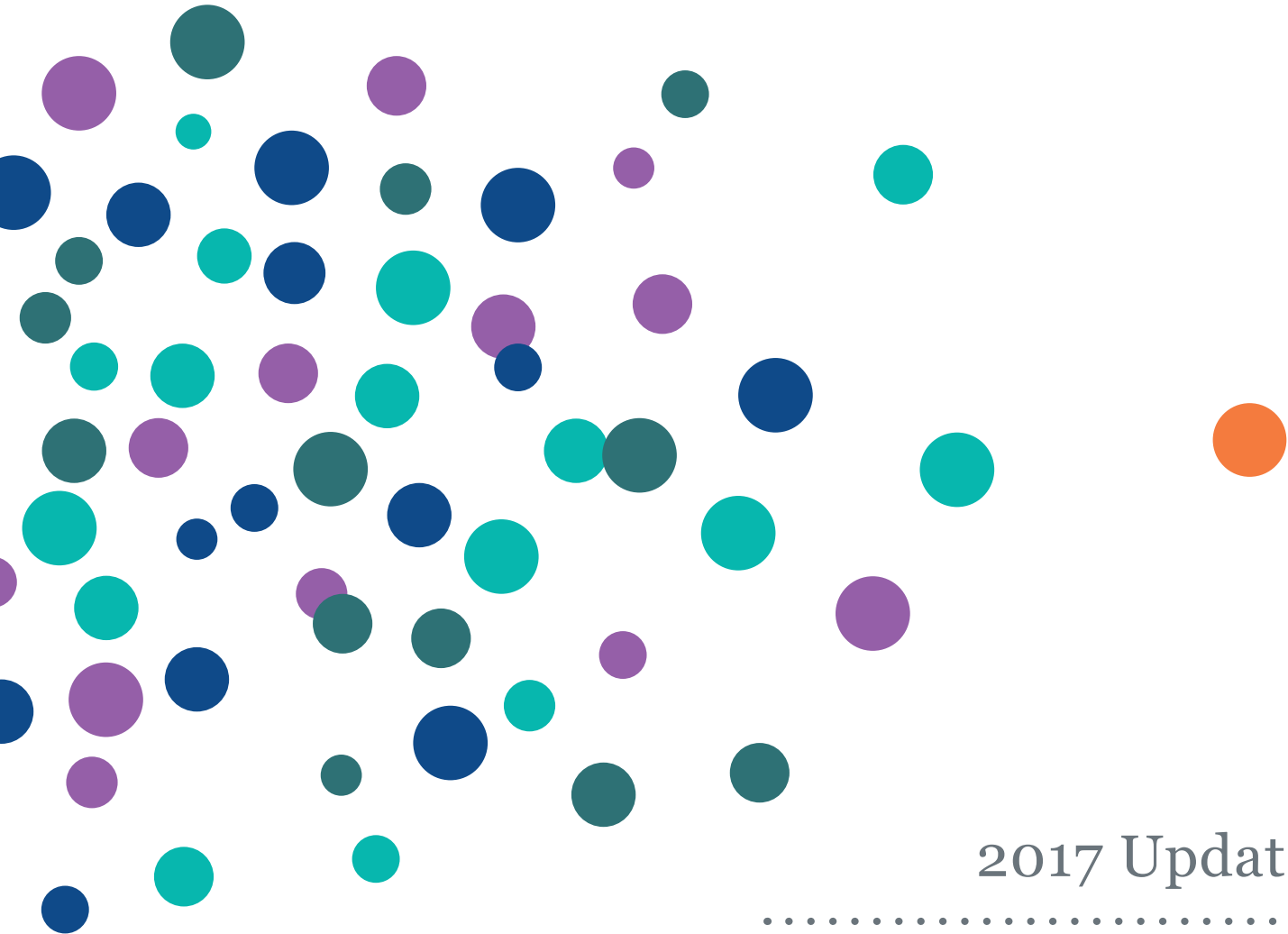




THE UK'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



2017 Update



INTRODUCTION

UK universities are a national asset. Our excellence in teaching and learning, in research and scholarship, and in knowledge exchange, are widely recognised and underpin a global reputation that attracts more than 400,000 international students to the UK each year.

