**209** NHS Trusts in England, which amounts to **93%** of all NHS trusts.



...**Every** NHS Board in Scotland, covering the full length and breadth of the country's healthcare provision.



# MILLIONPLUS UNIVERSITIES BUSINESS EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS

Pathways, partnerships  
and productivity

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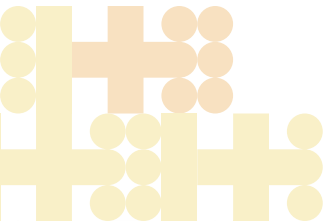
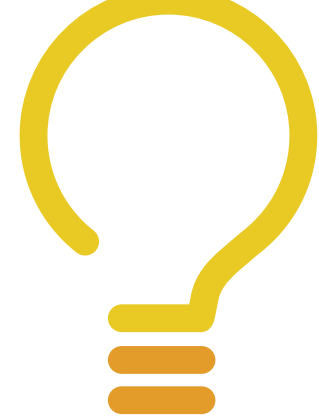
<sup>1</sup> Education & Skills Funding Agency, Register of apprenticeship training providers.  
All data taken from **HESA records 2022–23** and refer to undergraduates unless otherwise stated.

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## Entrepreneurial, enterprising, enriching

Modern universities have found ways to unleash ingenuity by placing entrepreneurialism at the centre of the curriculum.

They support students in **creating businesses, social enterprises and charities well before they have graduated.** This provides them with enriched expertise and experience which benefits them whether they become employers or employees.







## BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

In 2022–23, modern universities provided services<sup>1</sup> to:

**15,486** SMEs  
(small and medium enterprises).

**3,705** non-SMEs.

**14,758**  
non-commercial  
organisations.



## SPIN-OFFS AND START UP COMPANIES

The most recent KEF data shows strong modern university performance in the area of graduate startups, scoring **61.6%** (3.08 out of 5), indicating a vibrant entrepreneurial culture among students.



Graduate start-ups linked to modern universities are estimated to have generated **£873 million** in turnover.

Graduate start-ups linked to modern universities are estimated to have employed **19,492 people**.



## SPIN-OFFS AND START UP COMPANIES

The most recent KEF data shows that modern universities are investing in the area of CPD and graduate startups, scoring **63.5%** (3.17 out of 5).



Indicating a strong commitment to continuing professional development and continuing education in the workforce, modern universities scored **62.7%** (3.13 out of 5) in the latest KEF in the area of HE-BCI CPD/CE Income, normalised by HEI income.



Graduate start-ups linked to modern universities are estimated to have generated **£247 million** in external investment.

<sup>1</sup> Services include contract research, consultancy and facilities/equipment.  
All data taken from **HESA records 2022-23** and refer to undergraduates unless otherwise stated.

## Innovation and research

### Modern universities are crucial regional anchors.

Researchers and academics at these universities are vital in ensuring that businesses – especially the small and medium enterprises that are the lifeblood

of the UK's towns, communities, regions and nations – can benefit from expertise in research and innovation. Modern universities are essential in bringing these experts closer to business, supporting them in providing solutions to major challenges and driving economic growth in all parts of the country.



# INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

In 2022–23 modern universities received...

... **£140** million from UK research councils for research contracts.

... **£54** million from EU government bodies for research contracts.

... **£128** million from central government bodies, local authorities and health and hospital authorities for research contracts.



## RESEARCH AND IMPACT

Research at modern universities judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent...

...**58%** overall...

...**70%** in Allied Health Professions, Nursing and Pharmacy...

...**68%** in Art and Design...

...**67%** in Communications, Cultural and Media Studies.<sup>1</sup>



In terms of impact, **63%** of research carried out at modern universities was judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent.<sup>2</sup>

## NUMBER OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

In 2022–23....

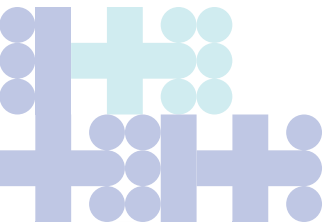
**3,355** in business and management studies

**2,220** in subjects allied to medicine

**2,215** in education

**1,605** in the biological sciences

...were at modern universities.





Percentage of modern university research found to be world leading or internationally excellent in REF2021...



**70%** in Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy



**62.6%** in Engineering



**59.3%** in Social Work and Social Policy



**68.2%** in Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory



**66.6%** in Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management



**62.6%** overall in terms of impact



**71%** in Architecture, Built Environment and Planning

<sup>1</sup> Overall averages for modern universities calculated from REF2021 results.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

All data taken from **HESA records 2022–23** and refer to undergraduates unless otherwise stated.

# THINK MODERN

## Creative and technological skills for the 21st century

Modern universities have pioneered new degrees to ensure that the businesses of the 21st century can benefit from a high-calibre workforce, skilled in **Science**, **Technology**, **Engineering**, the **Arts** and **Maths**.

Innovative courses once seen as huge risks are now well-established in the higher education sector, combining new and traditional skills across diverse, once separate disciplines.

This age of **STEAM** is digital.



# THE CREATIVE ECONOMY IN THE UK

Creative and technological skills for the 21st century

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In 2023 the creative industries employed over **2.4 million** people in the UK and are creating jobs at three times the UK average.<sup>1</sup>

The creative industries exported **£46 billion** in services worldwide and accounted for almost **14%** of UK services exports.<sup>2</sup>



It is estimated that the creative industries will be worth **£128.4 billion** by 2025.<sup>3</sup>

The UK video games market was valued at **£7.82 billion** in 2023, up +4% on last year and one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy.<sup>4</sup>



## RESEARCH AND IMPACT IN STEAM

**71%** of research carried out at modern universities in Architecture, Built Environment and Planning.

**63%** of research carried out at modern universities in the category of General Engineering.



...was judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent in terms of its originality, significance and rigour.<sup>5</sup>

# REVOLUTIONISING STEAM

In 2022–23...



