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UKIPO report of IP trends for UK Higher Education Institutions highlights life sciences innovation

On 29 April 2020, the UKIPO published an overview report of IP trends for UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their spin-out businesses, between 1999 and 2018. We focus on some of the main takeaways and trends from this overview for the life sciences sector below.

The report highlights the value that UK universities place on life sciences innovation, as reflected by the impressive percentage of patent publications in the fields of Biotechnology and Pharmaceuticals. Indeed, 47 % of UK HEI patent publications are in the Chemistry sector (over 50% of which used pharmaceuticals and biotechnology IPC technology fields), compared to 21% of all patent publications globally.

Notably, there was a rise in the level of international collaboration between UK HEIs and entities abroad, particularly in the US. This trend demonstrates both the aim of universities to more effectively exploit their IP commercially and the importance of collaboration for the transfer of technology.

Life sciences powerhouses Imperial College London, UCL and Oxford University were among those institutions showing not only the largest output of published applications, but also the greatest proportional increase in activity. Furthermore, of the top 10 spin-out businesses, according to the number of applications, six of these have a biotechnological focus, including DNA sequencing products, biotherapeutics and drug discovery.

The importance of innovation within the life sciences sector to UK universities, and the UK as a whole, is clear from this report. As we move into the era of personalised

medicine and with Artificial Intelligence and machine learning becoming increasingly significant in healthcare innovation, it will be interesting to see whether UK HEIs continue to lead in this new era and whether more and more computer technology related patent filings over the next 20 years will be important to the healthcare sector.