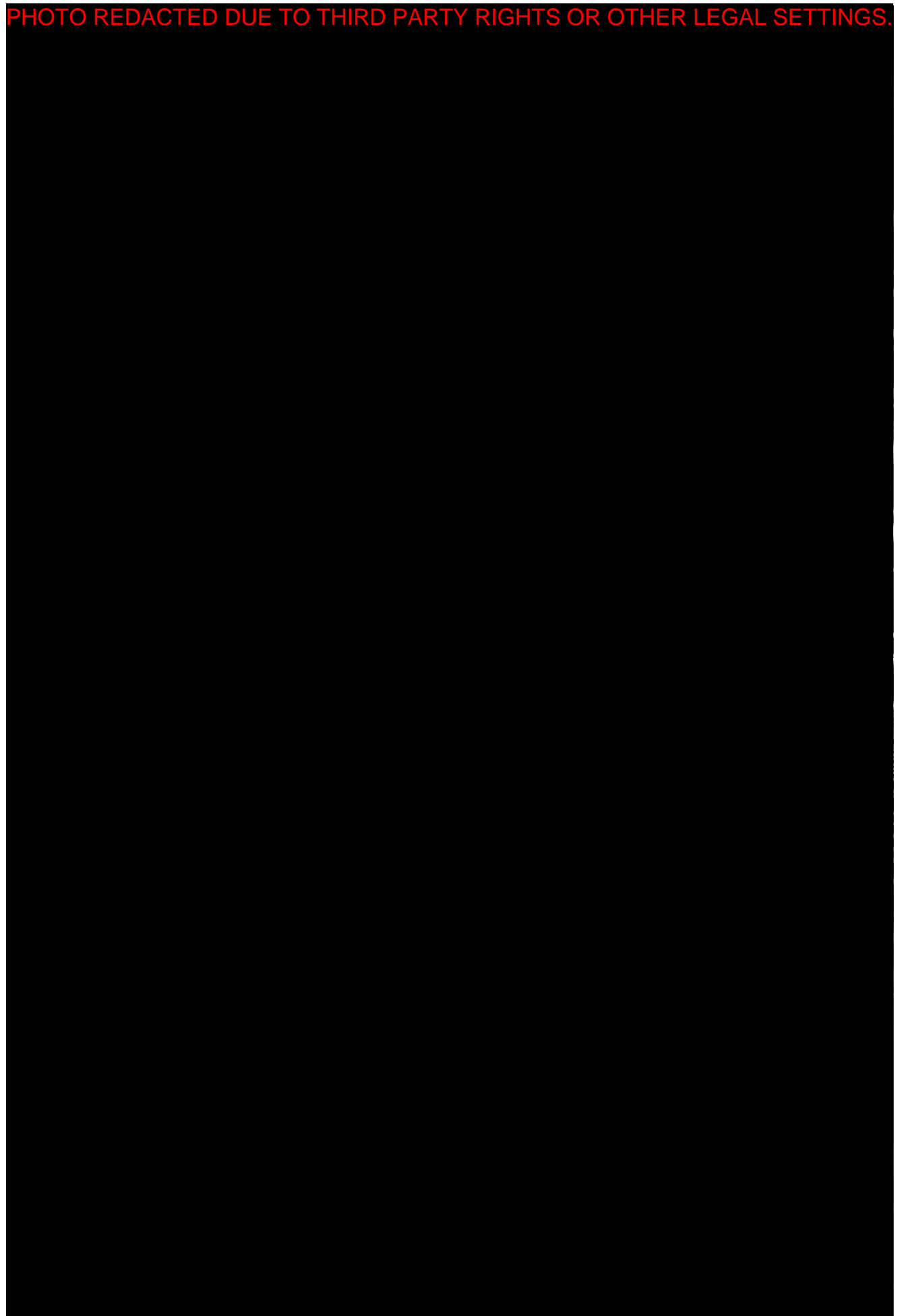


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# Ministerial Foreword



**The Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern**  
Minister of State for Skills and Women and Equalities



**Sir Chris Bryant MP**  
Minister of State for Trade



**The Rt Hon Baroness Chapman of Darlington**  
Minister of State for International Development and Africa

**The world is changing fast. Geopolitical tensions, rapid technological innovation, and urgent challenges such as climate change are reshaping the way nations interact and the skills people need to thrive. In this uncertain world, education matters more than ever. This International Education Strategy sets out how we will use our country's strengths in education to expand growth and opportunity beyond our borders while serving the national interest.**

