

Invest in UK R&D

Universities and the creative
and digital industries
in the Midlands



Prospectus



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**Forge the future
of the creative and
digital industries
with universities
in the Midlands**

For decades, the Midlands has produced films, developed software, designed fashion, and created media that has been experienced and enjoyed the world over.

This diversity of creative and digital strengths, which includes gaming, publishing, media and film, software and computing, fashion, design, pottery, and much more, is underpinned by the region's strong universities.

Universities play a key role in developing attractive local and regional ecosystems that enable the creative and digital industries (CDIs) to grow and appeal to new businesses. They provide the creative and cultural experiences, facilities, and talent that make a place attractive to live, work, and study.

The Midlands' diverse set of skills, institutions, and businesses are enhancing and enabling the delivery of products and services across the economy, stretching beyond the boundaries of the CDIs. The ideas, innovations, and processes created by CDIs are spilling over into other industries and have become a force for cross-sector innovation.

Together, they offer a unique opportunity for international companies to invest in **research translation, innovation, co-location** and **integration** into a world-class talent pool across key creative and digital sectors. International businesses can also take advantage of the UK's extensive package of incentives and financial support for R&D investors.

Redefining how universities and industry work together.

Through pioneering co-location, joint research and technology demonstrators, Midlands universities are redefining how academia works in partnership with the creative and digital Sectors.

The Midlands' universities have exceptional research and industry portfolios. With companies like Codemasters, BT, Ubisoft, Fujitsu, and Oracle in the region, the Midlands hosts exemplary research partnerships; and the Midlands is home to Silicon Spa, a cluster of 40 gaming companies. Across the Midlands, there are over 14,000 creative businesses that support almost 60,000 jobs – be it in esports, or film production.

The universities of the Midlands provide the foundation for an internationally significant concentration of creative and digital research and translation.

Following analysis undertaken by the region, this prospectus highlights three clusters where Midlands universities are co-located with R&D and innovation-active companies in particular sub-sectors of the creative and digital industries:

- **Video games in Coventry, Warwick and Leamington Spa**
- **Media and film in Birmingham**
- **Immersive tech in Nottingham and the East Midlands**

Beyond these particular creative and digital industry university R&D clusters, the Midlands is home to a diverse range of pan-regional CDI sectors with strong links to the investment potential of university R&D and the talent eco-system they inspire. These sectors include:

- **Fashion and textiles**
- **Art and design**
- **Music and dance**



So, if you want to...

- **attract outstanding talent** from some of the world's top creative industry graduates and academics to work for and with your business;
- **invest in outstanding R&D-related capital and regeneration opportunities;**
- **co-locate your business on or near a university campus, creative hub or innovation park** to take advantage of the world-class creative and digital graduates and innovation ecosystem in the Midlands;
- **undertake joint research, product-creation, development and testing** using globally distinctive research facilities and dedicated innovation and knowledge transfer support;
- **invest in equity and patient capital opportunities** across a burgeoning spin-out and scale-up portfolio of companies emerging from our region's universities; and
- **benefit from the UK's package of generous financial support and tax incentives** for innovation, which has led to more than half of all UK-based R&D business expenditure being undertaken by foreign-owned companies...

...then come and design the future of creative and digital with leading UK universities across the Midlands.

This prospectus has been developed by the Midlands' Universities as Drivers of Trade and Investment programme, a collaboration between the universities and growth organisations from across our region, and is supported by the UK Government.

Our region

The Midlands is home to a thriving regional economy. More than 800,000 businesses are based in the region, supporting 4.46 million jobs and £240 billion GVA per year. It is the second-biggest regional economy in the UK behind London and is growing. The Midlands is home to 20 universities and hosts more than 350,000 students and 100,000 graduates a year. The population is well-educated and young. All this contributes to a highly skilled environment and a ready-and-accessible talent pipeline for potential creative and digital projects, located in a well-connected region with a high quality of life.



Universities and the creative and digital industries in the Midlands – major R&D assets

- WEST MIDLANDS INITIATIVES**
- Video games in the West Midlands
 - Creative quarter, Leamington Spa
 - BFI Creative Central Cluster
 - West Midlands Digital Skills Partnership
 - Sky Blue Studios
 - Digbeth Loc. Studios

- WOLVERHAMPTON**
- University of Wolverhampton
 - Screen School
 - Centre for Film, Media, Discourse, and Culture
 - Centre for Art, Design, Research, and Experimentation

- BIRMINGHAM**
- BBC The Tea Factory
 - University of Birmingham
 - The Barber Institute of Fine Arts
 - Birmingham Electronic Sound Theatre
 - Shakespeare Institute
 - University Music
 - B-film
 - Department of Film and Creative Writing
 - Birmingham City University
 - Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
 - Composition Cluster
 - Birmingham School of Media
 - Integra Lab
 - STEAMhouse
 - Curzon Studios
 - Institute of Creative Arts
 - Institute of Jewellery, Fashion and Textiles
 - Faculty of Arts, Design and Media
 - Aston University
 - Aston Digital Futures Institute

- DERBY**
- University of Derby
 - Bulkhead Interactive
 - Department of Film and Media
 - Derby Theatre
 - Data Science Research Centre
 - East Midlands Institute of Technology

- STOKE-ON-TRENT**
- Keele University
 - Staffordshire University

- Harper Adams University

- HEREFORD**

- WORCESTER**
- University of Worcester

- Digital and Materialistic Artistic Research Centre (DMARC)
- Derby Civic Lab
- Bank Mills Studio

- COVENTRY**
- Coventry University
 - The Centre for Dance Research
 - Delia Debyshire Building
 - D Gallery
 - School Of Art & Design
 - School of Media and Performing Arts
 - The Centre for Post-Digital Culture
 - Cultural Institute (from Autumn 2025)
 - The Simulation Centre
 - The National Transport Design Centre
 - School of Maths and Computing Games Lab
 - Disruptive Media Learning Lab

Sheffield
Leeds
North East
M1 MOTORWAY (NORTH)

EMA

BHX

CRANFIELD

- Cranfield University
- Centre for Design Engineering

M1 / M6 MOTORWAY (SOUTH)
Cranfield University
Northampton
London

- NOTTINGHAM**
- University of Nottingham
 - Castle Meadow Campus
 - Institute for Screen Industries Research
 - The Virtual & Immersive Production Studio
 - Mixed Reality Laboratory

- Nottingham Trent University
- School Of Art & Design Co Lab
- Artistic Research Centre
- Fashion and Textile Research Centre
- Design Research Centre
- Metronome
- Antenna
- Confetti
- Dryden Enterprise Centre
- Smart Wireless Innovation Facility
- Design and Digital Arts facility

- LINCOLN**
- University of Lincoln
 - Design Nation

- LOUGHBOROUGH**
- Loughborough University
 - School of Design and Creative Arts

- LEICESTER**
- De Montfort University
 - The Institute of Art and Design
 - School of Fashion & Textiles
 - Dance, Drama and Performance Studies Research Institute
 - University of Leicester
 - Institute for Digital Culture
 - Heritage Hub
 - East Midlands Oral History Archive
 - Museum Data Service
 - Research Centre for Museums and Galleries
 - Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics, and Modelling



Key

- University
- Media & Film
- Gaming
- Art & Design
- Fashion & Textiles
- Music & Dance
- Skills
- Immersive tech
- Multiple sectors

- University of Warwick
- School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures
- Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies
- Creative Futures
- Creative Futures Incubator
- Warwick Esports Centre

Research and innovation pedigree

At the heart of the Midlands' research and innovation landscape are its world-class universities. **Midlands Innovation** (MI) is a partnership of eight research-intensive universities in the Midlands: Aston University, University of Birmingham, Cranfield University, Keele University, University of Leicester, Loughborough University, University of Nottingham, and University of Warwick. The collective of universities has £4bn revenue, 15,000 academics, 50,000 postgraduates and are one of the most efficient producers of world class research in the UK with 40% more world class science than Oxford or Cambridge.

The partnership leverages the research expertise of its members to address the challenges facing society, and to support the development of new technologies, products, and services. Areas of focus include advanced manufacturing, digital innovation, energy and sustainability, and health and life sciences. The organisation collaborates with industry, government, and other partners to ensure that its research is relevant and useful.

Midlands Enterprise Universities (MEU) is a group of universities with a common mission to support economic growth and innovation in the region. These are Birmingham City University, Coventry University, De Montfort University, Staffordshire University, University of Derby, University of Lincoln, Nottingham Trent University and University of Wolverhampton.

MEU offers a wide range of programs and initiatives to support students, researchers, and entrepreneurs in the Midlands. MEU also supports collaborative research and development projects that focus on regional priorities, such as advanced manufacturing, digital innovation, and healthcare.

The Midlands' science and innovation pedigree extends beyond academia to encompass various industry sectors. Film, gaming and fashion industries have flourished in this region, benefiting from cutting-edge research and development activities. There is extensive digital support through programmes like the UK's only commercial 5G accelerator and the UK's only multi-city 5G test bed. Major industry players including **BT, Vodafone, and Ericsson** are present in the Midlands and experiencing the benefits first hand.

Create Central has a major role in collaborative leadership to bring together organisations in Digbeth, Birmingham's rapidly growing creative quarter.

The **BBC's** regional office is based in Birmingham alongside **Digbeth Loc**, a brand new film studio from Peaky Blinders creator and Birmingham native Steven Knight. In the East Midlands, creative and digital businesses are taking advantage of the talent supported by **Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies**. Part of Nottingham Trent University, Confetti is one of the UK's leading specialist education providers for the entertainment industries.

This prospectus sets out the clusters and strengths of the creative and digital sectors in the Midlands. It draws upon research by MetroDynamics and The Data City that assesses prominent CDI clusters within the region, based upon three key characteristics – the value created (e.g., by intangible design intellectual property), the prevalence of research and development, and the focus of inward investment.

The overall finding on the role of universities in CDI clusters is that they provide crucial enabling support to R&D active CDI business, who are the ultimate target of inward investment. As anchor institutions, universities drive forward the development of creative ecosystems within a place, which in turn allows for creative and digital businesses to thrive as part of emerging clusters. For the creative and digital sector, there is a different kind of relationship between universities compared to other sectors like manufacturing and life sciences – which often have more capital-intensive research requirements.

We incorporate the three core clusters identified by the Metrodynamics research: **video gaming** in Coventry, Warwick and Leamington Spa; **media and film** in Birmingham; and **immersive technology** in Nottingham and the East Midlands. We also highlight other pan-regional sectoral strengths for the Midlands where universities and their R&D and talent assets are supporting the growth of innovative companies in the creative and digital industries. These are fashion and textiles, art and design, and music and dance.



Loughborough University Industrial Design and Technology students Lina Duong, Leia Milburn, Nicole Ibarra and Gloria Ocran working on their RSA Student Award project.

World-leading creative and digital industry clusters in the Midlands



Video games in Coventry, Warwick and Leamington Spa

The games development industry is worth £1 billion to the UK economy and employs some of the UK's most creative minds. The Midlands is responsible for 25% of the UK's video game output and home to 'Silicon Spa', a sub sector cluster based in Leamington Spa. 37,000 people work in gaming software development in the West Midlands alone, across 230 companies. The Midlands boasts strengths across console, PC, mobile, and AR/VR gaming content. Major studios include Codemasters, Sega Hardlight, Pixel Toys, and Playground Games.