**89%** of computer games students...

**80%** of cinematography and photography students...



**77%** of creative arts students...

**39%** of computer science students...



**74%** of software engineering students...



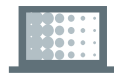
**84%** of design studies students...

**43%** of ecology and environmental biology students...



**69%** of architecture, building and planning students...

**43%** of civil engineering students...



**54%** of computer generated and visual effects students...



**76%** of maritime technology students...

**100%** of minerals technology students...

...were at modern universities.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/site-content/uk-creative-industries-jobs-grow-to-2-42m>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wearecreative.uk/champion/statistics/>.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Peter Bazalgette, “Independent Review of the Creative Industries” 2017.

<sup>4</sup> The Association for UK Interactive Entertainment, 2023 Video Game Industry Valuation.

<sup>5</sup> Overall averages for modern universities calculated from REF2021 results.

All data taken from **HESA records 2022–23** and refers to undergraduates unless otherwise stated.



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## Aspiration, opportunity, inclusion

Modern universities have increased the opportunities for people from all walks of life to experience the transformative impact of higher education.

Mature learners, people already in work, and all those who thought higher education was only for others have been able to **unlock their potential and create new careers for themselves and new lives for their families.** This diversity of approach and student profile is a key pillar of the modern university sector.



# LEADING THE WAY IN WIDENING PARTICIPATION...

**97%** of entrants to modern universities went to a state school.



In England...

**67%** of all HE entrants from a low participation background were studying at modern universities.

Modern universities accounted for **79%** of full-time mature entrants to higher education.

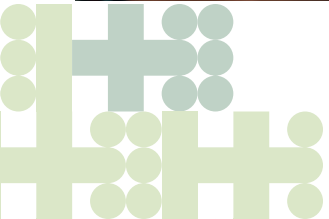
In Scotland...

A third of universities are modern, but they account for **45%** of full-time entrants to university from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and **51%** of mature students.<sup>1</sup>

In 2022–23, **65%** of Black students in the UK were at modern universities.



All modern universities identified **widening participation/access** as one of the principal areas in which they **contribute to the local economy**.



# ...AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Aspiration, opportunity,  
inclusion



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**89%** of modern universities provide distance learning courses.

**88%** of modern universities provide continuous work-based learning courses.

**236,180** people attended free performance arts events organised by modern universities in 2022–23\*.



**204,687** people attended paid exhibitions at modern universities.

**390,545** people attended paid performance arts events at modern universities.

**5.7 million** people attended free public lectures at modern universities\*.



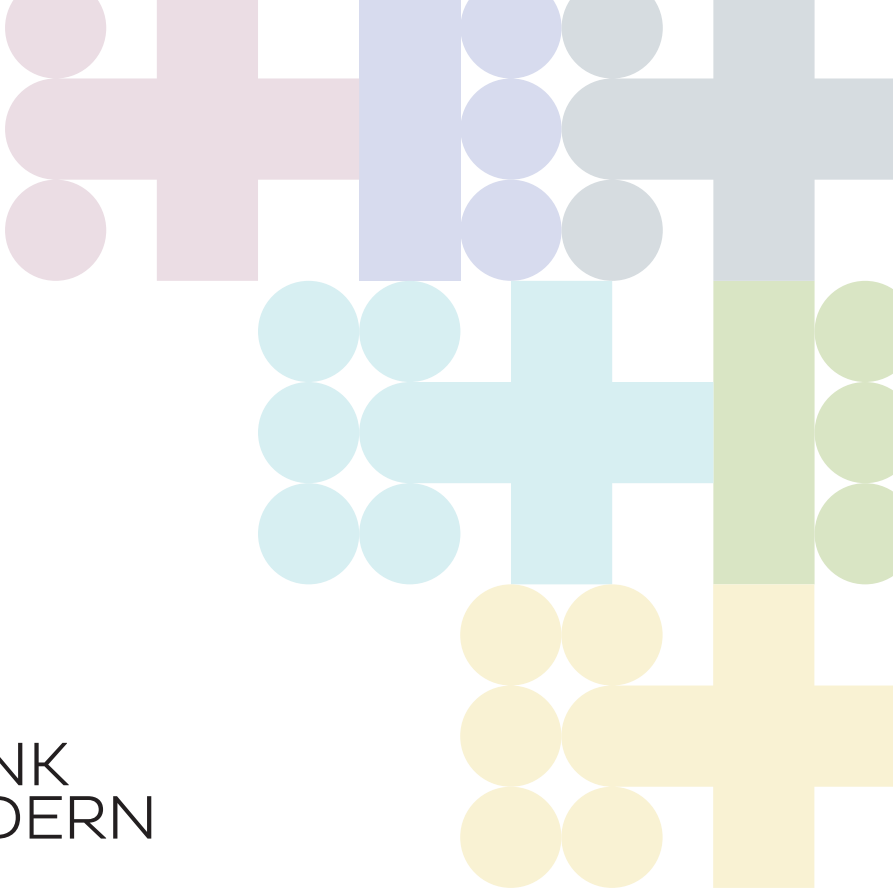
**1.9 million** people attended free public exhibitions at modern universities\*.



<sup>1</sup> Scottish Funding Council, Report on Widening Access 2022–23.

All data taken from **HESA records 2022–23** and refer to undergraduates unless otherwise stated.

\* One provider has been excluded due to atypical engagement resulting from high-profile media appearances.



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