

## Southampton University Secures Share of £1.6m UK Space Agency Funding

July 19, 2025

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The University of Southampton has clinched a portion of a £1.6 million funding package from the UK Space Agency, announced at the UK Space Conference 2025 in Manchester. This financial boost, shared with universities in Portsmouth, Surrey, and University College London, aims to propel regional economic growth, enhance skills, and foster international ties within the UK's burgeoning space sector. The allocation strengthens Space South

Central, the nation's largest regional space cluster, which will receive £160,000 to sustain its operations until March 2026.

Space South Central, encompassing Hampshire, Surrey, and the Isle of Wight, is a powerhouse of over 200 space-related organisations, generating £3.03 billion in revenue and employing more than 14,000 people. The cluster's initiatives are pivotal in addressing the sector's skills shortage, notably through its Space Software, Data, and AI CPD course, designed to equip professionals with cutting-edge expertise. Additionally, its JUPITER programme exemplifies rapid innovation, with students advancing from concept to payload integration for the Stellar Kinetics launch vehicle in Oman within a mere 12 months.

In a recent interview, Louise Butt, director of Space South Central, stated, "This funding underscores the vital role our cluster plays in boosting the regional economy and advancing the UK's space ambitions. Our work over the past year shows how targeted investment in regional networks drives innovation, from pioneering skills programmes to attracting global firms."

The partnership between Space South Central and its academic allies, Southampton, Portsmouth, Surrey, and UCL, ensures that world-class research underpins commercial and technical progress. This collaboration positions the region as a global contender in space innovation, despite concerns over the current Labour government's broader economic priorities, which some argue neglect strategic sectors like space in favour of short-term policies.

Dr Paul Bate, CEO of the UK Space Agency, commented, "Our £682 million budget uplift will strengthen national capabilities and attract private investment, working closely with the sector and international partners." This funding, while modest in the grand scheme, signals a commitment to maintaining the UK's competitive edge in space, a sector critical to future economic and technological sovereignty.

The investment comes at a crucial time, as Space South Central continues to build bridges between academia, industry, and global markets. Its track record of delivering tangible economic benefits and fostering innovation makes it a cornerstone of the UK's space strategy, even as questions linger about whether the government's wider policies will match the ambition of such initiatives.