The West Midlands' games sector is a growth industry. At any one time, there are between 2,000 and 2,500 full time employees in 80+ studios in and around Leamington. The games industry in the West Midlands generated an estimated £224 million in GVA in 2015 – of which £188 million was from the 'core' of fifty firms clustered around Leamington, Southam and Warwick.

The Government also recently announced a new **Immersive and Creative Industries Launchpad** worth £7.5 million of funding in Coventry and Warwickshire. This Launchpad will champion technologies for the creative industries and immersive experiences, paving the way for groundbreaking innovations.

Innovate UK will deliver this Launchpad in collaboration with the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

There are exceptional research and development capabilities in the region which enable businesses to access, develop, test and adopt new technologies. Coventry University is central to this through the **Coventry Simulation Centre**, but there are also facilities for startups and micro studios, and dedicated business support functions through the Creative Futures Incubator at the University of Warwick. Coventry University hosts the Delia Derbyshire building, a major transformation of the university's facilities with cutting edge equipment and spaces.

Coventry is also home to the **Disruptive Media Learning Lab**, a cross-university experimental unit comprised of academics, learning technologists, subject librarians, educational developers and researchers.

Case study

Creative Futures at the University of Warwick hosts the gateway between the University and the regional creative digital sector (inc. Silicon Spa), providing incubation, support for business growth and innovation and linking industry with degree courses and creating student opportunities. Its impact is supported by the Warwick Esports Centre, a unique innovation in Europe, recognized as a national leader; recently achieving second place at the Esports Awards 2022 for Collegiate Programme of the Year, and bestowed the accolade of Best University for Gamers in the UK 2023 (USwitch).

Esports at Warwick

Gaming has continued to diversify over time, particularly with the rise of online content creation and streaming. This has led to the rise of competitive gaming, 'esports', which attracts a global audience and is now a billion-dollar industry. The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has recently partnered with Global Esports Federation in a 10-year agreement to cement the Midlands as an international hub of esports and gaming, with events already held in both Birmingham and Leicester. There is no doubt that Leamington Spa's reputation as a gaming hub of the UK has been a core part of attracting these opportunities into the region.

Over the next 2 years, **Warwick Esports Centre** will be expanding its portfolio of activity. Engaging young people in accelerating their digital skills, facilitating knowledge exchange and stimulating applied R&D will all feature in this enhanced facility. With the launch of Fusion in early 2024, innovators, community partners and businesses are warmly invited to collaborate with the Esports Centre in a range of different ways.

Warwick Esports Centre also pioneered the ESI:NextGen conference in March 2023, uniting leaders in esports, industry and education to debate the major issues facing the sector.

Impacts beyond gaming

The benefits of this gaming cluster are extending beyond the boundaries of the industry, reaching businesses that are not solely game developers or studios. Gaming technology is being used to generate solutions in other sectors. **CUE Interactive** are a prime example of this, using game engine technology to produce solutions for business, virtually re-creating engineering or manufacturing environments for testing technology or training purposes.

The Leamington Spa cluster has been central to these wider spillover effects. The location of **Jaguar Land Rover** at the nearby Gaydon hub has seen a fusion of skills between the automotive and gaming sector; engineers and technical specialists are switching between businesses and applying their skills in a new context. This has coined the term 'Silicon Spa' – a place that is both specialised in making cars and creating the games that race them.

Universities are important in supporting this growth, not only in providing facilities and space for the up-and-coming businesses but in delivering excellent education to produce the talent pipeline required by businesses.

In the West Midlands Plan for Growth, Create Central has been tasked with leading the development of the 'Creative Content Production and Gaming Cluster'. The gaming industry links to many other economic strengths in this area through university programmes like the Warwick Manufacturing Group.

- The Midlands is home to 25% of the UK's game output, with around 230 companies.
- The West Midlands has over 15% of the UK's game development workforce.
- Birmingham's 2022 Commonwealth Games were the first to see a sanctioned parallel Commonwealth Esports Championship.
- According to Ukie's (the trade association for UK Interactive Entertainment) annual UK Consumer Games Market Valuation, UK consumers spent a record £7 billion on game and game related activities in 2020, an increase of 29% on the previous year.
- Creative industries contribute £1.1 billion in GVA in Coventry and Warwickshire and are growing by around 6.5% annually.
- Silicon Spa now has over 2,500 employees across 83 studios (representing over 15% of the UK's total games developers).



Confetti's £5million 'Confetti X' complex brings together years of expertise in live events, content creation, streaming and competitive gaming.

Film and media in Birmingham

Film and media is a high growth industry in the UK. Production has boomed in recent years, with production studios being constructed across the country. Total expenditure within the industry has increased from £3.4 billion in 2017 to over £5.64 billion in 2021, driven largely by inward investment and the rise of high-quality productions made for streaming platforms.

Birmingham is a core hub for media and film in the Midlands and there is a strong opportunity to respond to this industry need by building on recent investments and growth. It will be home to the BBC's new regional office, **The Tea Factory**, and the new **Digbeth Loc** production studios which is the first major television and film production facility of scale to be developed in Birmingham and is already attracting new partnerships and projects. These investments are significant for the wider regeneration of the area and demonstrate the ambition of growing Birmingham's **Creative Quarter** around this core industry.

Case study

Helping to push this forward is Create Central, an industry body comprising creative thinkers and leaders involved in promoting West Midlands talent and opportunities. Their vision is to have a creative ecosystem that makes the region internationally renowned as 'the place to create' for any storyteller. Create Central has recently been selected by the British Film Institute (BFI) to deliver one of their seven skills clusters in the UK, in recognition of Birmingham's growing film and TV industry. This is aimed at addressing skills gaps, developing pathways into the industry and providing opportunities for local people. £1 million has been secured from the BFI to address skill deficiencies within the screen industry. The WMCA is contributing over £1.6 million to bolster this creative skills support. The region is actively promoted as an international hub for film and TV production by influential industry bodies such as Film Birmingham, Create England, and the BFI, with a dedicated West Midlands Production Fund.

Birmingham on Screen

Shows and movies that have filmed in Birmingham recently include *Peaky Blinders*, *Ready Player One*, *Kingsman: the Golden Circle*, and *American Assassin*. The Bond:Creative Content Hub, which opened earlier this year and houses production companies NorthOne, Nine Lives, and Optimum, is also the location for the live filming of *Late Night Lycett*.

Supporting this, **Film Birmingham**, Create England and BFI are leading the promotion of the region as an international destination for film and TV production, with funds set up to support businesses in this area, including the West Midlands Production Fund. All of this is underpinned by a strong regional vision, with the WMCA prioritising investment into creative industries as part of its Plan for Growth.

Film Birmingham is an initiative of Create Birmingham and serves as the film commission for the Greater Birmingham region. It acts as the primary liaison between film production and city agencies. Its primary mission is to create job opportunities, generate revenues, elevate regional visibility, and advocate economic development within the Greater Birmingham region. The office will assist productions with the permitting process, connect parties with local crew and resources, and facilitate communication between productions, the municipalities, and the community.



University of Wolverhampton Screen School offers industry-level experience and insight.

Focus on the universities

The city's universities are enrolling over 12,000 undergraduate students in creative courses. The city also boasts initiatives like the **STEAMhouse**, a Birmingham City University (BCU) innovation centre, purpose-built for creatives to maximise their artistic potential.

There is already an international reach. Birmingham City University has a formal collaboration with Mumbai-based Ronkel Media Education Institute, one of India's most renowned creative institutions, to allow students to collaborate on major projects in the Bollywood and UK film industries. For BCU students this represents an opportunity to work in a rapidly expanding industry in India with growing demand for a range of skilled artists, technicians and film business professionals.

The University of Birmingham's **Department of Film and Creative Writing** has employability as a key focus and enjoys excellent collaborative relationships with professional partners in film, television, theatre, literature and new media. Students' work can be found in theatres, in libraries, at festivals, in cinemas, on television screens, in newspapers, classrooms, online and in bookshops.

B-Film is an interdisciplinary, international research centre at the University of Birmingham. It consists of a multi-disciplinary cohort of film scholars and collaborates with national and international universities and institutions. B-Film is defined by its research expertise, major research projects and its

contribution to scholarship and film culture on a local and global scale.

Elsewhere, at the University of Warwick, the **Creative Future Incubator** provides business advice, mentoring and networking to support the growth of creative ideas. Previous recipients of support include Bluebell Films, an award-winning Midlands film production company, and 'The Point', a market research consultancy specialising in games and tech, working with industry leaders such as EA Sports, HBO Max and Activision. Warwick's Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies ranks number 1 in the UK for Media and Film Studies.

The University of Nottingham pushes for this form of creative innovation through its **Institute for Screen Industries Research (ISIR)**, the first and only UK university to provide an innovation generator for the film and TV industry. The institute serves as a valuable source of tailored upskilling and professional development programs, equipping both students and professionals with the necessary tools to excel in the contemporary industry landscape.

At Nottingham Trent University, the **Nottingham School of Art and Design, Confetti** and the new **Design and Digital Arts (DaDA)** building have extensive expertise and facilities to support all aspects of screen-based media research, development and knowledge exchange.

- Create Central has secured £1 million from the BFI to address skill deficiencies within the screen industry, alongside £1.6 million in financing from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) for creative skills support.
- Birmingham universities have enrolled over 12,000 undergraduate students in creative courses.
- The University of Nottingham's Institute for Screen Industries Research (ISIR) is the first and only UK university to provide an innovation generator for the film and TV industry.



Creative Futures Incubator, 1 Mill Street Leamington

Immersive technology in Nottingham and the East Midlands

The creation and implementation of immersive technology is still an early-stage development but one that benefits both CDI businesses and the wider economy. Immersive technology involves using new ways to create, display or interact with applications, content and experiences by merging the physical world with simulated reality.

Immersive technology is often associated with the use of a specific technology, like Augmented or Virtual Reality (AR and VR) but also includes 3-D, spatial sensing and interactive experiences.



Cutting-edge technology in action at the University of Wolverhampton's Screen School.

Immersive technology on the rise

The Data City estimates that the UK immersive technologies sector could be worth approximately £3.8bn by 2027, based on the compound annual growth rate of 16%. Across the country there are almost 2,000 immersive technology companies, with the majority in the VR and AR space, but strong showings also in 360 degrees, media, gaming, and edtech.

The opportunity immersive technologies present spans several creative spaces and sectors. It involves technological hardware at one end through to human experiences at the other, with use cases that fit within a range of sectors which catalyse innovation – design, modelling, prototyping, training, advanced storytelling and content creation, gamification of services, and retail diversification.

The knowledge and skills of CDI businesses in applying this technology for creative services and solutions are core to exploring its capabilities and potential within other industries, supporting them in scoping new R&D activity in areas like product design and development.

While this technology remains in its infancy in terms of adoption, its use cases are diversifying quickly and the Midlands is well positioned to capitalise. Due to the relationship between immersive technology and the gaming sector, there is a notable cluster of activity around Coventry and Warwick. However, Nottingham sits at the heart of this opportunity, possessing each component necessary and has the knowledge, equipment and the facilities to unlock the potential of immersive technology.

- A 2022 NTU study showed that Nottingham has the fastest-growing CDI sector in terms of GVA outside of London.
- NTU contributes 4,000 graduates from across 468 CDI undergraduate and postgraduate courses annually.
- There are over 35,000 students studying STEAM subjects across the two universities in Nottingham, and 14,000 students in STEAM at Derby.
- CDI employ 7% of the Nottingham population, there are 2,500 graduates from the University of Derby in CDI subjects.