The United Kingdom has a strong tradition of international education that changes lives globally and builds trust in the UK. Our world-class institutions, qualifications and research support high-skilled jobs, drive innovation, attract investment and build people-to-people links for the UK. As a powerful and immersive experience, the UK's education offer leaves a long-lasting impact.

This strategy forms part of the Government's Plan for Change, supporting the missions that guide our path to national renewal by increasing exports, supporting skilled employment and broadening access to high-quality education provision.

Our strategy is built around three core ambitions:

1. We will **increase the UK's international standing through education** and make the UK the global partner of choice at every stage of learning – a system trusted to deliver excellence and opportunity wherever it operates.
2. We will continue to **sustainably recruit high-quality international students** from a diverse range of countries, helping them become global changemakers and lifelong advocates for UK values.
3. We have set a bold ambition for the UK's thriving education sector: to collectively **grow education exports to £40 billion per year** by 2030.

Leadership of this agenda now sits firmly across the Government, with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office joining the Department for Education and the Department for Business and Trade as co-owners of the strategy. The UK is taking a new diplomacy-led approach, by appointing Heads of Missions to drive education-industry collaboration to meet demand from our global partners. Across all our missions, we will continue to harness UK diplomatic levers to protect and promote women's and girls' right to education and learning globally.

We recognise and value the important role our education sector plays in this endeavour and are empowering it to lead on delivery at every level of study through a new Education Sector Action Group. Together with the International Education Champion and key strategic partners such as the British Council, we will tackle barriers and amplify the impact of UK education internationally.

The commitments in this strategy set a clear and confident direction for the UK's role in global education: stronger partnerships, support for skills and institutional development, growth in education exports, and shared prosperity. These commitments will help to shape a world where education unlocks opportunity for everyone.

# Executive summary

**Education is one of the UK's most important global assets, connecting people, driving shared prosperity, and shaping a more peaceful, innovative, and inclusive future. In an increasingly uncertain world, education matters more than ever – it equips individuals to succeed, societies to prosper, and nations to build the partnerships needed for global stability and growth.**

As a world leader in education, the UK is uniquely equipped to meet this challenge. From early years and schools to colleges, universities, training providers and awarding bodies, institutions across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are globally trusted for their quality and impact. 59 serving world leaders were educated in the UK<sup>1</sup> and over 1.35 million international higher education students are currently studying towards UK qualifications in the UK and overseas.<sup>2</sup> Our universities produce world-leading research and innovation, leading advances in fields including global health and sustainable development. The UK's education system at every level offers a stable, sustainable, and internationally collaborative foundation for long-term partnerships and shared progress.

At a time of unprecedented global demand, UK education is not only one of our most successful exports – generating £32.3 billion per year<sup>3</sup> for our economy and creating jobs across the UK – but also one of our greatest contributions to addressing shared global challenges. UK providers lead in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence and green technologies, backed by rigorous quality assurance and a proven track record in scalable delivery. Through the UK's Official Development Assistance and partnership approach, we lay the foundations for mutually beneficial relationships.

This strategy places our world-class education system at the heart of the UK's global engagement. As set out in our Plan for Change, the Government's priority mission is to deliver a decade of national renewal underpinned by strong, secure, and sustainable economic growth. The International Education Strategy recognises that global education partnerships are critical to this mission and continued global influence. Together with the International Education Champion, we will embed education and skills as a central theme across our global partnerships to support this vision.