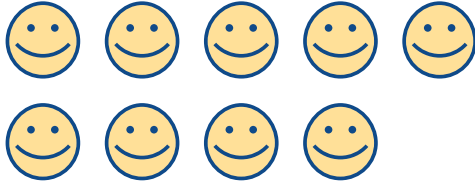
But it is about more than just reputation. The UK remains one of the world's leading study destinations for international students because of the first-class experience offered by our universities. And this is recognised by those that matter the most – the students themselves.

This report, *The UK's competitive advantage: 2017 update* highlights the success of UK universities in delivering a truly world-class experience for international students at all levels – undergraduate study, postgraduate taught, and for postgraduate research students. It is based on the findings of the world's largest survey of international students – the International Student Barometer (ISB).

The ISB has collected data from over 3 million students in over 1,400 institutions across 33 countries since its inception. The findings in this report are based on the feedback of over 137,000 and examines the experience of international students in the UK and key competitor nations – the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands.

THE UK'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: KEY FINDINGS

#1



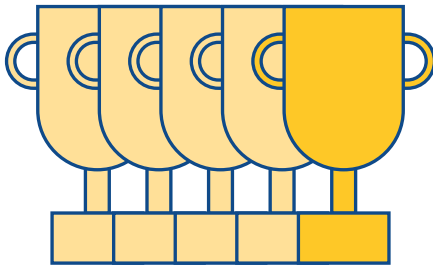
The UK is ranked first by international students for overall satisfaction. Overall satisfaction of international students studying in the UK is very high – we rank first among our competitor nations, with 91% of international students across all levels of study (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research combined) reporting that they are satisfied with their experience in the UK.

REPUTATION AND QUALITY



Reputation and quality are critical factors influencing the study destination of students at all levels. The reputation of the institution is the most important factor in international students' decision to choose the UK at the undergraduate and postgraduate taught levels (93% and 95% respectively). For postgraduate research students, the most important factor is the quality of research at their chosen institution (at 97%).

#1



The UK is ranked first by undergraduates across five measures of the student experience. At undergraduate level, the UK is ranked first among our major competitors across five critical measures of the student experience – overall satisfaction, learning environment, arrival and orientation, living, and support services.

#1

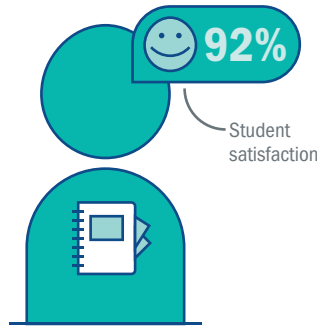


The UK is ranked first for recommendation by international students at all levels. International students studying in the UK are more likely to recommend their chosen destination than in any of our major competitors. This applies across students at undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research levels.

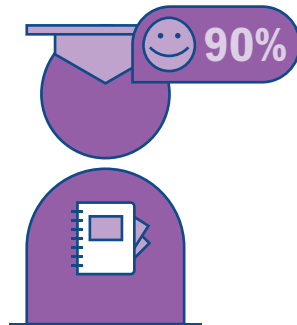
THE UK'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: KEY FINDINGS

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SATISFACTION IS VERY HIGH IN THE UK ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF STUDY

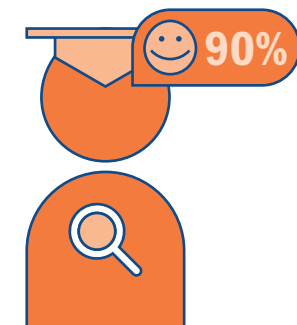
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



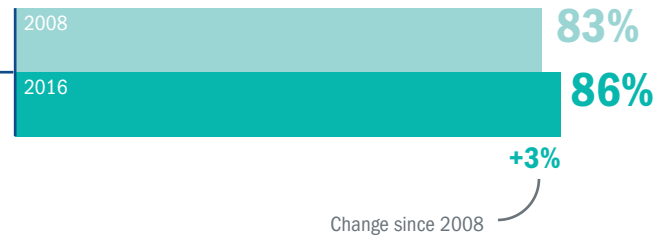
POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS



POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE UK ARE VERY LIKELY TO RECOMMEND THEIR DESTINATION OF STUDY



THE UK: NUMBER 1 FOR RECOMMENDATION BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The UK is a global leader for recommendation when compared with the major English-speaking and continental European competitors.