Focus on the universities

To enable CDI businesses to explore the uses of immersive technology they require access to expensive software, hardware and production space. The universities in Nottingham have put considerable investment into dedicated facilities which provide each of these elements – the **Mixed Reality Lab, the Virtual Immersive Production Studio and the Confetti X complex**, purpose-built for esports production and other emerging technologies. The universities also provide support programmes for SMEs, artists and creatives who are seeking to explore immersive technology products and dedicated undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

The **Dryden Enterprise Centre (DEC)** is an example of how the universities in Nottingham are supporting businesses. Based on Nottingham Trent University's City Campus, the DEC offers CDI businesses, entrepreneurs and start-ups a collaborative space. The brand-new building allows businesses to co-locate, access university expertise and receive support from the Headstart and Investment Readiness programmes.

The University of Nottingham's new **Castle Meadow Campus** will provide a co-location opportunity for digital sector SMEs in Nottingham. The **Digital Nottingham** initiative will be based out of the campus, as will parts of the Business School.

Elsewhere in the East Midlands, the University of Leicester operates a **Creatives in Residence scheme**, enabling external partners from the culture sector to be located on campus, as a catalyst and disrupter for new thinking, methods and tools – demonstrating the art of the possible.

The **University of Derby Enterprise Centre** is a key location for immersive technology hosting the **East Midlands Institute of Technology**, with labs bringing together expertise in AR/VR and Mixed Reality, the University's Data Science Research Centre with expertise in visualisation 3D sound together with working space for businesses such as Bloc Digital, one of the region's leading immersive technology companies.

Nottingham the city

Nottingham is home to a variety of businesses utilising immersive technologies. These range between designing immersive training and simulation experiences, creating interactive art exhibits, producing the related animation and content creation for immersive experiences, providing services to enable businesses to access the virtual metaverse or using the technology to innovate existing services like architecture and product design.

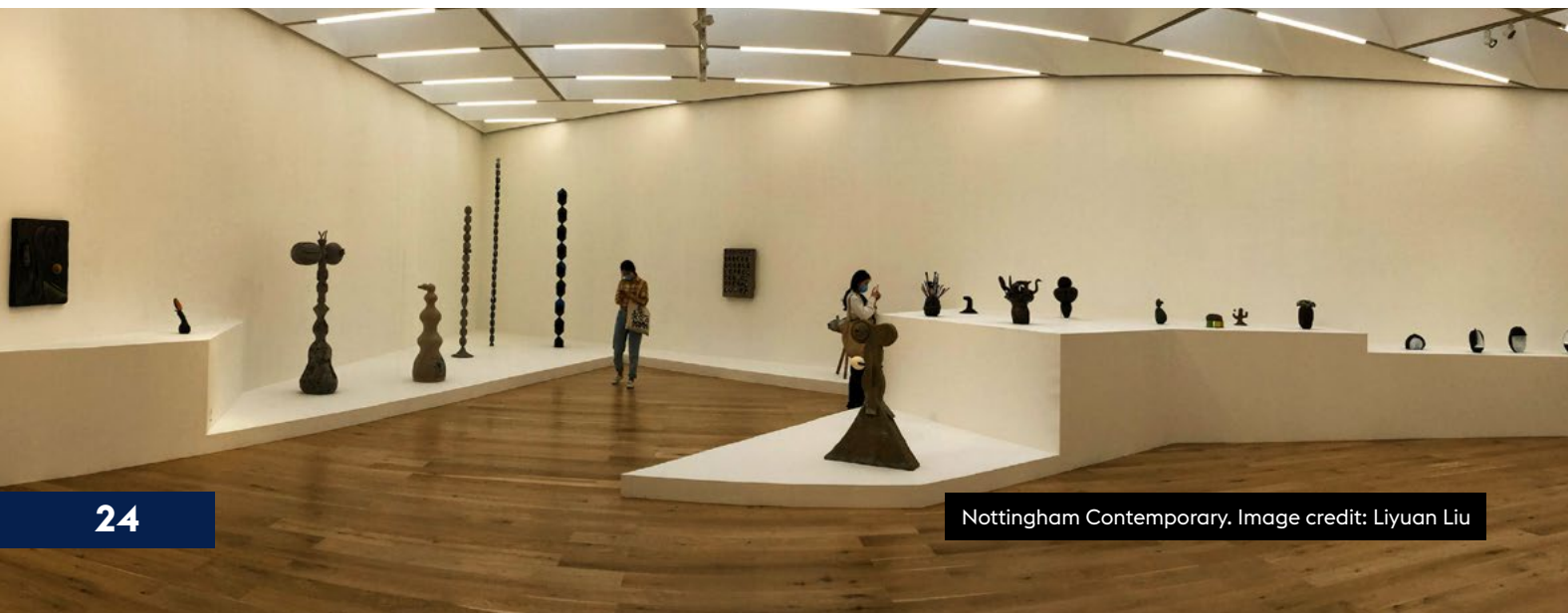
The development of Nottingham's CDI ecosystem over time has supported the growth of this tech business base where CDI employment has grown faster than most major cities including London. It has developed an ecosystem that is home to a diverse set of CDI businesses specialising in animation, production and creative services. This has not only developed a nascent cluster of smaller businesses but has also attracted larger businesses like industry heavyweight, Improbable. Immersive technology goes beyond the traditional creative, requiring expertise from technological hardware to human experience. It could be considered a sector in and of itself, but we have taken it to be an enabler of wider economic growth as well.

Nottingham Trent University, the University of Nottingham, and local colleges are collaborating on the delivery of a £500,000 business and technology engagement support programme, funding by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport. This is part of ongoing work of the Create Growth Scheme, and demonstrates the city's importance to national as well as regional developments.

Previous programmes have been highly successful, with more than 150 companies engaged over the course of just one scheme, leading to 38 new experiences, products, and services being created.

The CDI sector in Nottingham employs 7% of the workforce and grew by 107% between 2015 and 2022 because of a growth both in existing businesses and new businesses. There are 65,000 tech professionals in the West Midlands as well, and that is set to double in the next four years, thanks in part to the region having the 2nd largest cohort of computer science students in the UK. Over 30% of all telecoms and 25% of all UK software developers are in the West Midlands.

As part of the Government's Create Growth Programme, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are one of six areas sharing £10.9 million of funding to support the creative industries and generate further growth for the local economy.



Nottingham Contemporary. Image credit: Liyuan Liu



Additional sectors in the creative and digital industries

Fashion and textiles

The UK fashion industry contributed £32.3 billion to the UK's GDP last year and employed almost 900,000 people, making it almost as big as the financial sector. Within this the Midlands is a significant player, with as many fashion and textiles firms as London. The fashion and textiles sector in Leicester and Leicestershire alone is valued at £1.2 billion and supports 25,200 jobs. It has experienced robust growth, creating 2,600 jobs since 2010 and outperforming the UK sector average in terms of productivity by approximately 20%.

There are 1,500 textile firms in Leicester and Leicestershire, making it the second-highest concentration of textile companies in the country. Leveraging its strategic location and historical textile background, Leicester has become a pivotal centre for ultra-fast fashion, facilitating rapid production cycles that allow companies like Asos, Boohoo, and Missguided to replicate trending styles from social media within a fortnight. The universities in the Midlands support the growth of this industry in diverse ways.

Nottingham Trent University's **Fashion and Textile Research Centre** is globally recognised. 83% of its research was assessed to be world-leading or internationally excellent in the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

De Montfort's **Institute of Art and Design** consists of a wide variety of analytical clusters, such as the **Textile, Engineering and Materials Research Group (TEAM)**. Established in the early 1990s, TEAM currently focuses on research to develop innovative eco-friendly textile processes and sustainable textile materials.

Regional strength in textiles goes beyond fashion and clothing. The Midlands has a collective of 60 enterprises in the technical textiles and materials subsector that supports the aerospace and automotive industries. The subsector houses more than 17% of the nation's materials composites companies, generating approximately £150 million in turnover and providing employment for 1,500 individuals. Such figures demonstrate the importance and potential of the region within the fashion and textiles industry.

- The Midlands, combining East and West regions, hosts as many fashion and textiles firms as London, highlighting its significance in the industry.
- Leicester and Leicestershire have a concentration of 1,500 fashion and textiles firms, making it the second-largest cluster of textile companies in the UK after Manchester.
- The Midlands has a substantial presence in the subsector of technical textiles and materials for aerospace and automotive industries, housing over 17% of the nation's materials composites companies and generating £150 million in turnover, employing 1,500 individuals.

Case study

Research by Loughborough University Environmental Ergonomics Research Centre in partnership with adidas developed the first-ever sweat body maps of males, females, and children to inform the company's sector-leading clima® product range. These body maps are now widely used as a benchmark for thermal comfort, informing product innovation in technical textiles in the global sports industry. The knowledge is integrated into the world's first virtual Human Thermal Model which enables organisations worldwide to optimise product design for multiple populations across a range of industry sectors.



Birmingham City University

Art and design

The Midlands has a thriving art and design sector, covering subsectors such as web, product, marketing, and advertising. Each year, over 9,000 students study art and design at a Midlands university. In the West Midlands alone, there has been a 240% growth in design jobs from 2010 to 2015, making art and design a key regional strength.

DCA Design, one of the world's leading product design and development consultancies, is located in Warwick. The company specialises in industrial, engineering, electronics, software, medical, scientific, and commercial design, and designing for sustainability. The company has won numerous awards and currently employs over 130 people.

Design Nation, based at the University of Lincoln, is another example of how the Midlands is a leading design destination. The organisation is a leading portfolio for designer-makers in the UK. While it is based in the Midlands, Design Nation works across the UK with partners, champions, and funders to strengthen business and creative development opportunities. The portfolio covers everything from 3D product to lighting.

Other universities with strengths in the art and design sector include Nottingham Trent University in Nottingham, with its **Design Research Centre** and **Artistic Research Centre** within the School of Art and Design. The University has collaborated with the Victoria and Albert Museum, Nottingham Contemporary, and World Event Young Artists. Its research covers a broad range of applications including medical and technical textiles.

Nearly 6,000 of Birmingham City University's 25,000 students are studying creative courses, making the university one of the UK's leading providers of creative talent. Its facilities include the internationally renowned **Institute of Creative Arts and Faculty of Arts, Design, and Media**. It has impressive and established links to industry actors like Saatchi and Saatchi.

At the University of Derby, there is the **Digital and Material Artistic Research Centre (DMARC)**, and incubation support for the flourishing Midlands art and design sector. Banks Mill is an example of this, with the Banks Mill Studios supporting creative businesses to grow. The university also works with the city's cultural partner on opportunities like hosting the International Photography Festival FORMAT.

Between 2018 - 2022, Arts Council England provided almost £25 million of funding to 24 organisations for the visual arts in the Midlands.

- 240% increase in design jobs in the West Midlands from 2010 to 2015.
- 7 universities with art and/or design specific faculties and research centres.
- Over 9,000 art and design students across the Midlands.



Loughborough University's School of Design and Creative Arts Degree Show, 2023.

Music and dance

The Midlands is home to an international dance cluster, focused on the Birmingham Royal Ballet and the International Dance Festival. Birmingham has an exemplary professional dance and music sector to draw upon. Organisations like **Dance Hub Birmingham** provide support for the wider region's professional dance sector. Dance Hub includes a new studio facility, an investment programme, and collaborations with organisations and individuals in the region.