### **Our ambitions are clear:**

#### **1. To increase the UK's international standing through education and make the UK the global partner of choice at every stage of learning.**

- We will leverage the UK's diplomatic network and British Council presence to build bridges across cultures and sectors, deepen

global ties, and support strategic collaboration and the strengthening of education systems.

- We will grow the Government's leadership in transnational education (TNE), working closely with the sector and the British Council to expand access and impact of high-quality UK education provision overseas.
- We will champion the UK as a trusted global partner in research, science and technology by strengthening international collaboration, showcasing UK excellence, and leveraging our global networks to enhance the UK's international standing.
- We will create opportunities for more young people in the UK to study, work and volunteer abroad, building the confidence and the skills needed to thrive in a globalised world.
- We will continue tackling global education challenges, including improving access for women and girls, strengthening foundational learning, and embedding climate adaptation and resilience.
- We will expand global recognition of UK academic and professional qualifications to support skilled migration, trade in services, and international education.



## **2. To sustainably recruit high-quality international higher education students from a diverse range of countries.**

- We will support the sustainable recruitment of high-quality international students to the UK's world-class higher education institutions by putting student experience, quality outcomes, and responsible recruitment at the heart of our approach.
- We will ensure the UK's offer to international higher education students remains globally competitive and aligned with the UK Government's wider immigration and skills priorities.
- We will continue to promote the UK as a preferred destination for study and research through the Study UK campaign, delivered and co-funded by the British Council as part of the GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland Campaign.

## **3. To collectively grow education exports to £40 billion per year by 2030.**

- We will work with the full breadth of the sector, aligning with the UK's Plan for Change to reach the ambition of £40 billion in annual education exports.
- We will support the International Education Champion to drive education export growth and partnerships in their focus countries.

- We will promote the UK education offer as high-quality, innovative and values driven. We will support exporters, including through the UK Export Academy and the wider HMG overseas network.
- We will support UK education providers to access financial instruments and practical support, including UK Export Finance, to help overcome barriers and grow internationally.
- We will work with education providers and businesses to develop industry-led action plans to increase the value of education exports.

This strategy is a joint commitment across government, developed in close collaboration with the education sector across the UK and the devolved governments. It is co-owned by the Department for Education, the Department for Business and Trade, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. To deliver on this ambitious strategy, we will work in partnership with the UK Government's International Education Champion and a repurposed Education Sector Action Group representing the education sector across the entire UK.

# Introduction

## The UK's offer to the world as a global leader in education

By 2030 the world's population will exceed 8.5 billion, placing huge pressure on education systems at every stage of learning. Education accounts for 50% of global economic growth, 70% of income gains among the world's poorest 20%, and 40% of extreme poverty reduction since 1980.<sup>4</sup> High-quality education gives children the foundations to thrive, equips young people with the technical skills economies need, and drives innovation that shapes our collective future.

The global education market continues to rapidly expand and evolve, becoming ever more diverse and competitive, with increased competition from both traditional and newer regional actors investing heavily in expanding their global market share. The growing strength of our competitors means we must take steps to preserve the UK's world-leading position even in countries where the UK has a strong presence, including promoting the full spectrum of the UK's education offer. We see diversification across sub-sectors as key to long-term success. We must remain agile and responsive to emerging global opportunities, while cementing our position as global partner of choice through our enduring partnerships and strong people-to-people links.

The UK is recognised worldwide for its diversity and excellence in education. England, Northern Ireland, Scotland<sup>5</sup> and Wales each have distinctive approaches and priorities, but all share a commitment to quality, excellence and global collaboration. Together, they enable the UK to meet rising global demand through outstanding education diplomacy and a world-class international education offer spanning the entire sector.

## **Early years and schools**

The UK's early years provision is recognised worldwide for robust safeguarding and its discovery-based approach to learning which actively nurtures social and emotional development. In England, this is underpinned by the Early Foundation Stage (EYFS) and in Scotland by the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), with equally effective frameworks in Northern Ireland and Wales.

