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Policy paper

# International Education Strategy: 2023 progress update

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International Education Strategy (IES): 2023 Progress Update

## Details

International Education Strategy (IES): 2023 Progress Update is the third annual progress update to the original 2019 IES. It summarises progress against the two IES ambitions and all outstanding actions, and sets out future priorities.

## Background

The UK government published the [International Education Strategy \(IES\): global potential, global growth](#) in March 2019. It sets out a cohesive, cross-government approach to supporting the global activities of our education sector.

The IES committed to two ambitions to achieve by 2030:

- increase education exports to £35 billion per year
- increase the numbers of international higher education (HE) students studying in the UK to 600,000 per year

The [IES 2021 update: Supporting recovery, driving growth](#), published in February 2021, re-committed the UK government to achieving the two ambitions. Through this comprehensive update, the UK government committed to working closely with the devolved governments and the UK education sector to move from pandemic recovery to sustainable growth in education exports.

The IES 2022 update [International Education Strategy: 2022 progress update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), published in May 2022, outlines progress against the ambitions and the outstanding actions since the February 2021 update. It sets out updates on new initiatives to support export growth and ensure it comes from a diversified base.

## Progress against the International Education Strategy ambitions

With 679,970 students in 2021/22, the UK has met the IES international student ambition two years running and we are on track to meet the export ambition by 2030. In 2020, the total UK revenue from education-related exports and transnational education activity was estimated to be £25.6 billion.

This represents an increase of 0.8% since 2019 when total revenue was £25.6 billion. From 2021 onwards, to meet the £35 billion ambition by 2030, an average annual increase in export revenue of just over 3% per year is needed. The growth rate is in nominal terms (with no adjustment for forecast inflation).

Given the significant disruption to education in 2020, the continued export growth is welcome. This was primarily due to growth in higher education, which was the main contributor at £19.5 billion. Moderate growth was also seen in transnational education, from £2.2 billion in 2019 to £2.3 billion in 2020. However, other revenue streams decreased. Further Education and English Language Training decreased by 49% and 74% respectively. The medium- to longer-term impacts on these sectors are not yet known. We continue to work closely with the education sector to promote

growth across the whole sector, including through the Education Sector Advisory Group, which includes representation from the devolved governments.

We recognise the success that the strategy has had in attracting international students to study at our world-leading institutions. We are committed to working with the education sector to ensure that student growth is sustainable and allows us to continue to deliver on our ambition to host 600,000 students per year.

The UK government recognises the need to continue to support all education sub-sectors, particularly those who faced a disproportionate impact from the pandemic. Ensuring that our exports come from a diversified base remains a priority to ensure that our education sector is resilient to any future challenges.

As the International Education Champion, Professor Sir Steve Smith continues to promote UK education export growth in the key growth markets of India, Nigeria, Vietnam, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. He undertook successful visits to each country in 2022. This engagement has created opportunities for education exporters across the sector, including HE, schools, skills and English Language Training.

## **Headline achievements since publishing the IES 2022 progress update**

Successful implementation of the IES remains an important focus for the UK government. We have made and continue to make good progress.

A summary of some of the key achievements across international education since the last update was published is set out below. Details of progress against each action are set out at Annex A.

## **Sustainability and climate change**

Tackling climate change is an international priority for the UK. The UK government recognises the fundamental role education plays to mitigate climate change and support adaptation efforts by preparing young people for a changing world.

Through the implementation of the [Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#), the Department for Education is helping to create a sustainable future through education. This includes developing the skills needed for a green economy and supporting our sectors to reach net zero targets.

DfE is committed to working with international partners to tackle this global challenge and to strengthen the role of education and skills in tackling climate change. DBT is working in partnership with providers to develop net-zero focussed green skills and technology programmes which support key UK and global strategies such as Maritime 2050, and the Green Jobs Taskforce.

## **Girls' Education**

Girls' education is central to the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) new International Women and Girls Strategy (2023 to 2030). Championing the right of every girl everywhere to secure the knowledge and skills needed to reach her full potential is a key Strategy priority. In the past year, FCDO have taken great

steps towards this goal, including:

- working with likeminded partners to build a coalition for learning. During the Transforming Education Summit, FCDO secured Commitments to Action on foundational learning and education in emergencies and protracted crises
- committing a further £217 million for girls' education at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. This supports teacher training in Rwanda and gets girls and vulnerable children into schools in Pakistan. It also provides better global data on children's learning outcomes through both the What Works Hub and the EdTech Hub
- acting as the Global Partnership for Education's largest bilateral donor, with plans to finance £430 million of vital work over the next five years
- publishing a position paper: Addressing the climate, environment, and biodiversity crises in and through girls' education
- supporting over 5,000 girls to continue to receive education despite significant challenges over the last two years in Afghanistan

## Turing Scheme

The UK-wide Turing Scheme is the UK government's global programme to study and work abroad, with £110 million invested for this (2022/23) academic year.