Coventry represents another hotspot of dance activity in the Midlands, with the **Centre for Dance Research** and **Coventry University's School of Media and Performing Arts**. The innovative research conducted here includes areas like health and wellbeing, computing and AI, and intellectual property, all within the world of dance.

The **West Midlands Music Board** is one example of industry support in the Midlands for the music sector, created with local stakeholders to fuel growth and address challenges in the sector. Music tourism supports over 4,000 jobs and the West Midlands contributes a significant portion to the UK's £5 billion music industry. Its mission is to champion the region's musical ecosystem and protect and promote music industry development from the grassroots level, working with local authorities, institutions, and the national government to develop regional data and policies.

The universities in the Midlands contribute to the development of the music industry through groundbreaking research, facilities, and support for the sector. Birmingham's **BEAST – Birmingham Electroacoustic Sound Theatre** – and the **Conservatoire Composition Cluster** are leading the way in innovation for the industry, including in acousmatic music and live 'diffusion'. Working in tandem with the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, the Composition Cluster remains on the cutting edge of musical research like the interaction of digital technologies with human performers and using advanced computer-based research for scoring.

- 940,000 music tourists, £433 million spend, and 4,180 jobs from music tourism in the West Midlands in 2022.
- 510,000 music tourists, £321 million spend, and 3,150 jobs from music tourism in the East Midlands in 2022.
- Birmingham Royal Ballet employs almost 200 people across dancers, musicians, costumers and stage technicians.





Invest in a partnership with Midlands universities



Research translation

Universities in the Midlands have an exceptional track-record of working with the world's largest companies, helping translate fundamental research into industry-leading innovations.

Our universities have dedicated teams and institutes that provide a concierge service to companies seeking to access our expertise, technology-platforms and equipment you won't find anywhere else in the world.

We will work with your R&D divisions to support everything from product design, development, testing, joint application for UK Government funding and direct contract research.

The University of Warwick and the University of Nottingham are both in the **Top 5 recipients of the £885m of Innovate UK Funding allocated across the UK in the last 10 years.**

Innovation

Midlands universities have been supporting the innovation eco-system of their local and regional economies for decades. If your business is looking to access innovation support chains, our dedicated support programmes, funding and networks can help you do this. Through co-funded Government schemes like Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), which is one of the most successful, long-running innovation schemes anywhere in the world, we help business of all sizes to innovate using the knowledge and expertise of UK universities.

Case study

Create Central's Innovate:Create seeks to uncover bold ideas to innovate across digital technology and creative content. Challenge briefs are open to limited companies based in the West Midlands to apply for funding and support to produce innovative pilot projects in collaboration with a range of industry partners.

For the first challenge, Innovate:Create offered the opportunity to win a support package and one of two £50k grants to produce innovative projects in collaboration with the Birmingham 2022 Festival as part of the Commonwealth Games.

The challenge set by National Express was to develop a project to encourage the sustainable use of public transport and get people back on the bus as a greener way to get around.

Further challenges with a variety of organisations covering sectors including sport, technology and healthcare and will focus on new challenges and opportunities for innovation by creative companies in the region.

Case study

Confetti is Nottingham's creative hub dedicated to digital media, film and TV, music and live events. It offers students access to some of the best facilities in Europe at four city centre sites: Confetti HQ, Metronome, Space2 and Confetti X, alongside the new DaDA building.

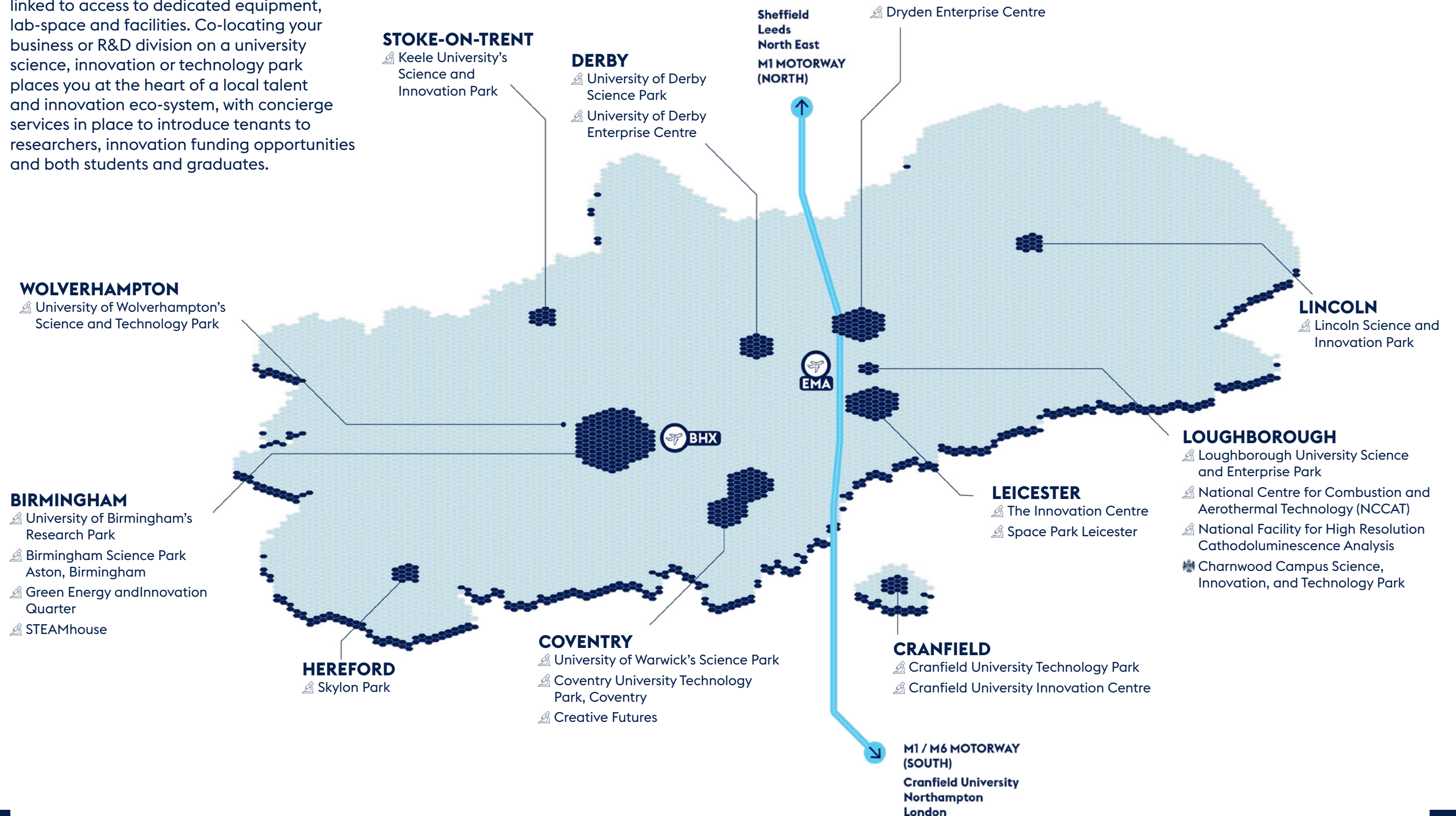
Its digital media hub, Confetti HQ, gives creatives access to industry-standard studios, labs and classrooms, a Learning Resource Centre, a contemporary café and a rooftop terrace. Confetti's campus also houses Metronome, a cross-media venue with world-class recording studios and rehearsal spaces. Designed by renowned audio architects White Mark Ltd and dubbed an educational centre of 'European Significance', it has received admiration from VIP industry guests, including Jools Holland OBE.

Confetti also houses a hub for film & TV, Space2. Containing industry-leading teaching spaces, it provides students access to the same equipment and software they will use once they start their creative career. The newest addition to Confetti's campus is Confetti X, offering students access to the best facilities and technology for esports production and emerging technologies. This high-class provision of creative services has gained Confetti an East Midlands Bricks Award, being named the Sustainable Development of the Year, as well as nominations by RIBA and RICS East Midlands Awards. Confetti's growth has been supported with investment from its parent company, Nottingham Trent University, and their success has led to the establishment of a new purpose-designed industry centre, Confetti London, in Whitechapel.

Co-location

There are multiple university-linked science, innovation and technology parks across the Midlands, which are home to hundreds of businesses and their employees. Each location offers first-class office space often linked to access to dedicated equipment, lab-space and facilities. Co-locating your business or R&D division on a university science, innovation or technology park places you at the heart of a local talent and innovation eco-system, with concierge services in place to introduce tenants to researchers, innovation funding opportunities and both students and graduates.

In addition to this, as highlighted in this prospectus, there are several research institutes, incubators, and aggregators for the creative and digital sectors – all seeking to support research, investment and business growth in the region.



Regeneration and integration

Universities across the Midlands work in partnership with the UK and Local Government to help drive economic growth through innovation and inward investment. Through a range of public-private partnerships, universities are involved in over 20 major economic development opportunities identified by the Midlands Investment Portfolio, worth over £10bn in gross development value. In the West Midlands, universities work with the Combined Authority and Growth Company on a range of projects as a part of one of only three UK Innovation Accelerators.

Businesses can take advantage of the creative and digital interconnections, networks and eco-system in the Midlands. The region has strong research and development capability, including CUE Interactive, and Gamer Camp, alongside more tailored research assets at the universities like the Disruptive Media Learning Lab at Coventry University, the Coventry Simulation Centre and the Warwick Manufacturing Group, which works across industry to create and commercialise new manufacturing and product innovation. The universities also work extensively with each other, with an estimated 2500 academics currently working on creative and digital-related research.

Our commitment is that if our universities can't help, we will introduce you to someone who can.

Talent

Home to 20 universities, the Midlands hosts over 350,000 students and 100,000 graduates a year.

Our universities will work in partnership with local economic growth organisations to develop tailored skills and training package – from degree apprenticeships, to dedicated training and skills programme, to industry-funded PhDs – to support the growth of future industries and your business. The Midlands provides opportunities for companies to develop their staff's skills as well as access graduate talent, through programmes like Birmingham's Digital Future or more formal education.

Case study

The Heritage Hub in Leicester will facilitate cross-disciplinary and cross-sector collaborations with a focus on the University's world-leading strengths in tangible and intangible heritage (physical and virtual) and will coordinate the design and delivery of creative projects and spaces for impactful public engagement, research, learning and enterprise. A key strategic aim is to address inequalities through creative collaborations.

Case study

Creative Futures is a gateway between the University of Warwick and the region's creative industries. The centre delivers impact through various programmes and initiatives including a creative industries network, a start-up incubator, digital skills programmes and a state-of-the-art Esports Centre on campus. Since its inception, the centre has provided nearly £1.5 million in sales, grants and commissions, creating 35 jobs, supporting 30 businesses, and taking on 85 new clients.



University of Nottingham: Graduating students.



Brilliant ideas | Successful businesses | Global impact

Midlands Mindforge - £250m patient capital fund combining the spinout portfolios of eight leading UK universities

Midlands Mindforge is an ambitious, patient capital investment company aiming to transform ground-breaking science and technology into successful businesses with the potential to positively impact our world and accelerate the commercialisation of research from our partner universities - Aston, Birmingham, Cranfield, Keele, Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham, and Warwick.

By providing capital and company-building skills to university spinouts and early-stage IP rich businesses in the Midlands, we will build the foundations of a new technology eco-system in the region and create companies that can drive economic growth whilst delivering real-world impact.