School curricula inspired by the UK education system are among the most widely adopted globally, collectively accounting for over 40% of international school offerings.<sup>6</sup> This reflects the strengths of our education system across the UK. In England, for example, cognitive science has shaped the National Curriculum's knowledge-rich approach, helping pupils build deep subject understanding, with the 2025 Curriculum and Assessment Review highlighting its positive impact on attainment. The Education Endowment Foundation provides evidence on strategies to raise achievement, especially for disadvantaged pupils, and influences policy and practice across education settings. In Scotland, the First Minister's International Council of Education Advisers

stated in its most recent report that Scottish education is well recognised globally as valuing both equity and excellence. A Curriculum Improvement Cycle is underway, building on the key strengths of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence while making improvements to ensure it remains forward looking and supports high quality teaching and learning. Wales and Northern Ireland have similarly strong approaches.

Central to the appeal of British international schools is quality assurance and a staunch commitment to raising safeguarding standards. More than 300 international schools across 60+ countries are accredited under the British Schools Overseas (BSO) programme, showcasing UK ethos and standards worldwide.<sup>7</sup> Ofsted monitors BSO accreditation inspections and reports on their quality annually. Our International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS) programme opens new opportunities for international teachers, strengthening the global workforce.

## **Colleges, universities and independent training providers**

The UK offers a world-class skills and training ecosystem that powers economies and transforms workforces. In the 2024/25 academic year, over 703,000 apprentices participated in training programmes in England alone,<sup>8</sup> with similarly strong systems in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. More than 1.6 million adults engaged in further education and skills programmes,<sup>9</sup> many of which were co-designed with employers to meet evolving labour market needs.

UK providers deliver modular, industry-aligned training across areas such as leadership, digital transformation, sustainability, and technical operations, offered through flexible formats – on-site, online, and hybrid – ensuring accessibility across geographies. UK qualifications are internationally recognised, enabling career mobility and supporting workforce upskilling.

Chartered Bodies and accredited institutions also support lifelong learning across more than 180 countries,<sup>10</sup> contributing to global education and workforce development. These organisations play a vital role in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and in partnerships with higher education institutions. They offer employer-driven curricula, competency-based assessments, and internationally recognised qualifications that support career progression and skills development.

UK experts and providers collaborate with overseas governments, donors, employers, and education institutions to co-design curricula, build institutional capacity, and close skills gaps. These partnerships span sectors such as renewable energy, aeronautical engineering, sustainable agriculture, and technical skills, supported by initiatives like the British Council's Going Global Partnerships and the UK Skills Partnership.

UK universities are among the world's best, with 17 ranked in the global top 100.<sup>11</sup> Through transnational education partnerships, universities deliver degrees in 188 countries and territories worldwide,<sup>12</sup> widening access to UK qualifications to those who are unable to come to the UK.

Through research excellence they generate breakthroughs ranging from new vaccines to clean energy innovation. International students and research talent in the UK amplify this impact. Around 60% of UK publications include an international co-author<sup>13</sup> and in 2023-24, 33% of academic staff at UK higher education providers (77,780 individuals) were non-UK nationals,<sup>14</sup> providing a valuable intercultural dimension to our academic curriculum and research efforts.

## EdTech

The UK is home to one of the world's largest and most innovative EdTech sectors. British companies are pioneering solutions in AI-driven adaptive learning, digital assessment, and assistive technologies that deliver inclusive, future-ready classrooms. Characterised by its commitment to impact-driven deployment and close collaboration with educators, the UK's EdTech sector is well placed to respond to the ever-growing international demand for digital solutions.

Government support for the sector ensures continued innovation and international growth, helping learners worldwide access high-quality, tech-enabled education. The UK's AI Opportunities Action Plan reinforces this ambition, promoting safe, effective, and inclusive use of AI in education to reduce teacher workload, personalise learning, and improve outcomes across diverse settings.

