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[Department for Business & Trade](#)



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Policy paper

Annex A: progress against the ongoing actions of the 2019 International Education Strategy and the 2021 update

Published 26 May 2023

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2019 International Education Strategy actions

Action 3 (2019): visa offer

The UK government keeps the visa system under review to ensure it remains fit for purpose and that the UK's visa system is world-class. Government will strengthen the UK's visa offer for international higher education students by increasing the post-study leave period and making it easier for students to move into skilled work after graduation.

Timeline

Complete

Progress

The graduate route went live on 1 July 2021 and the skilled worker route went live on 1 December 2020.

Action 4 (2019): visa customer journey

The UK government will keep the visa application process for international students under review, with the aim of improving the customer journey, both for students and their sponsoring institutions. This will include reviewing processes for conducting interviews to ensure that these are appropriately focussed and to minimise inconvenience for applicants.

Timeline

Ongoing – Review early 2024

Progress

Home Office are working on a project to update IT systems and improve the user experience of the sponsor system.

Action 9 (2019): education exports data

The UK government will provide a clearer picture of exports activity by improving the accuracy and coverage of education exports data. The Department for Education, in partnership with the Department for Business and Trade, the sector and other key bodies such as the Office for National Statistics, will work in between each annual data publication to strengthen the methodology, identify a better range of sources, and look for ways to deliver more accurate, up-to-date reporting. Throughout, government will continue to look for ways to develop our picture of the global education market and regional trends, where the data allows, to better inform government and sector priorities.

Timeline

Ongoing – Review early 2024

Progress

The UK government will provide a clearer picture of exports activity by improving the accuracy and coverage of education exports data.

In March 2023, the UK government published a report from the London School of Economics (LSE) on the taxonomy of education exports. The report reviewed existing methodologies to quantify the value of UK education exports and provided recommendations to improve data collection. The Department for Education, the Department for Business and Trade, the Office for National Statistics and the UK education sector will keep working together to improve the education exports methodology, following the recommendations from the LSE report.

DBT working closely with the UK Skills Partnership to develop robust data sources from further education and skills providers in order to understand the full scale and scope of skills related international activity. The first UKSP International Market

Report was produced in 2022 - with plans to produce another more detailed analysis in later 2023.

Action 13 (2019): quality and safety of schools

The Department for Education, working with the Department for Business and Trade, will coordinate efforts across government and key sector bodies to promote the quality and safety of our schools, both in the UK and overseas, by advocating the British Schools Overseas Inspection Scheme. We will encourage independent schools to have a better understanding of guardian arrangements, learning from those schools that do this well and the important role of accreditation bodies.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

The Department for Education met with British Schools Overseas (BSO) inspectorates and associations in March 2023. The purpose was to seek their views on proposed updates to the BSO Standards. To further support associations with promoting BSO, updated Standards were published in April 2023 and include information for schools on the benefits of being a BSO accredited school.

On the national minimum standards for boarding and residential special schools, we are considering how to improve the requirements for guardian arrangements.

Action 15 (2019): English Language Training (ELT) sector engagement

The Department for Business and Trade will inform the UK ELT sector of global opportunities linked to other industries. We will ensure that ELT providers have the opportunity to take part in a broader range of Department for Business and Trade-led activity where ELT could play a more prominent role. From 2019, we will hold webinars and workshops in the UK to share sector best practice and identify large-scale international projects run by other UK exporters that require skills and training, which can be supported by language training.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

Workshops and webinars have continued to be held on a regular basis, including Export Academy workshops for new to market organisations.

All presentations highlight the [events home](#) which lists activities across Department for Business and Trade where ELT providers can promote sector-specific training. ELT providers have engaged in missions to market in Vietnam and Malaysia alongside Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Teacher Training providers.

Sector engagement has focussed primarily on promotion and rebuilding the sector post-pandemic through the [English with confidence campaign](#) and funding of UK familiarisation trips. As the UK sector recovers, there is a renewed drive to go out to market and look at in-country opportunities, with ELT missions planned in 2023.

Action 16 (2019): promotion of English Language Training (ELT) sector

The Department for Business and Trade will utilise our exports pipeline database and exploit opportunities overseas to promote the English Language and the UK ELT sector, as valuable contributors to individual and national prosperity. From 2019, the Department for Business and Trade will host joint webinars with the British Council to raise awareness of the ELT offer for the benefit of the UK education sector.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

The Department for Business and Trade hosted joint presentations with the British Council to the sector which continue to move from opportunity promotion to opportunity creation.