This applies across all levels of study: undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research students.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



- #2 GERMANY
- #3 NETHERLANDS
- #4 USA
- #5 AUSTRALIA
- #6 CANADA

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS



- #2 NETHERLANDS
- #3 USA
- #4 GERMANY
- #5 CANADA
- #6 AUSTRALIA

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS



- #2 AUSTRALIA
- #3 GERMANY
- #4 USA
- #5 CANADA
- #6 *

RECOMMENDING THE UK AS A STUDY DESTINATION: WHAT MATTERS MOST TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?

While undergraduate international students focus on a mix of social aspects and the learning environment, postgraduate taught students place significant emphasis on the learning

dimension of the student experience. For postgraduate research students, the quality of the research environment and employability are important drivers of recommendation.

THE MOST IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF STUDY

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



- #2 COURSE CONTENT
- #3 COURSE ORGANISATION
- #4 QUALITY LECTURES
- #5 GOOD PLACE TO LIVE

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS



- #2 COURSE ORGANISATION
- #3 GOOD TEACHERS
- #4 COURSE CONTENT
- #5 EMPLOYABILITY

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS



- #2 RESEARCH
- #3 EMPLOYABILITY
- #4 WORK EXPERIENCE
- #5 FORMAL WELCOME

*The Netherlands is not included in rankings or comparisons at the PGR level as the sample size was deemed too low for inclusion.

OVERALL UNDERGRADUATE RANKINGS

At undergraduate level, the UK is ranked first among our major competitors overall, and across five critical measures of the student experience – overall satisfaction, learning environment, arrival and orientation, living, and support services.

RECOMMENDATION

**#1
UNITED
KINGDOM**

- #2 GERMANY
- #3 NETHERLANDS
- #4 USA
- #5 AUSTRALIA
- #6 CANADA



OVERALL SATISFACTION

**#1
UNITED
KINGDOM**

- #2 NETHERLANDS
- #3 GERMANY
- #4 USA
- #5 AUSTRALIA
- #6 CANADA



ARRIVAL OVERALL

**#1
UNITED
KINGDOM**

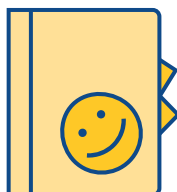
- #2 NETHERLANDS
- #3 AUSTRALIA
- #4 USA
- #5 CANADA
- #6 GERMANY



LEARNING OVERALL

**#1
UNITED
KINGDOM**

- #2 USA
- #3 NETHERLANDS
- #4 AUSTRALIA
- #5 GERMANY
- #6 CANADA



LIVING OVERALL

**#1
UNITED
KINGDOM**

- #2 NETHERLANDS
- #3 AUSTRALIA
- #4 USA
- #5 GERMANY
- #6 CANADA



SUPPORT OVERALL

**#1
UNITED
KINGDOM**

- #2 USA
- #3 AUSTRALIA
- #4 NETHERLANDS
- #5 CANADA
- #6 GERMANY



INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

#1

The UK ranks first for international student satisfaction.

90%

International undergraduates are highly satisfied with course content.

86%

86% of international undergraduates would recommend their UK experience to others – up from 83% in 2008.

The quality of the learning experience is vital to international undergraduate students. The ISB found that course content, course organisation and quality lectures are all in the top five in importance to international undergraduate students who study in the UK.

A supportive environment that forges close community as well as delivers a great academic life are also important to students. These factors form a core part of the UK's competitive advantage.

Satisfaction across these important elements of the experience in the UK is high, and performs better than the competitor study destinations in the majority (over two thirds) of comparison points.



WHY DID INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS CHOOSE THE UK AS THEIR STUDY DESTINATION?

INSTITUTIONAL REPUTATION

#1

SPECIFIC COURSE OF STUDY

#2

REPUTATION OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

#3

INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS

90%

International postgraduate taught students' overall satisfaction with their UK university experience is very high.

95%

International postgraduate taught student satisfaction with lecturers' expertise is 95%.

#1

The UK is ranked first for international postgraduate taught students' views on the quality of teachers.

Quality, teaching and well organised courses are the most important aspects of the experience for international postgraduate taught students studying in the UK.

The UK's advantage includes leading against competitor countries for good teachers and course content at the postgraduate taught level.

Out of the top 30 most important elements of the student experience in the UK, the expertise of lecturers is the most highly rated for satisfaction.