## English Language Training (ELT)

English is the global language of education, commerce, and diplomacy and the UK is its foremost champion. With a rich literary heritage and world-renowned institutions, the UK delivers high-quality English language teaching, assessment and teacher training that supports learners across professional, academic, and cultural contexts. British English remains the benchmark for global communication.

## Educational travel and short courses

Educational travel plays an important role in the UK's international education ecosystem through short courses and bite-sized programmes, micro-credentials, continuous professional development, and lifelong learning. In 2023, the UK welcomed 12.5 million youth and student travellers – 33%<sup>15</sup> of all international arrivals – whose participation supports local economies and fosters global connections. These experiences complement formal education and strengthen the UK's reputation as a welcoming, world-class study destination.

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The UK is a recognised leader in inclusive education, with decades of experience in supporting learners with SEND. British expertise in inclusive pedagogy, policy, and technology is shared globally through partnerships that improve outcomes for learners with diverse needs. The UK's long commitment to an inclusion-first approach has made us a partner of preference for many governments, institutions, and families with key strengths in diagnostics, inclusive delivery solutions, and inclusive governance, both at home and overseas.

### **These strengths make the UK a trusted global partner for high-quality education.**

By combining world-class standards with international partnerships, the UK is uniquely placed to meet rising global demand. Equally, education partnerships make us a more inclusive and diverse country – willing to learn and grow with others while delivering mutual benefits and building cooperation on shared issues from human rights to climate action.

**A sector-led promotional document will be published to complement this strategy and set out the UK's offer at every level in greater detail – in the words of our education providers themselves.**

Image: The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom with the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, and leaders from UK universities

## Turning ambition into action

We will continue to embed international priorities across our education system to ensure that UK education at every stage of learning meets global needs. Our goal is simple: a UK education system that unlocks opportunity and growth wherever it operates. Support for the delivery of the strategy includes:

- **Education Sector Action Group (ESAG)** – Sector stakeholders will be central to the successful delivery of this strategy. This reformed Ministerially chaired forum will bring together industry, government, and representative bodies from across the education sector to tackle key concerns and identify opportunities for partnerships. Each representative will lead on an action plan, published within the first 100 days of appointment to ESAG, outlining how their members will support delivery of the three ambitions of this strategy.
- **UK Government** – By combining education, trade, development and diplomatic expertise, DfE, DBT and the FCDO will reinforce the quality of the

UK's education system, support trade partnerships, and promote UK education to overseas partners. The FCDO's inclusion as co-owner of this strategy brings its global diplomatic reach and development expertise, championing education as a driver of sustainable growth and international partnerships. We will use robust data and evidence for strategic decision-making and work across government to embed international education into the priorities of departments including DSIT, Cabinet Office, MHCLG, DWP and the Home Office.

- **HMG's overseas network** – Strong leadership from UK Heads of Missions and His Majesty's Trade Commissioners, supported by the UK's overseas network, including education advisers and trade advisors, helps align UK expertise with local priorities and promotes education as a tool for development, diplomacy, and global influence. The British Council plays a central role in brokering

partnerships that underpin this work. Strategic dialogue through our overseas network removes barriers and unlocks opportunities, shaping country-level planning and amplifying the global reach of UK education.

- **The International Education Champion** – Professor Sir Steve Smith will continue to remove barriers to education partnerships by engaging with his current focus countries of India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. Sir Steve has also responded to opportunities in emerging economies such as Brazil, Mexico and Pakistan.

To facilitate delivery of the three ambitions, we will also draw on a wide range of tools, programmes and partnerships, including:

