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Policy paper

Education Sector Advisory Group minutes 1 December 2021

Updated 7 March 2022

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Time, date and venue: 11am to 12:30pm, 1 December 2021, Old Admiralty Building / online

Chair: Minister Freer, Minister for Exports, DIT

Secretary: Sarah Chidgey, Department for International Trade (DIT)

Attendees

- Vivienne Stern – Director, Universities UK International (UUKi)
- Alex Proudfoot – Chief Executive, Independent HE (IHE)
- Colin Bell – Chief Executive, Council of British International Schools (COBIS)
- Caroline Wright – Director General, British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA)
- Jodie Gray – Chief Executive, English UK
- Lesley Davies – Chair, UK Skills Partnership
- Maddalaine Ansell – Director Education, British Council (BC)
- Professor Sir Steve Smith – International Education Champion
- Wendy Alexander – Vice-Principal International, University of Dundee and Scottish Trade Envoy

- Iwan Davies – Vice Chancellor, Bangor University and Chair of Global Wales

Senior officials attending

- Zamila Bunglawala – Director, International Education, Department for Education (DfE)
- Rupert Daniels – Director, Digital, Education, Creative, Consumer and Sports, DIT

Secretariat

- Sarah Chidgey, Education Sector Team, DIT
- Simon Denning, Education Sector Team, DIT

Apologies

- Minister Burghart – Minister for Skills, DfE
- Neil Leitch – Chief Executive, Early Years Alliance
- Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland

1. Welcome and introductions

As new co-chairs of the Education Sector Advisory Group (ESAG), Mike Freer has taken over from Graham Stuart as Minister for Exports at DIT and Alex Burghart has taken over from Michelle Donelan, as Minister for Skills at DfE. Today's chair, Minister Freer welcomed members and invited introductions.

2. International Education Strategy (IES) update

Zamila Bunglawala, DfE outlined that the 2021 IES update set out 14 new actions to support the path from COVID-19 recovery to sustainable growth. It recommitted to the 2030 ambitions to sustainably increase the value of education exports to £35 billion per year and international student numbers to 600,000 per year.

We are grateful for this group's continued efforts and the good progress made in supporting IES delivery to achieve the ambitions including:

International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS)

Following a public consultation, DfE will take a pilot approach to the delivery of iQTS. The process to select iQTS pilot providers opened on 15 November 2021, with announcement of successful providers in early 2022. The iQTS pilot will run for one academic year commencing September 2022.

Turing Scheme

The Turing Scheme will provide opportunities for participants from schools, colleges and universities to study and work across the globe. Under the programme, providers successfully applied for funding to cover over 41,000 individual placements overseas across the academic year 2020 to 2021. COVID-19 will impact mobility and student journey and welfare aspects will be taken on board. DfE are working closely in partnership with UUKi and British Council.

Improving the student journey

We are committed to ensuring the UK is the destination of choice for international students, including through developing an alumni platform, roundtables on student employability opportunities and the UCAS launch of the Myriad system in November 2021.

Education exports data

Robust data is key. DfE and DIT, with support from Office for National Statistics (ONS), are working with London School of Economics (LSE) to improve the accuracy and methodology. We will ensure LSE engage with the Group / sector to understand the challenges. Minister Freer thanked the group for their involvement so far and stressed the importance of continuing that engagement. ONS workshops were highlighted.

When sourcing data, English UK usually go to members directly. The same applies to the UK Skills Partnership (UKSP), for example the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) have had an annual survey for a number of years and have a better view on qualifications. It was noted that the skills sector has the appetite to be more closely involved in official statistics. UKSP is attempting data breakdowns but face challenges, including some reluctance to share data. It is important that a good case is made for this. UKSP are hoping for results in the next 6 months on this work.

Quantifying how much of overseas schools' income comes back needs to be addressed.

UUKi said a breakdown of data by subsector would help and BESA is looking to strengthen data from their end. Latest education exports figures will be published later in December.

IHE asked if more can be done to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (English Language Teaching (ELT) and IHE). Minister Freer confirmed there are 2 separate strands in the Exports Strategy - on Export Champions and International Trade Advisers (ITAs) - and advised contacting DIT if more can be done.

Free trade agreements (FTAs)

One of this government's key priorities is to secure world class FTAs across the world, to benefit both UK businesses and consumers. It is important that we continue to support the education sector and promote education in FTAs.

DfE and DIT have been engaging with the sector to understand export priorities for countries where we are negotiating FTAs, and to facilitate input into FTA public

consultations.

Most recently, we have run information sessions as part of the Gulf-Cooperation Council FTA public consultation for ESAG members and a range of other education stakeholders. Group members were encouraged to input into this consultation. DIT's trade council consultation in January was highlighted.

3. Deep dive on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region

Emily Hamblin, Head of DIT in Vietnam and Deputy Regional Director for Trade provided a review of work that both Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and the education sector have conducted in the region in 2021 to promote UK education exports and highlighted the opportunities in the region for 2022. This was followed by a group discussion facilitated by Sir Steve Smith.

ASEAN will be a high value region for education. ESAG have adopted Trade Commissioner Natalie Black's recommendations, as reflected in the International Education Strategy. An official visit from ESAG to Indonesia is planned for the Spring.