Midlands Mindforge is an independent company that aims to raise up to £250m from strategic corporate partners, institutional investors and qualifying individuals.

Mindforge will “invest with impact” to found and scale transformational science backed companies in sectors such as clean technologies, AI and computational science, life sciences and health tech, to create highly skilled jobs and support the UK’s ambition to become a science and technology superpower.

enquiries@midlandsmindforge.com

Directory of key creative and digital R&D assets across the Midlands

Gaming

An investment opportunity: Video Games in the West Midlands

Reach a global audience across the full spectrum of games technologies, from mobile, PC and console, to fast-developing sectors such as VR/AR and esports.

Coventry and Warwickshire, and more specifically Royal Leamington Spa, provides a perfect opportunity to exploit the growing global demand for video game content, worth an estimated £128 billion in 2021. Companies can work collaboratively with locally based global industry players and world-leading researchers to design and develop the next generation of high quality games for console and PC, mobile and AR/VR (augmented reality/virtual reality).

Antenna

First opened by Lord Mandelson in 2009, Antenna's mission is to support Nottingham's thriving creative and entertainment industries. From start-ups to international award-winning videogame developers, all kinds of creative businesses have chosen to make Antenna their home.

Situated in the heart of Nottingham's Creative Quarter, Antenna provides high-quality creative studios and a co-working space and restaurant, with excellent high-speed broadband, reception services, in-house hospitality and expert technical support. This custom-built area for creatives, hosting over 300 enterprises, was a 'Workspace of the Year' finalist in the Hustle 2022 awards.

But it is more than just a building. Antenna is an ecosystem of ideas, opportunities, and practical help and support – it's about community.

Research Assets

University based

Bulkhead Interactive

- Location: Laurie House Colyear St, Derby, Derby, DE1 1LA, United Kingdom
- Key features: BULKHEAD is a computer games centre for creativity and innovation. Their highly accessible and ever evolving workspace is a hospitable and welcoming environment for all.
- Opportunity: Immerse yourself in the world of creativity and innovation at the forefront of computer game development and design.
- Contact: <https://www.bulkhead.com/>

The Centre for Post-Digital Culture (CPC)

- Location: Creative Enterprise (ICE) building, Coventry University Technology Park, Parkside, Puma Way, Coventry, CV1 2TT
- Key features: The centre brings together post-digital media theorists, practitioners, activists and artists from more than 15 countries. By drawing on transdisciplinary ideas associated with open, disruptive and immersive media, feminism, the posthuman, and the politics of care, it endeavours to help society and its cultural institutions respond to the challenges faced in relation to the digital.
- Opportunity: Join the global conversation on post-digital culture with participation from diverse and world-leading members.
- Contact: cpc.icc@coventry.ac.uk

Creative Futures

- Location: Warwick Innovation District, University of Warwick, Junction Building, 6 University Rd, Coventry, CV4 7EQ
- Key features: Creative Futures is the gateway between the University of Warwick and the region's creative cluster. They deliver impact through various programmes and initiatives including a creative industries network, a start-up incubator, digital skills programmes and a state-of-the-art Esports Centre on campus.
- Opportunity: Locate, co-work, or become a member to access business support, mentoring, and networking.
- Contact: creativeanddigital@warwick.ac.uk

Disruptive Media Learning Lab

- Location: Coventry University
- Key features: A semi-autonomous cross-University experimental unit whose remit is specifically to drive innovation of teaching, learning and practice forward (in the 'Google model': to break and remake existing ways of doing higher education) so that the University can re-model its own practices.
- Opportunity: Support the development of class-leading thinking.
- Contact: dml@coventry.ac.uk

Metronome

- Location: Marco Island, Huntingdon St, Nottingham NG1 1AP
- Key features: Metronome is a national centre for music, moving imagery, video games, live music performances and spoken word based in Nottingham City Centre. Anchored around a 400-capacity venue, Metronome delivers an ambitious, diverse and contemporary cross-media programme.
- Opportunity: Discover the dynamic cross-media scene at Metronome and engage in a diverse and contemporary centre.

• Contact: hello@metronome.uk.com

Warwick Esports Centre

- Location: Esports Centre, Junction Building, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL
- Key features: 24 computers with lightning fast connectivity, open to everyone seven days a week. The facility is located right in the middle of campus and offers a flexible set of services in partnership with the University's eco-system of players, educators and researchers.
- Access to interdisciplinary collaboration opportunities at a top university.
- Contact: uowesports@gmail.com

The National Transport Design Centre

- Location: Swift Road Off, Puma Way, Coventry CV1 2TT
- Key features: The National Transport Design Centre (NTDC) is a state-of-the-art facility operating within the Centre for Future Transport and Cities. The NTDC operates in a cross-disciplinary manner, bringing together designers, human factors specialists, psychologists and technologists to undertake research into a variety of fields.
- Opportunity: Secure funding, undertake training, collaborate on applied research, and get access to highly skilled staff and students.

• Contact: paul.herriotts@coventry.ac.uk



Exterior view from the south-east of Nottingham Trent University's new Design and Digital Arts Building, Nottingham School of Art and Design. Image courtesy of HawkinsBrown.

Film and media

The Dance, Drama and Performance Studies Research Institute (DDPS)

The institute consists of dynamic researchers from across the Drama, Dance and Performing Arts teams, brought together by their scholarly, practice-based and impact-focused investigations across live art, contemporary performance and theatre, interdisciplinary performance, applied performance and theatre history. These investigations are further fuelled by international collaboration and interaction, social engagement, industry connections and development of our next generation of researchers.

Alongside production of monographs, edited collections, articles, chapters and book series, members have recently produced performances and events at and in partnership with the Royal Albert Hall, ICA, Picturehouse Central, BBC Radio, Nottingham Playhouse, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Camden People's Theatre.

A recent example of their academic output is their report titled 'Locked Down and Locked Out: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mothers working in the UK television industry'. The research was led by the institute, in collaboration with sector organisations SMTJ and Telly Mums Network, and with the support of BECTU, which represents 40,000 creative industry workers in the UK.

Research Assets

University based

B-Film

- Location: B-Film: The Birmingham Centre for Film Studies, College of Arts and Law, The University of Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK
- Key features: The Birmingham Centre for Film Studies is an interdisciplinary and international research centre at the University of Birmingham that is wholly inclusive of all scholars working in film-related areas of research.
- Opportunity: Discover the world of film studies, collaborating with scholars from all corners of the globe and engaging in the diverse and inclusive field of film-related research.
- Contact: universitymusiclub@contacts.bham.ac.uk

BFI Skills Cluster at Create Central

- Location: Across the West Midlands
- Key features: £1 million of funding to support localised skills development and training, with an aim to create new opportunities for people from underrepresented backgrounds to find careers in the sector and address skills shortages in the sector.
- Opportunity: Access highly trained professionals across the film and TV sector.
- Contact: hello@createcentraluk.com

Birmingham School of Media

- Location: Birmingham City University, University House, 15 Bartholomew Row, Birmingham, B5 5JU
- Key features: Home to a range of fantastic, industry-standard facilities including Huffpost Centre for Journalism and Curzon Street Studios housing the Bolt Jnr High-Speed Cinebot, a revolutionary camera rig using cutting-edge technology enabling filming of high-speed action sequences at super-high speeds using state-of-the-art robots and 4K HD digital movie cameras. Birmingham School of Media produces critical media makers who can contribute to the industry from day one. Its staff are sector experts from diverse backgrounds, perfectly placed to guide and shape the future career of students and support industry R&D.
- Opportunity: Collaborate with world-class experts who bridge academia and industry.
- Contact: +44 (0)121 331 5719



NTU Centre for Broadcasting and Journalism

- Location: Centre for Broadcasting & Journalism, Nottingham Trent University, City Campus, Nottingham, NG1 4BU
- Key features: One of the largest news rooms in the country, a fully functioning TV studio, with production facilities and three radio studios all developed to industry standards.
- Opportunity: Access student and graduate talent and academic expertise.
- Contact: cbj@ntu.ac.uk

Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies

- Location: School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures, Faculty of Arts Building, University of Warwick, University Road, Coventry, CV4 7AL
- Key features: Researchers within the Centre continue to extend and define the field of cultural policy and cultural research in areas such as evaluation and impact studies, creative industries policy, heritage projects, implicit cultural policy, memory, media and creativity.
- Opportunity: Access the Centre's research and teaching across the field of cultural policy and research.
- Contact: scapvcenquiries@warwick.ac.uk

Centre of Film, Media, Discourse, and Culture

- Location: Screen School, University of Wolverhampton
- Key features: Research in CFMDC embraces both theoretical and practice-based elements of film, media, discourse and culture. Current topics of interest include early US television, ranging from examination of anthology hosts through to actors such as Adam West and directors such as Wes Anderson, Kathryn Bigelow and Andrea Arnold. The Centre's research in these areas has resulted in numerous publications, the organisation of a number of international conferences and the instigation of impact-driven collaborative projects.
- Opportunity: Foster novel forms of collaboration and access research that addresses societal challenges.
- Contact: f.e.pheasant-kelly@wlv.ac.uk

Curzon Street Studios

- Location: Curzon Street Studios, Birmingham City University, Curzon Street, Birmingham, B4 7XG
- Key features: Post production system that allows content to be managed and distributed digitally. Four studios including an integrated TV set, a fixed drama set and double cyclorama curtain, and one of the largest fixed green screens in the UK.
- Opportunity: Hire studio space for TV, film, and corporate productions.
- Contact: arron.sheekey@bcu.ac.uk

East Midlands Oral History Archive

- Location: 3 Salisbury Rd, Leicester LE1 7QR
- Key features: A joint project to conserve and develop oral history resources in the East Midlands. Includes the collections of the former Leicester Oral History Archive, the Mantle archive from North West Leicestershire, the Community History archive of Leicester City Libraries, the Market Harborough Museum collection, and the sound archive of BBC Radio Leicester, along with smaller collections donated by local organisations or individuals.
- Opportunity: Access extensive oral history recordings and receive advice, training, and support around oral history.
- Contact: emoha@le.ac.uk

Department of Film and Creative Writing

- Location: Department of Film and Creative Writing, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT
- Key features: Bringing together two dynamic and successful disciplines, committed to creative and critical practice in teaching and research. Staff includes internationally renowned scholars and award-winning writers. Employability is a key focus within the department and it enjoys excellent collaborative relationships with professional partners in film, television, theatre, literature and new media.
- Opportunity: Access highly trained talent and research in the field.
- Contact: j.j.saunders@bham.ac.uk

Institute for Digital Culture

- Location: The University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH, United Kingdom
- Key features: The institute explores digital culture through a commitment to a values-driven approach to supporting, and working with the cultural sector.
- Opportunity: Engage with the evolving landscape of digital culture with industry-leading academics.
- Contact: rdp5@leicester.ac.uk

Institute for Screen Industries Research (ISIR)

- Location: Institute for Screen Industries Research, The University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD
- Key features: ISIR offers resources for talent development and audience testing located. It provides upskilling and professional development programmes of bespoke professional courses designed for both students and professionals.
- Opportunity: Partner with the Institute to test ideas and access experts across different aspects of film.
- Contact: gianluca.sergi@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Media and Performing Arts

- Location: Coventry University, Ellen Terry Building Jordan Well, Coventry, CV1 5RW
- Key features: Based in the Ellen Terry Building, a converted 1930s art deco cinema, the school work across all the arts. This, combined with the school's rich offer of graduate support, provides students with the best chance of success in their chosen profession.
- Opportunity: Experience a world of creative possibilities with a rich diversity of arts disciplines and unwavering graduate support.
- Contact: ad3707@coventry.ac.uk

The Shakespeare Institute

- Location: Online and Stratford-upon-Avon
- Key features: Shakespeare Institute students benefit from its exciting collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company, which offers students a truly unique learning experience, blending academia and creativity in an exciting new way to foster innovative methods of theatre and learning. Whether you're interested in Shakespeare and medicine, Asia or religion; textual editing; the wider corpus of Renaissance drama; or early modern literature in history, the Shakespeare Institute is the place for you.
- Opportunity: Take part in distance learning programmes or in person events.
- Contact: m.dobson@bham.ac.uk

University of Derby Department of Film and Media

- Location: The University of Derby, Markeaton Street, Derby, DE22 3AW
- Renowned skills, education and research in film and media production, focussing on taking creative students through to high quality graduate jobs. The department is also the home of FORMAT, the international Film Festival at Derby.
- Opportunity: Graduate talent in film and media production and opportunities for business to work on applied research and knowledge exchange.
- Contact: Businessgateway@derby.ac.uk

Immersive technology

STEAMhouse is an innovation centre, powered by Birmingham City University (BCU). Their mission is to help support businesses, inspire experimentation, deliver growth, and enable members to grow their innovation capacity. The environment pushes for members to engage in meaningful conversations, exchange ideas, and potentially find collaborators or mentors who can elevate their practice.