- **Data and evidence support** – including HMG’s publication of education export revenue estimates to measure progress against the £40 billion ambition.
- **Finance tools** – such as UK Export Finance, helping providers of every size compete and grow internationally.
- **Business support** – advice, and market-entry support including through the UK Export Academy for education providers of every size to compete and grow internationally.
- **Mutual recognition of qualifications** – removing barriers and opening markets by evaluating overseas credentials against UK standards.
- **Mobility programmes** – which provide opportunities for UK students to study and collaborate internationally.
- **Scholarships and alumni networks** – notably Chevening, Commonwealth and Marshall, which support future leaders and strengthen UK influence globally.
- **Research and science and technology partnerships** – through Horizon Europe, the Science and Technology Network, and other collaborations that showcase UK innovation.
- **Education diplomacy** – through strong leadership by UK Heads of Mission, local insights by political counsellors, support from technical advisers, promoting cultural initiatives, and the convening power of embassies and high commissions to promote UK excellence at every level.
- **Marketing campaigns** – such as the British Council’s Study UK campaign, part of the GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland Campaign, which promotes the UK as the preferred study destination in a range of countries. Alumni UK, also coordinated by the British Council, further creates a vibrant global network of UK-educated graduates.
- **International events** – including the UK’s hosting of the Education World Forum – the largest annual gathering of Education Ministers from over 135 countries – as well as British Council’s annual Going Global conference, and the world’s largest EdTech event, BETT UK. These events raise the profile of UK education globally and strengthen partnerships.

# Increasing the UK's international standing through education

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**Education is one of the UK's most powerful tools for global engagement. It builds trust, strengthens systems, and forges enduring links between people, institutions and nations. Through education, the UK promotes shared values of freedom, equality and inclusion, enhancing our international standing and influence. Education partnerships and transnational education (TNE) deepen international ties, unlock collaboration in trade and research, and position the UK as a leader in addressing shared global challenges.**

The UK's education offer is world-renowned. Through TNE our schools, colleges and universities demonstrate excellence in teaching, openness, research and innovation. More than 6,000 UK-oriented schools deliver our curriculum overseas,<sup>16</sup> and over 730,000 international students study in UK higher education institutions.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, more than 620,000 students across 188 countries and territories are registered with UK higher education providers overseas.<sup>18</sup> With less than 1% of the global population, in 2022 the UK accounted for 6% of the world's academic publications and 12% of the world's most highly cited academic publications.<sup>19</sup>

The UK's global presence in education strengthens alliances, builds trust, and enhances the UK's reputation as a partner of choice. UK education overseas unlocks opportunities for our partners, from access to world-class qualifications and institutional capacity building, to support for national development priorities.

Working with overseas governments on education policy often paves the way for closer connections and stronger alliances, generating goodwill towards the UK and benefits that extend beyond the education sector.

The upcoming HMG Soft Power Strategy will set out a renewed commitment to the values, creativity, and global partnerships that define our country's influence in the world. In support of this, the Soft Power Council was established in January 2025 to bring together 26 experts across the domains of the UK's world-class education, creative, sports, science, governance, development and tech sectors. The UK's education offer is fundamental to reinforcing the UK's position as a place of learning, openness, research and innovation – building life-long alliances and deepening trust in the UK.

The Soft Power Strategy and the International Education Strategy will support the UK to promote its education offer as a shared opportunity to strengthen connections and build trust. Proposed initiatives in the Soft Power Strategy include expanding alumni networks, deepening research partnerships and strengthening connections and the sharing of expertise between the UK and other countries.

# Strengthening education diplomacy through strategic government partnerships

**We will leverage the UK's diplomatic network and British Council presence to build bridges across cultures and sectors, deepen global ties, and support strategic collaboration and the strengthening of education systems.**

Deep-rooted relationships and networks are formed through education, leading to invaluable partnerships for the long term.

Each year, the UK responds to hundreds of requests from Ministries of Education seeking UK expertise, from study tours and technical advice to joint policy development and two-way knowledge exchange, inviting global best practices that can be culturally adapted to local contexts. These engagements span joint recognition of qualifications, gender equality, inclusive education, and

financing reforms. They build bridges, expand influence, and diversify the UK's global engagement.

British diplomats with expertise on local politics as well as connections with respective governments play a vital role in facilitating education partnerships. In turbulent geopolitical times, the UK remains a trusted partner – a source of stability, tolerance, and flexibility. Through the UK's overseas missions, the UK will enhance and amplify our education offer by promoting our excellence across the full spectrum of education, including a values-based education accessible to all.