The Turing Scheme is providing funding for more than 38,000 participants from education providers across the UK to study or work in over 160 destinations in the 2022/23 academic year. This scheme is also extending the horizons for students who might never have had that chance. 51% of the international placements have been earmarked for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping to drive social mobility in parts of the UK where historically there have been fewer opportunities to work and study abroad.

Interest in the Turing Scheme has increased across all education sectors. There were 520 applications for projects to run in the 2022 to 2023 academic year, compared with 412 in the first year of the scheme.

The scheme enables organisations to offer their participants the chance to develop new skills, gain international experience and boost their employability. It is also truly global in scope, with every country in the world eligible as a destination for UK students, from Australia to Zimbabwe. This is great news for all students, including those studying languages, as many more countries, cultures and languages are within reach for UK participants.

Whether it's construction students from South West College in Northern Ireland, who went to Canada to improve their knowledge of green building techniques, or budding entrepreneurs from Nottingham Trent University getting to sample work and study, in Latin America, the Turing Scheme is unlocking international opportunities for students, pupils and learners across the UK.

The UK government has a clear aim to use this scheme as part of our long-term ambition to support international mobility and exchange wherever possible and where there is appetite to do so. It remains the government's intention that Turing Scheme be used by UK education institutions to encourage international engagement to enhance existing partnerships and forge new relationships.

We plan to announce the results of applications for funding for the academic year 2023 to 2024 in June 2023. International placements will commence from 1 September 2023.

DfE and DBT are working closely with the further education sector to ensure they are

able to unlock potential long-term partnerships stemming from the Turing Scheme.

## Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme

The Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme, for those who have been relocated to the UK via Operation Pitting, launched in April 2022. Universities across England, Scotland, and Wales are participating.

For the 2021 to 2022 academic year, the Warm Welcome Scheme awarded 34 scholarships to eligible scholars. For courses starting within the 2022 to 2023 academic year, 68 scholarships were awarded to eligible scholars. The programme will conclude when the 102 scholars have completed their studies, by July 2027.

## Study UK

Study UK, funded by the British Council and GREAT, focuses on promoting UK education in key international student recruitment markets. Headline markets include China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, USA, France and Germany. It provides information to undergraduate and postgraduate audiences, plus parents and influencers. A refreshed [Study UK](#) website was launched in July 2022 with a new design, enhanced content, and added functionality. The redesign took place following a consultation period with the HE sector, and audience research. The new site features a comprehensive course and scholarship search, provided by IDP Connect. It helps prospective students refine their options when researching UK study opportunities and enables them to make direct enquiries with institutions.

## Transnational education (TNE) and Market Barriers

The UK government works closely with the British Council and education sector to target priority market access barriers for resolution. In July 2022, the UK achieved a landmark agreement with India to progress Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications. This means that A-levels and their equivalents, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees will now be recognised in India. It will allow Indian graduates from UK universities to apply for postgraduate qualifications, or embark on government careers in India that require university qualifications. DBT continue to work with the education and skills sector to [report trade barriers](#), which informs government-to-government engagement on facilitating trade and supporting UK exports.

## Devolved government engagement in the International Education Strategy

The IES is a UK-wide strategy (trade/international relations is reserved while education is devolved), representing overall UK policy. The governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are key partners in ensuring that the IES is relevant for the whole of the UK. They are also valued members of the Education Sector Advisory Group (ESAG) which supports the implementation of the IES.

Northern Ireland continues to support the implementation of the IES.

Wendy Alexander (Vice-Principal International at the University of Dundee and Scottish Higher Education Trade Envoy) champions the Scottish education sector at international events and attends visits with Sir Steve Smith, the UK government's International Education Champion. This collaborative approach ensures promotion of Scotland's education sector, whilst highlighting working together to achieve joint outcomes as part of the IES. The Scottish government will continue to work with universities and colleges to promote Scotland's education offer globally. This will attract a diverse range of students to Scottish institutions, through promotion of the Study in Scotland website.

The Welsh government's innovative Taith mobility programme, which is in its second year, continues to build on already strong relationships. The £65 million investment brings together education providers and supports learners and staff at all levels in Wales – from primary through to postgraduate. It is also reciprocal, enabling multi-year project partnerships built on the mutual respect that underpins successful international collaboration. Taith will provide 25,000 opportunities for learners and staff by 2026. Taith is one key part of a wider approach to international education. For example, £10.28 million will be invested in the Global Wales project for the next four years. This project will progress key international partnerships and sustainably grow international student recruitment for universities and colleges.

With the UK Skills Partnership, DBT works closely with further education and skills providers across parts of the United Kingdom working with Colleges Wales International, Colleges Scotland and Northern Ireland Colleges.

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