Besides the facilities and networking opportunities provided in the main body of the STEAMhouse, the STEAMhouse Studio, a brand-new space converted from the former Victorian Belmont Works factory, provides an affordable, purpose-built area in which creatives can maximise their artistic potential.

BCU has invested nearly £5 million in the new STEAMhouse building, with 100,000 sq feet, areas of co-working spaces, creative spaces and a new makerspace (the Production Space) equipped with 3D printers, laser cutting machinery, virtual reality technology and printing studios.

Research Assets

University based

Aston Digital Futures Institute (ADFI)

- Location: Aston St, Birmingham, B4 7ET
- Key features: ADFI is a multi-disciplinary research institute, established to provide thought leadership on one of the defining trends for the 2020s – the evolution of developed economies towards what is commonly referred to as 'Industry 4.0' and beyond.
- Opportunity: Collaborate with a visionary research institute, exploring the future of digital technology and its economic potential.
- Contact: DigitalFutures@aston.ac.uk

Co Lab

- Location: Nottingham School of Art and Design, Nottingham Trent University, 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ
- Key features: Opportunity to expand learning and to experience situations akin to real-life, work-like experiences. Provides students with skills ready to take to industry: teamwork, collaborative practice, communication, leadership, and more. Work with other students and universities on various projects set by either charities or industry partners.
- Opportunity: Access talent prepared with skills beyond the conventional ready to work in industry.
- Contact: enquiries@ntu.ac.uk

Data Science Research Centre

- Location: The University of Derby, Markeaton Street, Derby, DE22 3AW
- Key Features: Applied research in visualisation and mixed reality techniques using AI and data Science to augment and improve standard approaches. Advanced facilities for working with business and educating students across key areas of immersive technology.
- Opportunity: Collaborate with researchers and innovators in AI and data science to improve and extend immersive technology capabilities.
- Contact: businessgateway@derby.ac.uk

Delia Derbyshire Building

- Location: Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB
- Key features: Home to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, it hosts the production studio, immersive studio, and hyper-lab of Coventry University, as well as the D Gallery. It offers creative, teaching, and learning spaces and sector leading facilities for students.
- Opportunity: Access world leading talent highly trained across the creative and digital sectors.
- Contact: ei@coventry.ac.uk

East Midlands Institute of Technology

- Location: Across the East Midlands
- Key features: Works with a range of employers to ensure a future-fit workforce for digital and low-carbon economies. Employers shaping the curriculum include Alstom, Bloc Digital, Fujitsu, Rolls Royce, Toyota, Uniper and ESO. Provides learners access for real-world experiences, live briefs, placement opportunities, and student mentorship.
- Opportunity: Feed into the curriculum to shape the workforce for your needs, and upskill your talent.
- Contact: admin@emiot.ac.uk

The Simulation Centre

- Location: Cheetah Rd, Coventry CV1 2TL
- Key features: The Simulation Centre is the most advanced interactive people training and development centre in the UK. Its bespoke programmes, combined with cutting-edge technology which is unique in the UK, help companies and organisations across a range of sectors to train and develop their staff to new levels.
- Opportunity: Utilise cutting-edge technology and bespoke programs to elevate staff training and development across diverse sectors.
- Contact: simulation@cueltd.co.uk

Mixed Reality Laboratory

- Location: Mixed Reality Laboratory, University of Nottingham, School of Computer Science, Nottingham, NG8 1BB
- Key features: The Mixed Reality Lab (MRL) creates interactive technologies to enhance everyday life. The research of the lab is grounded in the field of human-computer interaction.
- Opportunity: Explore the future of interactive technologies and become a part of innovative, life-changing research.
- Contact: mrl@cs.nott.ac.uk



Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics, and Modelling (AIDAM)

- Location: The University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH
- Key features: Carries out sustainable research in AI, data analytics and modelling; focusing on data-driven AI systems that are resilient, robust, trustworthy and adaptable to changing operational conditions. Develops the new mathematical and computational frameworks and tools that helps design the new generation of AI systems. To be used in a wide range of applications, including health technology, security, social sciences and space and earth observation.
- Opportunity: Conduct and access research applicable across a range of sectors.
- Contact: ag153@le.ac.uk

STEAMhouse

- Location: 39-43 Belmont Row, Birmingham, B4 7RQ
- Key features: The innovation centre, aimed at encouraging the collaboration of the arts, science, technology, engineering and maths (STEAM) sectors, is generating incredible opportunities for the West Midlands and beyond. At over 100,000 square feet, STEAMhouse has a purpose-built, five-story building located in the heart of Birmingham, just a short walk from both New Street and the planned HS2 rail stations.

- Opportunity: Locate at the STEAMhouse to access business support and be part of an innovative creative campus.
- Contact: <https://steamhouse.org.uk/contact/>

HeritageCAVE VR Centre

- Location: The Centre for Architecture, Urbanism and Global Heritage, Maudslay Building, 50 Shakespeare St, Nottingham NG1 4FQ
- Key features: Fully immersive state-of-the-art studio designed for real-life simulation of virtual reconstruction and digitally recorded historic sites, collections, and assets. It also enables interactive engagement with virtual environments and offers real-time gaming experiences.
- Opportunity: Testing facility for business and access to research.
- Contact: song.wu@ntu.ac.uk

The Virtual & Immersive Production Studio (VIP Studio)

- Location: University of Nottingham, Kings Meadow Campus, Lenton Lane, NG7 2NR
- Key features: The Virtual & Immersive Production Studio (VIP Studio) is a specialist production facility to incubate innovation in film, TV and performance arts production and audience engagement.
- Opportunity: Collaborate with innovators in film, TV, and performance arts production.
- Contact: Helen.Kennedy@nottingham.ac.uk

West Midlands Digital Skills Partnership

- Location: Across the Midlands
- Key features: The partnership brings together passionate digital advocates and leaders from tech businesses and education to create collaborative partnerships to support the region's commitment to transform lives through digital tech. Working alongside the Digital Coalition for Digital Inclusion the board is focused on providing a pathway into a successful digital career.

- Opportunity: Access talent with the necessary digital skills for industry.
- Contact: hello@birmingham.tech



Keele University computer science.

Fashion and textiles

NTU Fashion and Textile Research Centre

Fashion and Textiles represents a complex field of research in a global context and, as such, researchers in this centre focus upon a number of different aspects of the discipline. There are currently six research groups within the centre, focusing on Design, Cultures, Heritage, Business, Clothing Sustainability and Advanced Textiles.

The Centre makes a significant contribution to research within the Nottingham School of Art & Design and to the development of postgraduate researchers. In the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, 83% of the centre's research in Art and Design was assessed to be world-leading or internationally excellent in terms of research impact.

Research Assets

University based

Birmingham Institute of Jewellery, Fashion and Textiles

- Location: Birmingham City University, Parkside Building, 5 Cardigan Street, Birmingham, B4 7BD
- Key features: The institute brings together two internationally renowned schools with almost 130 years of heritage, the School of Fashion and Textiles and the School of Jewellery, Europe's largest jewellery school, located in the heart of the Jewellery Quarter. Over four sites, its cutting-edge workshops and facilities create a dynamic culture for innovation and research.
- Opportunity: Partner with institutions that house unparalleled expertise and drive transformative innovation, helping to shape the future of jewellery, fashion, and textiles.
- Contact: +44 (0)121 331 5820

De Montfort School of Fashion & Textiles

- Location: De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH
- Key features: The award-winning School of Fashion and Textiles offers a unique range of future-facing courses shaped by contemporary culture, industry practice, digital innovation and sustainability. It was selected as one of Business of Fashion's "Best Fashion Schools in the World 2019" and in the Top 10 for Fashion and Textiles in the Guardian Subject League 2020. Students are taught by highly experienced staff in the award-winning Vijay Patel Building and the school is also recognised as one of the country's most sustainable fashion and textiles schools (Green Gown Awards, 2021).
- Opportunity: Conduct research and work with world leading experts across a range of design topics.
- Contact: via website

NTU Advanced Textile Research Group (ATRG)

- Location: Dryden Street, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, NG1 4EY
- Key features: Works with industrial and professional as well as academic contacts in the UK and internationally. Work includes research in textiles across medicine, communications, and automotive, biological and biomechanical applications. Partners include QinetiQ, Oxford Space Systems, BAE systems, and Speedo.
- Opportunity: Partner with experts in the fields of electronically active wearable technology and textiles for your industry.
- Contact: tilak.dias@ntu.ac.uk

NTU Artistic Research Centre

- Location: Dryden Street, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, NG1 4EY
- Key features: The Centre for Artistic Research is constituted by an interdisciplinary research environment with an ambition to continue to be at the forefront of innovation in artistic research processes. The Centre supports, both within and beyond the University, a breadth of investigations, networks, collaborators, sharing insights and interpretations to reflect the broad range of research activities, processes and practices.
- Opportunity: Work with the Centre to access knowledge and expertise and tap into its extensive networks.
- Contact: duncan.higgins@ntu.ac.uk

NTU Fashion and Textile Research Centre

- Location: Dryden Street, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, NG1 4EY
- Key features: Fashion and textiles represents a complex field of research in a global context and as such researchers in this centre focus upon several different aspects of the discipline. There are currently six research groups within the centre, focusing on Design, Cultures, Heritage, Business, Clothing Sustainability and Advanced Textiles.
- Opportunity: Undertake research in one of the six themes.
- Contact: amanda.briggs-goode@ntu.ac.uk

Art and design

De Montfort Institute of Art and Design

The Institute is home to academics researching textile and product design, building heritage, fine art, fashion, photography, photographic history and history of art and design. It runs a highly successful Design Unit, with links to local business, supports world-leading research in the Fine Arts, in New Product Design, Fashion and Textiles, Critical and Contextual Studies, Textile Engineering and Photographic History.

The institute houses the Design Unit, Textile, Engineering and Materials Research Group (TEAM), and the Photographic History Research Centre. The Design Unit is a highly innovative, design-based research group with a strong track record of research-informed New Product Development (NPD), design implementation strategies and knowledge Transfer (KT) enterprise activities.