Diplomats will support growing sectors such as TNE and AI by building connections globally and navigating the local political landscape. Drawing on market intelligence from Embassies, High Commissions and British Council offices, we continuously

evaluate opportunities for engagement. This intelligence shapes our priorities and programmes across key regions including Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and select countries in Latin America such as Brazil and Mexico.

We lead by example – committed to ensuring our education system is evidence-informed, accessible and contributes to a sustainable future – while encouraging our partners to do the same. For example, the UK Government expects all nurseries, schools and colleges to have a climate action plan, and in collaboration with leading environmental and education organisations, provides direct support through the innovative Sustainability Support Programme. The programme ensures educational settings are inspired to act and supported to plan and deliver meaningful climate action to embed sustainability, climate awareness and connection with nature. The UK also supports countries around the world to adopt phonics-based approaches to improve literacy and build early years capacity, particularly in geographies developing state systems from the ground up. This reflects the UK's commitment to foundational learning and inclusive education.

## **Education Diplomacy with Indonesia**

In early 2025, senior leaders from several British universities and the Singhasari Special Economic Zone in East Java held discussions on establishing a multi-institution campus offering programmes in artificial intelligence, life sciences, creative industries, engineering, materials science, climate science, international relations, finance, and strategic leadership.

The initiative came to the attention of the President of Indonesia, who requested a meeting with the consortium and the UK Government's International Education Champion, Sir Steve Smith.

In line with the 2025 UK–Indonesia Strategic Partnership and the UK International Education Strategy, the British Ambassador and Sir Steve Smith led a team comprising representatives from the university consortium and the British Council. During a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with the President, the consortium outlined how UK universities could support Indonesia's national development priorities across multiple sectors. Sir Steve Smith also explained how research partnerships could help raise global rankings and teaching performance within Indonesian higher education institutions.

The discussions included proposals to support Indonesia's objective of increasing participation in STEM subjects, particularly medicine, and broadening access to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The meeting demonstrated how collaboration in education can align with wider diplomatic and developmental objectives, contributing to a stronger bilateral relationship between the UK and Indonesia.

The UK is rolling out a new diplomacy-led approach, by appointing Heads of Missions to act as Local Education Champions. This approach helps to empower overseas missions to drive education-industry collaboration in response to requests from partner governments for wholesale systems-level support. Following early success in Southeast Asia, we will expand this approach by supporting Ambassadors and High Commissioners to step up as Local Education Champions in West Africa and the Gulf in 2026.

We will deploy additional expertise to overseas missions through new Higher Education Regional Advisers to help our international partners to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and implementation. Across all our missions, we will continue to harness UK diplomatic levers to protect and promote women's and girls' right to education and learning globally.

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# Expanding access to UK education through transnational education

**We will grow the government's leadership in transnational education (TNE), working closely with the sector and the British Council to expand access and impact of high-quality UK education provision overseas.**

TNE refers to any level of study delivered in a country other than where the awarding institution is based. It spans the full education range, from schools to colleges and universities, and includes overseas campuses, joint programmes, and online delivery. This whole-sector approach enables flexible, scalable models of engagement that meet the diverse needs of our partners.

TNE builds global ties, supports inclusive economic development, and strengthens institutional capacity. It offers a sustainable alternative to traditional mobility, helping mitigate 'brain drain' while widening access to high-quality UK provision for students

who may not be able to travel. In doing so, it supports long-term system strengthening and skills development in partner countries.

Global demand for TNE is growing rapidly. UK provision has expanded significantly in recent years, and in higher education alone over half a million students are studying for UK qualifications outside the UK.<sup>20</sup> This presents a major opportunity to deepen our international partnerships and extend the reach of UK education.

The quality assurance of British international schools is a key factor driving demand. The rigorous inspection processes UK-branded schools abroad often undergo through BSO accreditation (which includes Ofsted oversight) or independent quality assurance schemes gives parents and governments confidence in the consistency and integrity of provision. There is increasing interest in replicating these

quality assurance mechanisms in local contexts, with UK providers offering consultancy and capacity-building to support inspection, governance, safeguarding and school improvement.