There is an overall sense of a step change in engagement following the Integrated Review, the Indo-Pacific tilt and the recent achievement of ASEAN dialogue partner status; evidenced in Vietnam by 7 ministerial visits and a refreshed strategic partnership and the FTA. There needs to be a rebalance for some areas post-COVID-19.

ASEAN is a diverse region, including 'big hitters' and 'rising stars', all in need of high-quality education - transnational education (TNE), joint partnerships, quality EdTech, English language and the need for recognition of qualifications.

There has been good growth, and targets have been exceeded this year with £75 million worth of export wins across 50 deals. We should make better use of development funds for the rising stars; in particular via the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) merger has created Official Development Assistance (ODA) opportunities. Challenges include the impact of COVID-19 and the uncertainty around mobility, particularly the mass exodus of teachers across the region.

Whitehall departments each have an education agenda. Also, education is one of 3 pillars of the development plan as a dialogue partner. At a country level, we need to join up more across FCDO, DIT and British Council. Supporting partnership agreements is a long-term process requiring staying power in order to see results, for example 2 UK schools, Uppingham and Reigate Grammar, now set up in Vietnam, resulted from initial conversations in 2018 to 2019; so relationships take time to flourish.

Minister Freer asked how we could go about undertaking a competitor analysis. UUKi's report on why UK has lost market share was highlighted along with the idea of a 3-year post study visa, which was suggested could make the UK more competitive.

Sir Steve re-affirmed that opportunities in the ASEAN region look enormous across the breadth of the education sector, but with particular interest in schools, skills and English language. Steve is attending the Wilton Park Dialogue and hopes to take a delegation of HE institutions relating to Vietnam's needs (of interest particular to Scotland/Wales). There is opportunity for group members to join Sir Steve on missions to the region, including Indonesia where already 40+ education providers have found opportunities.

Southeast Asia is a big area of interest for the British Council where they are engaging with 7 out of 10 countries – mostly on ELT. Strong in most countries, less so in Cambodia and Brunei. They have been holding a series of big events on SE Asia and have produced a report that analyses 7 markets in the region to help inform considerations of the UK offer.

BESA is keen to follow up with Sir Steve on his plans for BETT Asia as they run the UK Pavilion.

COBIS were delighted that Reigate Grammar and Uppingham schools were highlighted as examples of UK schools opening campuses in Vietnam - both joined a DIT Vietnam mission which resulted in their success. From a schools' perspective, student success is about good education standards and high-quality teachers, so promotion of IQTS is key; in addition to reducing barriers to access teacher training. The investors that COBIS met in Vietnam wanted reassurance that the school brand is a quality one in order to attract fee paying students. COBIS are proud to be involved with British Council, helping to connect HE with student recruitment to ensure students are fully briefed on how to access UK HE, including safeguarding aspects.

UUKi have undertaken deep dives for Indonesia and Vietnam. They are working with Global Wales on promotional efforts, and British Council on Study UK.

Action 1: To share details of trade missions (including dates) including Vietnam, Indonesia and potential India mission [DfE/DIT].

Action 2: Produce page brief (1 page) on what we want to get out of trade missions/delegations to help ESAG members to decide who is best placed to prepare and join [DfE/DIT].

Action 3: ESAG sub-group to refresh their sector country by country grid to bring back to ESAG [UUKi].

Action 4: British Council to share with the group their report on Southeast Asia and analysis of 7 markets to help inform considerations of the UK offer [Maddalaine Ansell, BC].

4. International Education Champion 2022 forward look

Sir Steve highlighted:

- that most of his year was spent getting to know partners overseas
- that there have been nearly 300 engagements to date
- that Saudi Arabia are very interested; the potential is enormous. Recognition of qualifications still needs to be addressed
- the importance of his 2 in-person visits to Saudi
- that Vietnam is open for business
- that Indonesia is taking more time, largely due to personnel changes
- that Nigeria is taking longer
- the good progress on devolved administration engagement, but there is more to do
- that relationships built with key partners are strong

- that we need to continue to build to go to market. We are on the right track
- that in 2022, there will be potential ministerial meetings alongside Minister Freer (subject to travel challenges). India is a priority and there will be visits to Vietnam and Indonesia and Saudi Arabia once again

Action 5: Circulate Sir Steve's written report prepared to ESAG for urgent input by ESAG sector members [DIT].

Action 6: Share comms on Education World Forum (EWF) with the ESAG sector members once details are finalised [DfE].

5. Any other business

Dubai Expo

The new Omicron COVID variant is impacting planning and creating unease about travel abroad. DIT are considering slimming back the programme and moving where possible to virtual / hybrid. They are hoping the De Montfort event will remain a physical one. Sir Steve is still planning to go.

Hungary scholarships

English UK are working with DIT on the previously highlighted Hungarian English language project which will go ahead in 2022. They noted that it has the potential to increase the number of student weeks from 2,000 to 180,000. The project will have a knock-on effect for other sectors - FE, HE, tourism.

Date of next meeting

14 March 2022, 11am to 12.30pm.

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