The Department for Business and Trade has supported and promoted opportunities identified by the British Council, including Digital Innovation funding in India and Vietnam. By sharing these opportunities with our UK ELT networks we help to ensure that the range of responses reflects the wide variety of solutions across UK ELT sector.

Action 19 (2019): value of Transnational Education

The Department for Education and Department for Business and Trade will work with the higher education sector and the British Council to identify more accurately the overall value of TNE to the UK economy. We will seek to provide insight into potential markets for both new and existing providers, and to improve the overall evidence base around best practice and impact.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

In late 2022, the British Council published [The Value of Transnational Education Partnerships](#) report with the aim to better understand the value and impact of TNE partnerships. The research identified the varied value of TNE to the UK economy. This covers monetary returns, recruitment of international students and diversification of revenue for HE providers. It also covers increased reputation, internationalisation, and expansion of research, knowledge base and knowledge diplomacy. The report included 23 impact case studies, showcasing best practice and impact.

In October 2022, the British Council published the report '[Environment for Transnational Education Partnerships and UK Qualifications: Challenges and Opportunities](#)'. This focused on 16 countries, identifying challenges for institutions, regulatory bodies and government and setting a series of strategic recommendations for actors at all levels.

The Department for Business and Trade led several in-person HE TNE Missions to key markets in 2022. This included delegations led by Sir Steve Smith to India, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Online webinars were conducted focusing on Central and Eastern Europe, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco and Algeria. Incoming delegations were welcomed from Kazakhstan, Brazil and Mexico in early 2023. Further overseas missions, and incoming delegations are expected throughout the

rest of the calendar year.

For further information about education exports data, which includes TNE, refer to Action 9 (2019).

Action 20 (2019): barriers to TNE growth

The Department for Business and Trade will support the sector to grow TNE by engaging in dialogue with countries with recognised export potential. We will work to resolve regulatory barriers through international agreements and the work of the International Education Champion. We will work to ensure these agreements include the recognition of UK degrees, including online and blended learning programmes.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

In 2022, the Department for Business and Trade led three in-person HE TNE Missions to India, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, with more planned in 2023. These visits included government to government discussions, as well as institutional level interactions. With support across UK government, Sir Steve Smith visited all five of his priority countries set out in the IES. Regulatory barriers were raised during government meetings in each country. In November 2022, British Council delivered their Going Global Conference in Singapore. British Council also delivered their Going Global Partnerships grant programme, which supports new international TNE partnerships.

The Department for Business and Trade, Department for Education and the British Council provided input into TNE Guidelines requested by the Nigerian Universities Commission. They also provided input to the India University Grants Commission consultations on International Branch Campuses, incorporating views from the UK HE Sector. The UK and India signed a landmark Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQ) agreement on 21st July 2022. Work continues on mutual qualification recognition with other countries, including members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

2021 International Education Strategy actions

Action 1 (2021): International Education Champion

The International Education Champion's immediate priority countries are India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Nigeria. These priorities reflect where there is significant potential for growth and where the Champion could both open up opportunities and address barriers to that potential. Other important regional markets for the International Education Champion will include Brazil, Mexico, Pakistan, Europe, China and Hong Kong.

Timeline

Ongoing – Review early 2024

Progress

Sir Steve Smith has continued extensive engagement with the UK government, the devolved governments, the British Council and the UK education sector. This has created greater cross-departmental working and strengthened a coordinated, UK-wide approach to promoting education exports overseas.

Sir Steve Smith visited each of his immediate priority countries in 2022: India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, and Nigeria. Sir Steve Smith has also undertaken extensive engagement with governments of other important regional markets. This has included in-person attendance of several international education conferences in the UK. These engagements have further developed relations and have helped identify export opportunities.

An example of this is the Education World Forum which took place in May 2023, supported by the Department for Education, Department for Business and Trade and the British Council. It is the largest annual gathering of education and skills ministers from across the world. The Forum brings together Ministers of Education, Higher Education and Skills, their advisors and delegations from across the world to address key issues and to share the solutions they have found, the learning that has occurred and the successes they have achieved.

In 2023, the International Education Champion has further planned visits to his priority countries. Plans are also being made for engagement with his other longer-term priority markets, such as Pakistan in 2023 to 2024.