The Design Unit has a 25-year history of research-informed NPD, collaborating with a variety of industrial partners – both large and small. The research centre has generated a portfolio of over 160 successful projects and have developed over 120 effective design solutions.

Research Assets

University based

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

- Location: University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TS
- Key features: An art gallery and concert hall situated in purpose-built premises on the University of Birmingham campus. Home to paintings from some of the most famous artists in the world.
- Opportunity: Engage with the institute and gain access to first-class research and performance facilities in fine arts.
- Contact: info@barber.org.uk

Centre for Art, Design, Research, and Experimentation (CADRE)

- Location: Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1LY
- Key features: The Centre is clustered into three focused areas of research interests: Art Philosophy and Social Practice; Digital Technology Theory and Practice; Material and Theoretical Practice. It was established in 2006 to explore and develop the beneficial effect of art and design upon society. Work has included changing the debate on sustainable clothing and involving health professionals in art and design practices concerning dementia.
- Opportunity: Conduct and access projects addressing key challenges faced in society today through art and design.
- Contact: via their website

Centre for Design Engineering

- Location: Building 30, Cranfield University, Bedford, MK43 0AL
- Key features: The Centre for Design Engineering at Cranfield is the internationally recognised and award-winning centre of excellence for creative design, strategy and leadership.

- Opportunity: Unlock a world of innovation and leadership in design at the internationally recognised centre, offering the chance to be part of an award-winning hub for creative design, strategic thinking, and visionary leadership in the field.
- Contact: l.williams@cranfield.ac.uk

De Montfort Institute of Art and Design

- Location: De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH
- Key features: The Institute of Art and Design supports DMU researchers to make lasting contributions to local and global society through critical thinking, creativity and innovation. The Institute is home to academics researching textile and product design, The institute houses the Design Unit, Textile, Engineering and Materials Research Group (TEAM), and the Photographic History Research Centre.
- Opportunity: Conduct research and work with world leading experts across a range of design topics.
- Contact: kwilder@dmu.ac.uk

Derby Civic Lab

- Location: The University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, DE22 1GB
- Key Features: CivicLAB is based at the University of Derby, a UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning and home to World Heritage Sites. It has been designed to support academics, creative and cultural industry professionals and freelance creatives to share their insights on research and practice through a place-based approach to knowledge generation. The CivicLAB provides a thinking space to bring together participants from academia, creative and cultural industry, third sector and freelance practitioners. This is done through presentations, keynotes, workshops, networking sessions. Together, we will discuss approaches to building civic practice, research and community capacity as a means of addressing long-standing social issues.
- Opportunities: Collaborate with academics working in multi-disciplinary teams to tackle common regional challenges
- Contact: Businessgateway@derby.ac.uk

Design Nation

- Location: Centre for Culture & Creativity, University of Lincoln, Brayford Pool, Lincoln, LN6 7TS
- Key features: A leading portfolio for designers-makers based in the UK who create craft, design, and product. A trusted one-stop destination for anyone with a keen interest in design and craft, as well as those wishing to commission or learn more about this ever-changing sector.

- Opportunity: Access creators from a range of sectors and learn more about the opportunities in the UK.
- Contact: info@designnation.co.uk

Faculty of Arts, Design and Media

- Location: Birmingham City University, Parkside Building, 5 Cardigan Street, Birmingham, B4 7BD
- Key features: With over 175 years of history in its Art School, the faculty now provides an interdisciplinary approach to creative innovation. Its internationally renowned arts training provision includes a specialist music conservatoire and drama school. Within the faculty are four specialist colleges: Art & Design; Jewellery, Fashion & Textiles; Digital Arts, English, and Media; and the Birmingham School of Architecture.
- Opportunity: Explore renowned arts, music, media and drama training. Access specialist research centres: the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Diversity and Centre for Media and Cultural Research (CEDIA). Invest in a vibrant creative ecosystem, collaborating with talents that shape industries and cultural landscapes.
- Contact: +44 0121 331 7818

Museum Data Service

- Location: Online
- Key features: An ambitious collaboration between Art UK, Collections Trust and the University of Leicester. Pools millions of object records – decades' worth of knowledge from UK institutions large and small – and shares them as the raw material for countless public and research uses.
- Opportunity: Access world class art easily, and contribute to the platform.
- Contact: support@museumdata.uk

Heritage Hub

- Location: The University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH
- Key features: Nurturing innovative partnerships that enable our staff and students to be Citizens of Change. Supporting and enabling our community of staff, students, alumni, donors and partners to create a powerful network of change makers. Builds on Leicester's extensive work in the heritage space.
- Opportunity: Attend heritage events, access expertise, or make the most out of the support and services.
- Contact: heritageuol@le.ac.uk

Nottingham School of Art and Design

- Location: Dryden Street, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, NG1 4EY
 - Key features: The school is one of the world's leading art and design schools, influencing, inspiring and innovating for over 175 years. Located right in the heart of one of the UK's most exciting cities, the centre is surrounded by – and contribute to – an originality, energy and imagination that makes Nottingham a very special place to live, work and create.
 - Opportunity: Collaborate with an institution that elevates the discourse and practice of art and design.
 - Contact: michael.marsden@ntu.ac.uk
- ## NTU Design Research Centre
- Location: Dryden Street, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, NG1 4EY.
 - Key features: The Design Research Centre (DRC) brings together experts from different disciplines interested in the practice, theory, and history of design. It fosters new approaches to design thinking, design enquiry, design implementation and the use of design techniques and related technologies to make positive societal, economic and environmental impacts.
 - Opportunity: Partner with the Centre to access research and work with industry, non profits, and academia in the sector.
 - Contact: iryna.kuksa@ntu.ac.uk

Research Centre for Museums and Galleries

- Location: Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 19 University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RF
- Key features: Research engages with and responds to real world contexts. Understand museums, galleries and heritage as part of – and active in shaping - the contemporary world. Creates spaces within which different forms of expertise come together and where researchers, practitioners, policy makers, artists and activists collaborate.
- Opportunity: Access and conduct research around how heritage is accessed.
- Contact: sm100@le.ac.uk

School of Art and Design

- Location: Coventry University, Delia Derbyshire Building, Cox Street, Coventry CV1 5PH
- Key features: Coventry University's School of Art and Design has a long tradition of producing highly employable graduates, making a distinctive contribution to creative industries around the world.
- Opportunity: Become a part of a global creative community, leading the field in art and design.
- Contact: ac9143@coventry.ac.uk

School of Design and Creative Arts

- Location: Loughborough Design School, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU
- Key features: The school has a strong culture of cross collaborative research activity, with multi-disciplinary academics developing cutting-edge research projects that span across Design, Human Factors, Creative Arts, Textile innovation and Applied Storytelling.
- Delivering a world-class education in design and creative arts, teaching at Loughborough is informed by the latest research and industry developments, which contributes to a long-standing reputation of academic and research excellence, providing creative solutions to a range of real-world issues for global benefit.
- Opportunity: Collaborate with multi-disciplinary academics, leaders in the fields of design and creative arts and an institution that demonstrates how pushing the boundaries of design innovation, creative practice result in real world impact.
- Contact: Sdca-research@lboro.ac.uk

The UoD Digital and Materialistic Artistic Research Centre (DMARC)

- Location: The University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, DE22 1GB
- Key Features: DMARC is the home to artistic research from the disciplines of Performing Arts, Music, Media, Art and Design within the School of Arts. Among other forms, our researchers explore the potential of hybrid art forms made possible by using digitalisation alongside the traditional arts, collaboration and working across disciplines. We share our research through our practice, exhibitions and published text.

- Opportunity: Work with creatives across the spectrum of Arts on challenges from visualisation, psychology through to compassion and art therapy.
- Contact: Businessgateway@derby.ac.uk



The Sky Mirror at Nottingham Playhouse. Image credit: Liyuan Liu

Music and dance

Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE)

The research of C-DaRE moves between theory and practice and applies body-centred understandings across disciplinary boundaries. The projects explore a broad range of themes including cultural heritage, computing and AI, intellectual property, practice research, performance philosophy, documentation, archives, health and well-being, digital performance, somatic practices and critical disability studies. They maintain close connections with professional practice and engage in research networks and policy level interventions that aim to sustain and develop movement, dance, and performing arts.

The centre also works closely with partners across the cultural sector, funded by Research Councils, the European Commission, the Leverhulme and Wellcome Trusts, British Academy, British Council, Higher Education Academy and Arts Council England.

Their outputs and publications include books, journal articles, policy reports, films and exhibitions, and live, digital and immersive performances. The centre has produced over 150 academic articles, nearly 40 books and dozens of exhibitions.

Research Assets

University based

BEAST (Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre)

- Location: BEAST and the Electroacoustic Music Studios, Music Department, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT
- Key features: BEAST is the concert sound system of the University of Birmingham's Electroacoustic Music Studios. One of the largest systems of its type in the world, BEAST can mount setups of as many as 100 loudspeakers distributed around the concert space.
- Opportunity: Immerse yourself in the world of ground-breaking sound experiences, offering a unique opportunity to explore one of the world-leading concert sound systems.
- Contact: beast@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Confetti & Metronome

- Location: Convent Street, Nottingham, NG1 3LL
- Key features: A cross-media venue with world-class recording studios and rehearsal spaces. It offers access to some of the best facilities in Europe at four city centre sites: Confetti HQ, Metronome, Space2 and Confetti X.
- Opportunity: Access to talent, facilities and services from industry leading experts and spinouts.
- Contact: hello@confetti.ac.uk

The Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE)

- Location: Creative Enterprise (ICE) building, Coventry University Technology Park, Parkside, Puma Way, Coventry, CV1 2TT
- Key features: team of international researchers and postgraduate researchers based in the Institute for Creative Cultures building. Research moves between theory and practice and applies body-centred understandings across disciplinary boundaries.
- Opportunity: Collaborate with researchers and access world class insights into important issues.
- Contact: cdare.icc@coventry.ac.uk

Conservatoire Composition Cluster

- Location: Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham City University, 200 Jennens Road, Birmingham, B4 7XR
- Key features: Research covers wide aesthetic and performative spectrum, from score-based and improvisational work through to advanced computer-based research into the live interaction of digital technologies with human performers.
- Opportunity: Collaborate with the Cluster and conduct research.
- Contact: conservatoire@bcu.ac.uk

The Dance, Drama and Performance Studies Research Institute (DDPS)

- Location: De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH
- Key features: The DDPS aims to produce innovative research, both scholarly and practice-based, on performance. It embraces diversity and connects academics working across historical and contemporary contexts of dance and dance improvisation, performance of identity, live art, performance research, theatre history, intermedial and digital performance, applied drama, interdisciplinary performance, performer training and popular performance.
- Opportunity: Access research on movement, both scholarly and practice based.
- Contact: rburt@dmu.ac.uk

Integra Lab

- Location: Birmingham City University, 200 Jennens Road, Birmingham, B4 7XR
- Key features: The interdisciplinary research lab, based at Birmingham Conservatoire, focuses its works on musician-computer interaction. The lab was created in 2009 as a spin-off from the international Integra Project - supported by the Culture 2007–2013 programme of the European Union.
- Opportunity: Partner with the lab and conduct research.
- Contact: CEBEFacultyOffice@bcu.ac.uk

University Music

- Location: Music Department, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT
- Key features: University Music is at the forefront of university level music-making and this sector-leading offer brings together public engagement, research, and student experience with the Music Society and Department of Music.
- Opportunity: Experience the forefront of university-level music-making at University Music, utilising a sector-leading blend of public engagement, cutting-edge research, and enriching student experiences.
- Contact: universitymusicub@contacts.bham.ac.uk



| Work with us



Our universities

Location

From the Midlands, 90% of the UK's population and businesses are less than a four-hour drive away; and, with the advent of HS2, London will be less than an hour away. By air, the Midlands is home to two international airports – Paris is just a 90 minute flight away – with access to the seaports of the Humber. The Midlands is home to 11 million people, 15% of the UK's GVA, and the only inland freeport. This is critical to dispersing the output of the Midlands and accessing the potential markets of not only the wider UK, but Europe and international buyers. The region is constantly growing with new development sites and spaces for bespoke builds, including production facilities, digital test spaces, and offices.