WHY DID INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS CHOOSE THE UK AS THEIR STUDY DESTINATION?



INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

90%

Overall satisfaction for international postgraduate research students is very high at 90%.

#1

The UK ranks first for international student recommendation at the postgraduate research level.

#1

The UK is first for satisfaction with overall learning, living and support experience when compared to major competitors.

Satisfaction with the quality of research at UK institutions is very high among international postgraduate research students, at 93%. This is higher than at the UK's main competitors.

There is 95% satisfaction with the expertise of academic staff, another area of strength for the UK. This area outperforms competitor destinations, where the satisfaction ranges from 92–94%.

Those most satisfied with the expertise of academics at UK institutions include Chinese, Malaysian and US international postgraduate research students, where satisfaction is 96%, 97% and 97% satisfied respectively.



WHY DID INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS CHOOSE THE UK AS THEIR STUDY DESTINATION?

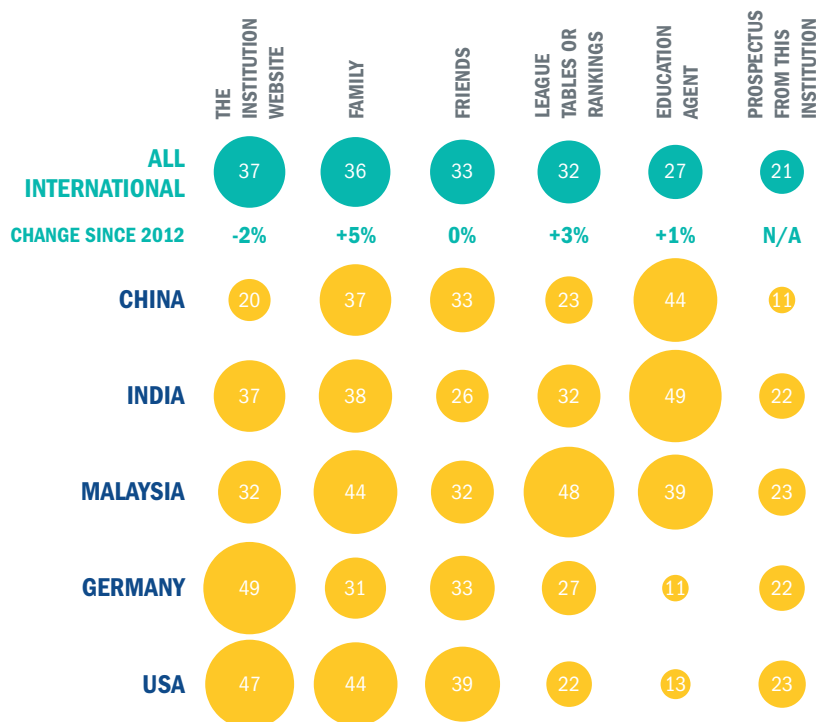


TOP INFLUENCERS FOR UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE UK

The top five factors influencing undergraduate international students' choice of study destination are institutions' websites, family, friends, league tables and education agents. These have all retained their importance over the last five years, with each factor remaining in the top five most cited influences for the whole period.

Of the top five key influencers, the importance of league tables is on the rise, growing by 3% from 2012 to 2016 as are family (+5%) and agents (+1%). League tables have greater influence for international undergraduate students coming to the UK (32%) than they do for competitor countries (just 11–17%).

Regional markets have clear differentiators. Nearly half of all international students from India say that an education agent was an influence on their decision, and over 40% of Chinese students – compared to 11% and 13% in Germany and the USA respectively.

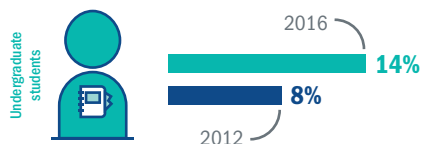


SOCIAL MEDIA'S GROWING INFLUENCE

While not yet one of the most significant factors influencing student decisions, the data shows that the use of social media is now

the fastest growing influencer in the international student journey. Today 14% of international undergraduate students used

a social networking site to help them choose where to study. This has grown from 8% in 2012.





Universities UK International (UUKi) is the international arm of Universities UK, representing UK universities and acting in their collective interests globally. It actively promotes universities abroad, provides trusted information for and about them, and creates new opportunities for the sector.



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