Action 2 (2021): free trade agreements

The Department for Business and Trade and the Department for Education will promote education in future FTAs and ensure the sector's views are represented.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

Free Trade Agreements continue to present opportunities to enhance the UK's international role, improve market access and deepen cooperation arrangements in education. The Department for Education and Department for Business and Trade continue to support the sector and promote education in trade negotiations.

More recently, other trade instruments such as Enhanced Trade Partnerships (ETPs) also present potential opportunities for education. The Department for Education and Department for Business and Trade are engaging in a number of ETPs to ensure we make the most of opportunities that contribute towards increasing education exports and collaboration.

Action 3 (2021): streamlined application process for international students

The Department for Education will work with the HE sector and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to ensure there is clearer, more accessible information for international students wishing to study in the UK. This will include information and advice tailored to students' needs, including links to the immigration system.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

UCAS supported almost 140,000 international applicants during the [2022 undergraduate admissions cycle](#), with an additional 150,000 pre-applicants making use of its Student [Hub](#) resources to discover UK HE. [Myriad by UCAS](#), the new dedicated discovery and application platform for international postgraduate students, launched in 2022. It is now used in over 200 countries and territories, and has been downloaded by 90,000 prospective international applicants.

In May 2022, UCAS published its latest international-focussed [Where next? report](#). This explored who and what influenced the choices international students make when considering higher education overseas. It found 70% of those applying or planning to apply to the UK also consider other destinations. [UCAS forecasts](#) that annual demand from international undergraduate students could reach 200,000 by 2030. The focus on ensuring a positive experience of international applicants looking to enter UK higher education is fundamental in maintaining the UK's competitive position. To support this increase in demand, UCAS is completing an International Admissions Review in Summer 2023. This will consult on how UCAS can better personalise and streamline for all parties, as well as launching its first country specific Where Next? report on China.

UCAS continues to work with the UK government and education sector colleagues to ensure international applicants and their advisers have access to the latest information tailored to their needs. This includes website improvements and regular webinars throughout the 2023 cycle in collaboration with relevant sector bodies. Through a 2023 website development, UCAS will host content supplied by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to inform international applicants and advisers at earlier stages of their admissions journey.

The British Council launched a free online training and engagement hub aimed at education agents and counsellors who help to recruit international students to the UK. This hub forms part of the UK's Quality Framework for Education Agents. It supports agents and counsellors to understand the UK education system and better promote the UK as an international study destination. A list of agents and counsellors completing the training and signing up to the UK Code of Conduct will be published on their public-facing website.

The UK Quality Agent Framework aims to ensure all those that advise prospective international students have the right level of knowledge and expertise about the UK as a study destination. It also seeks to ensure that agents and counsellors understand the UK's ethical code of conduct for student mobility. The Framework will help to maintain the UK's reputation as a quality study destination, improve the experience of international students, and support the ambition for sustainable growth.

In addition, the Department for Education and the Home Office will work closely with the HE sector to ensure that recruitment agents are operating fairly and transparently as part of reforms to the student visa route.

Action 4 (2021): financial options for international students

Universities UK International will convene alternative finance providers, sector and student representatives together, in order to raise awareness of the financial options available to international students and how products could be improved to meet demand.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

Following discussions with member institutions and desk-based research, Universities UK International has met with organisations that offer alternative finance options for international students who cannot access traditional student finance in the UK. This is with a view to holding a wider roundtable with sector and student representatives in due course.

Action 5 (2021): academic experience of international students

The Office for Students (OfS) together with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), will launch a new project that will aim to find ‘what works’ in ensuring international students can integrate and receive a fulfilling academic experience in the UK. It will explore the positive impact international students have on home students, and what longer term lessons can be learnt from their response to the coronavirus pandemic on provider-level delivery and student engagement.

Timeline

16 January 2023 – Action complete

Progress

On 16th January 2023, a report on international student integration and experience was published. This was in partnership with London School of Economics (LSE) Consulting, the Office for Students (OfS) and UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA).