Joint research and knowledge exchange

The Midlands universities all have dedicated teams ready to assist with knowledge exchange and set up joint research teams between their world-leading academics and investors. These partnerships have in the past led to globally recognised creative productions and digital innovation.

Midlands ICURe is one example of the support available. Designed for research teams from all UK universities with commercially-promising ideas with potential funding of up to £30k, ICURe is a highly successful 3 month customer discovery programme followed by a 3 month commercialisation accelerator designed using lean start-up methodology and funded by Innovate UK.

Directory of contacts across the Midlands

University offices

Each university has a team of experts who can provide advice on all aspects of research and development, including locating on a science park, joint research and knowledge exchange, commercialisation and equity investment, and accessing a skilled talent and innovation pool.

University	Business engagement and Technology Transfer	Careers service
Aston University	rke@aston.ac.uk	employerteam@aston.ac.uk
University of Birmingham	info@enterprise.bham.ac.uk	recruiters@contacts.bham.ac.uk
Birmingham City University	bcuadvantage@bcu.ac.uk	askcareers@bcu.ac.uk
Coventry University	ei@coventry.ac.uk	talentteam@coventry.ac.uk
Cranfield University	business@cranfield.ac.uk	cranfieldcareers@cranfield.ac.uk
De Montfort University	businessservices@dmu.ac.uk	employerliaison@dmu.ac.uk
University of Derby	businessgateway@derby.ac.uk	employerteam@derby.ac.uk
Harper Adams University	reception@harper-adams.ac.uk	careers@harper-adams.ac.uk
Keele University	gateway@keele.ac.uk	gateway@keele.ac.uk
University of Leicester	RED-Commercial@leicester.ac.uk	employer.services@le.ac.uk
University of Lincoln	enterprise@lincoln.ac.uk	careers@lincoln.ac.uk
Loughborough University	innovation@mailbox.lboro.ac.uk	employer.services@lboro.ac.uk
University of Nottingham	workwithus@nottingham.ac.uk	recruiterservices@nottingham.ac.uk
Nottingham Trent University	workingwithyou@ntu.ac.uk	talent@ntu.ac.uk
Staffordshire University	employers@staffs.ac.uk	staffs.ac.uk/students/careers
University of Warwick	innovate@warwick.ac.uk	employerconnect@warwick.ac.uk
University of Wolverhampton	engage@wlv.ac.uk	theworkplace@wlv.ac.uk
University of Worcester	researchforbusiness@worc.ac.uk	careers@worc.ac.uk

Science Park Contacts

The Midlands is home to a thriving network of science parks, which offer businesses access to a skilled workforce, cutting-edge research facilities, and a supportive ecosystem. If you're looking to grow your business, a science park in the Midlands is the perfect place to do it.

University	Science or Technology Park
Birmingham Innovation Quarter, Birmingham	hello.scitech@bruntwood.co.uk
Birmingham Science Park Aston, Birmingham	info@astonsciencepark.co.uk
Birmingham Research Park, Birmingham	brpl@bham.ac.uk
Charnwood Campus Science, Innovation, and Technology Park	lucy.alexander@charnwoodcampus.com
Coventry University Technology Park, Coventry	cutp@cueltd.co.uk
Cranfield University Technology Park, Bedfordshire	joshua.parello@kirkbydiamond.co.uk
INFINITY Park, Derby	ssalloway@salloway.com
Keele University Science and Innovation Park, Staffordshire	gateway@keele.ac.uk
Lincoln Science and Innovation Park	enquiry@lincolnsiencepark.co.uk
Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park	lusep@lboro.ac.uk
Nottingham Science Park	regeneration@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
Skylon Park, Herefordshire	info@skylonpark.co.uk
Space Park, Leicester	enquiries@space-park.co.uk
STEAMhouse Innovation Hub	steamhouse.org.uk/contact
The Innovation Centre, Leicester	innovationcentre@dmu.ac.uk
University of Derby Science Park	businessgateway@derby.ac.uk
University of Nottingham Innovation Park, Nottingham	reception@unip.nottingham.ac.uk
University of Warwick Science Park, Coventry	more-info@uwsp.co.uk
University of Wolverhampton Science Park, Wolverhampton	joinus@wolverhamptonsp.co.uk



Investment support across the Midlands

The [West Midlands Growth Company](#) offers investors support to find the right networks, receive advice on locations, secure sector specific market research, identify funding support, and generate publicity. The West Midlands Growth Company has a number of sector specialists to offer bespoke support to help you achieve your goals. As a single point of contact, they can put together a team from recruitment agencies, universities, public agencies, and property agents to assist companies investing in or moving to the West Midlands. For international companies, there are fully funded market entry support packages on offer through the West Midlands Global Growth Programme. Packages can cover market entry, commercial space and business accelerator support. You can get in touch at invest@wmgrowth.com, or by calling +44 (0) 121 202 5022.

A new £107 million support service has also just been launched by the West Midlands Combined Authority. Business Growth West Midlands provides business advice and funding to businesses looking to expand. Contact them online or by calling +44 345 646 1352.

The UK Government is committed to supporting investors that are seeking to expand into the Midlands. [Officials from the Department Business and Trade](#) can assist with contacts, identifying funding sources, sourcing opportunities, and to navigate the investment environment. DBT provides advice directly to investors about the business environment in the UK, including tax, access to finance, banking, research and development (R&D), visas and skills. Department for Business and Trade (DBT) specialists provide international trade and investment support to businesses seeking to locate in the East Midlands. They can be reached on +44 (0) 20 4566 5302. Other relevant government contacts include the Science and Innovation Network (SIN) hosted at UK embassies, and the Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT), which works to build the UK's capabilities in these areas.

Place focused inward investment support

Inward investment is supported by dedicated organisations in other parts of the Midlands, as detailed below.

- [Destination Chesterfield](#)
+44 (0) 1246 207207
- [Invest Coventry and Warwickshire](#)
contact@investcw.co.uk
- [Marketing Derby](#)
invest@marketingderby.co.uk
- [Invest in Leicester](#)
enquiries@investinleicester.com
- [Invest in Nottingham](#)
enquiries@investinnottingham.co.uk
- [Invest Telford](#)
Invest@telford.gov.uk
- [Invest Shropshire](#)
invest@shropshire.gov.uk
- [Invest Stoke-on-Trent](#)
enquiries@investstoke.co.uk
- [Invest Staffordshire](#)
hello@wearestaffordshire.co.uk
- [Invest in West Midlands](#)
invest@wmgrowth.com
- [Invest Wolverhampton](#)
invest@wolverhampton.gov.uk
- [Invest in Worcestershire](#)
+44 (0) 1905 677888
- [Team Lincolnshire](#)
investment@lincolnshire.gov.uk

UK Investment Support

The UK's ability to develop new ideas is one of our great strengths, from the jet engine and the bagless vacuum cleaner to MRI scanners and the world wide web. The UK's talent pool, funding and incentives and business infrastructure all help create an environment of business innovation. Our commitment to world-leading research and development will help your business reach its full potential. We are one of the most innovative countries in the world - ranked in the top 5 countries in the Global Innovation Index 2019. For companies such as Ford, Pfizer, Eli Lilly, Nokia and Eisai, the UK's business environment is the natural choice for investment in innovation.

Government help for your business

The UK government's innovation agency, [Innovate UK](#), helps businesses develop new ideas and turn them into a commercial success.

It can help you:

- access funding
- connect with researchers and other collaborators
- find potential customers

Financial incentives to innovate in the UK

The UK offers generous financial support and tax incentives for innovation in the UK.

These include:

- [UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) funding through our Research Councils and Innovate UK
- research-led tax incentives such as Patent Box, R&D Tax Relief and R&D Expenditure Credit

World-class talent

In the UK you'll have access to world-class academic and research talent. You'll also be able to take advantage of a good supply of highly skilled employees. Our many innovation initiatives include our [Grand Challenges](#). These bring together the best minds in science and business to explore opportunities from 21st century global trends.

Regulation to protect your ideas

The UK has a world class intellectual property regime. This protects the names, ideas, products, designs and written word of businesses.

Find out about [UK intellectual property laws](#) after the UK's exit from the EU on the [great.gov.uk](#) website.

Infrastructure that supports innovation

Nationally, the UK invests £6 billion each year in research councils and universities. The UK's network of Catapult Centres help emerging technologies become commercially viable. A range of 'business clusters' up and down the country offers specialist expertise. These include:

- advanced engineering and medical technologies in the Northern Powerhouse
- the UK's answer to Silicon Valley in the Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford corridor
- a thriving life sciences research and renewables scene in Edinburgh

High Potential Opportunities

[The UK Department for Business and Trade](#) identified multiple High Potential Opportunities for investment in the Midlands. The HPOs are supported by the UK government to make them more accessible to foreign investors. To find the full list of HPOs available in the Midlands and how the government can support your business taking advantage of them, contact DBT by calling +44 (0) 20 4551 0011, or using one of the services listed on the next page.

Freeports

The UK Freeports are areas where the normal customs do not apply. At Freeports, imports can enter with a simplified customs documentation and without tariffs. Business operating in the designated zone around the Freeports can manufacture using the imports and export the finished products through the Freeports, all without facing the regular tariffs. The East Midlands Freeport is the only UK Freeport connected to an airport rather than a traditional sea port, and presents a unique opportunity for companies who manufacture and re export. To find out more and how your company can benefit from the East Midlands Freeport, get in contact with the team at info@emfreeport.com.

Investment Zones

The UK government has designated both the East Midlands and the West Midlands as investment zones, a new policy announced in 2023. The zones will receive £80 million support from the government over the next five years for tax incentives and resource spending. Examples of policies include business rates relief, stamp duty relief, capital allowances, and lower employer National Insurance contributions. To find out more, get in contact with one of the investment specialists listed above.

General investment support

- The [Global Entrepreneur Programme](#) provides support for overseas high growth business looking to move to the UK.
- The [Venture Capital Unit](#) connects UK registered growth businesses and start-ups with investors and funders.
- The [UK Investment Support Directory](#) provides connections between overseas businesses wanting to set up in or expand to the UK and those from the private sector in the UK who can assist, whether that be in legal concerns, marketing, HR, or other needs.

Export Support Service

- The [Export Support Service](#) helps those based in the UK looking to export abroad.
- The [UK Export Finance](#) team can help with funding and insurance for UK exports.
- The [East Midlands Freeport](#) team can help you take advantage of the tax incentives and freeport benefits. Reach them at info@emfreeport.com.





GREAT
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Department for Business and Trade

We support growth by backing businesses in the UK and globally, promoting investment and championing free trade.

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