This report explores ‘what works’ to ensure international students can integrate and receive a fulfilling academic experience and explores the following themes:

- accessibility and effectiveness of well-being and support services for international students
- how responding to Covid-19 has shaped practice in supporting international students to adapt and integrate into UK higher education
- work done to prevent and tackle harassment and sexual misconduct

The report can be found on the OfS publication [website](#)

Action 6 (2021): employability of international students

The UK Council for International Student Affairs will collaborate with the Confederation of British Industry, Universities UK International, and key education and employer groups to support international student employability. This group will build understanding of the UK’s skills needs, international labour markets, and barriers to international graduate employability and share examples of best practice across the sector.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) continues to convene the International Students Employability Group (ISEG). It has published a [report](#) analysing research into the Graduate Route experience: "International Graduate Routes: Narratives from the UK Job Market". This included [case studies](#) illustrating the international student experience of the Graduate Route. UKCISA is also in the process of creating a toolkit for employers to better understand the rules and the benefits of employing international students and graduates. Members of the ISEG attended and spoke at two All Party Parliamentary Group meetings focussed on international student employability in May and November 2022.

Action 7 (2021): system-to-system engagement

The Department for Business and Trade will lead system-to-system engagement to develop trading partners with whom the UK education sector can engage over the long term. We will work with development banks and donor organisations to develop the sector's contact with these organisations, to ensure it is engaged in opportunities for business.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

Sir Steve Smith and Department for Education and Department for Business and Trade visited the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in late 2022. They also took part in sessions with the ADB during BETT Global 2023 in the UK. Similar engagement is ongoing in other regions as well.

In the Middle East and Pakistan, the Department for Business and Trade is facilitating an ongoing dialogue with regional, government and financial entities. These include Royal Commissions, Economic Cities and regional actors such as the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS).

DBT continue their partnership with the ASEAN region. As ASEAN Dialogue Partner, DBT has brought together UK skills providers to deliver 14 online workshops and knowledge sharing sessions in 2022-2023. Through SEAMEO and its TVET Council, this will be further strengthened with more opportunities for bilateral engagement in 2023-2024.

Action 8 (2021): International Qualified Teacher Status (IQTS)

The Department for Education will work with teacher training providers to establish a new international teaching qualification, 'International Qualified Teacher Status', that will provide an opportunity for teachers around the world to train to world-respected domestic standards. As well as providing more opportunities for teacher training providers, this will support the spread of high-quality teaching, and provide further opportunities for the UK to build lasting and positive relationships around the world.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

International qualified teacher status (iQTS) is a new teaching qualification backed by the Department for Education and the UK government. iQTS meets the same high standards as English [qualified teacher status \(QTS\)](#) and leads to the automatic award of QTS. Applicants for iQTS train where they live and work, with no need to visit the UK.

The iQTS programme launched in September with six English teacher training providers delivering iQTS in over 40 different countries. Feedback from trainees and schools involved in the programme has been positive, demonstrating the high-quality of this qualification. Earlier this year an additional number of English Initial Teacher Training providers were approved by the department to offer iQTS. We expect to see iQTS to continue to grow over the coming years and become available in more countries.

The iQTS programme is making high quality teacher training accessible all around the world so that schools outside the UK can recruit, retain and develop local talent and further contribute to the global pool of teachers. We look forward to continuing to work with the education sector to promote and grow iQTS.

Action 9 (2021): market barriers

The Department for Education, the Department for Business and Trade and the International Education Champion will work with the British Council and the sector to address market barriers to the growth of UK education exports. This will help facilitate the expansion of TNE, including online and blended learning models.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

The UK government works closely with the British Council and education sector to target priority market access barriers for resolution.

Additionally, providers are being encouraged to report international trade related barriers and challenges via the Department for Business and Trade website. These are then managed by the relevant teams in the UK and at Post.

In October 2022 the British Council published the [Environment for Transnational Education Partnerships and UK Qualifications: Challenges and Opportunities](#) report. This focused on 16 countries, including market and regulatory barriers.

In July 2022, the UK achieved a landmark agreement with India to progress Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications. Other successes in 2022 and 2023, supported by the work of the British Council, include:

- bilateral government-to-government agreements have been signed with Brazil, Nigeria, and Vietnam, which will enable UK education providers to offer TNE programmes with local partners
- five Philippine universities have started their partnership with UK universities to support TNE development under the 'Access and Competitiveness through Internationalisation of Higher Education (ACT-IHE)' programme
- the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) signed an agreement to partner on the Newton Agham programme. This promotes economic development and social welfare in the Philippines through science and innovation partnerships with the UK
- in Peru, 15 Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are involved in developing a roadmap to establish a joint and dual masters degree in STEM

- in Vietnam, 3 partnerships between 5 UK and 10 Vietnamese universities were signed. There is also an ongoing funding opportunity to support digital transformation in Vietnamese universities
- through our Pakistan UK-Education Gateway, a new and practical handbook for TNE has been approved by the Higher Education Commission, creating new opportunities for TNE partnerships

Action 10 (2021): alumni activity

Following a recommendation in the 2019 Tailored Review of the British Council to take a more structured approach to its alumni activity, the British Council is exploring options for attracting and supporting a global UK alumni network.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

The British Council registered 11,637 international UK alumni for its first ever global online professional development festival, [Alumni UK Live](#). The festival had 13 sessions across time zones, and took place from Monday 27-Friday 31 March 2023, featuring 40 inspirational speakers from 18 countries.

Key themes during the festival included the future of work, tackling gender equality, entrepreneurship, addressing global changes and leadership in practice.

Action 11 (2021): UK Export Finance (UKEF) offer to the education sector

UK Export Finance will tailor its marketing and communications activity for the whole of the education sector, to boost awareness and understanding of the sector's access to UKEF products. The Department for Business and Trade will also work to promote and ensure an understanding of the UKEF offer across the education sector.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

UKEF support is available for exporters and businesses with export potential in the education sector. UKEF continues to work through the Department for Business and Trade to ensure that its offer is well understood across the sector so that businesses can access export finance support, including through targeted marketing campaigns and communication. In 2021-22, UKEF support mobilised the finance to enable a UK education sector exporter to win a contract to supply educational materials to Turkey.

The Department for Business and Trade continue to promote UKEF's offer and support in engagements with the education sector.

Action 12 (2021): opportunities for UK chartered professional bodies

The Department for Business and Trade will scope opportunities for partnership and export for UK chartered professional bodies. Department for Business and Trade will connect overseas demand for chartered status to UK organisations. We will ensure we effectively communicate these opportunities to the sector, and we will run trade missions specifically for chartered professional bodies.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review early 2024

Progress

The number of professional bodies, both chartered and non-chartered, regularly engaged by DBT specialists has increased from 22 to 56, with individual support provided to 53. Professional bodies are now represented by the Chartered Management Institute within the UK Skills Partnership. The Department for Business and Trade are working on a market access issue relating to the recognition of chartered bodies in the GCC, China and India. Professional bodies have participated in skills trade missions to India, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam in 2022 and early 2023. 23 professional bodies have participated in UK webinar showcases covering ASEAN, China, Mexico India, the GCC.

Throughout 2023/2024, the Department for Business and Trade will support further participation in skills trade missions, skills roundtables and online showcases. The Department for Business and Trade will support the further integration of professional bodies into the UK Skills Partnership. The Department for Business and Trade will continue the implementation of professional bodies in sub-sector meetings and continue support to negate the market access issue relating to recognition of chartered bodies.

Action 13 (2021): exporting UK SEND services

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) will identify high value export opportunities for UK SEND providers. Department for Business and Trade will work with the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN), the UK SEND sector and other government departments to develop an effective and collaborative approach to this work.

Timeline

Ongoing – Review early 2024

Progress

The Department for Business and Trade continues to work across UK government and the education sector, including NASEN, British Council and British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), to identify high value SEND export opportunities.

Recent activity includes incorporating SEND into overseas trade delegations, including to Saudi Arabia. Department for Business and Trade continue to work with the Department for Education to identify opportunities for government-to-government SEND policy exchange. This enables the sharing of international best practice and unlocks public and private SEND partnership opportunities.

In 2023, the Department for Business and Trade aims to review the previously collected database of UK SEND companies and previously identified priority countries. Continued integration of SEND in overseas trade activity also remains a priority.

Action 14 (2021): developing investment opportunities in the UK education sector

The Department for Business and Trade will develop its investment offer and identify opportunities for the education sector, beyond EdTech.

Timeline

Ongoing - Review mid 2024

Progress:

The EdTech market has grown significantly during the pandemic as classroom learning went online. This created a growing opportunity for the UK to further cement its position as the European leader on EdTech. We have seen a major increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) “wins” i.e. investment projects in EdTech, significantly exceeding our target, as well as increased demand for EdTech from changing consumer trends. We are launching a refreshed EdTech proposition to reflect rapid growth in the sector.

We will scope out further potential opportunities for FDI in other parts of the education sector.

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