Working with the Education Sector Action Group, regulators, quality assurance bodies, the British Council and our overseas network, we will identify and remove barriers to sustainable TNE growth and support UK institutions to engage with opportunities. We will continue to monitor and ensure that UK institutions deliver the highest quality of TNE provision by raising awareness of the legal, financial and security risks of operating overseas through sector-led action plans and ensure UK institutions understand their role in managing these risks.

## **University of London**

The University of London (UoL) is both the UK's largest provider of international distance and online learning and the convenor of a federation, with 17 members. Federation members are all London-based universities, including some of the world's highest-ranking institutions. They provide academic direction for UoL's programmes, delivered online and through a distinctive, global network of recognised teaching centres (RTCs).

Having pioneered transnational education since the nineteenth century, UoL's reach today extends to 190 countries where some 40,000 students take its degrees. As universities working together, the federation increases access globally to high-quality higher education for students where they live.

Around 45% of students choose to study independently online. The remainder study UoL programmes at an RTC accessing additional in-person teaching, learning and pastoral support, and benefitting from a campus experience.

All students have access to extensive digital resources from UoL's Senate House Library, alongside a wide range of services from induction to study skills, careers and employability to alumni networks.

RTCs undergo rigorous due diligence covering local compliance, financial viability, academic management and administration, facilities, staffing, teaching and learning and quality assurance, underpinned by a robust contractual framework and annual monitoring. UoL retains control over curriculum, academic direction, assessment and awarding. There is no financial relationship between the University and the RTCs, which retain legal and fiscal autonomy.

For RTCs, the relationship offers broad benefits including international benchmarking, capacity building through professional and academic development and access to a global peer network.

## University of Southampton India Campus

In autumn 2025, the University of Southampton became the first foreign university to establish a campus in India under new regulations developed by India's University Grants Commission.

Situated in the Greater Delhi area, the campus is contributing to India's National Education Policy 2020 that calls for the internationalisation of India's higher education sector. It will allow Southampton to create a centre for research, innovation and teaching in India for the first time. This in turn will allow Southampton to offer a high-quality UK university experience to students in India itself, while developing research and innovation links across the country.

The campus came about through support from HMG and its identification of India as one of our International Education Champion Sir Steve Smith's focus countries. Specifically, Southampton were part of the largest ever UK higher education delegation to India in 2023, organised by HMG and the British Council and led by Sir Steve Smith.

This significant achievement was recently celebrated by the Prime Minister, alongside his counterpart in India, Prime Minister Modi, as they acknowledged all nine UK university campuses to be opened in India during his visit to India in October 2025.

*"This is an exciting time in Indian higher education, with its new 2023 legislation for foreign branch campuses under the University Grants Commission. I am delighted that Southampton is the first university to fully utilise this opportunity, coinciding with signing of the UK-India trade agreement. It exemplifies the living bridge between the two countries."*

**Professor Mark E Smith, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southampton**

## **Charterhouse Lagos: A Flagship UK–Nigeria Education Partnership**

Charterhouse Lagos, which opened in September 2024, is the first British independent school in Nigeria, delivering high-quality UK education locally. Developed in partnership with Charterhouse UK, this is a landmark £123 million investment, offering world-class facilities and a curriculum that blends the British National Curriculum with Nigerian studies.

The Department for Business and Trade played a pivotal role in enabling this partnership. Through its team in Nigeria, DBT provided early-stage advisory support, facilitated connections with UK education networks, and helped navigate regulatory and operational challenges. Crucially, DBT convened meetings between Charterhouse UK leadership and senior UK Government representatives, including the Deputy High Commissioner, to build trust and confidence in Nigeria's business environment.

Charterhouse Lagos exemplifies the global potential of British independent schools, supporting partner countries' education ambitions while enhancing the UK's international standing and reputation for excellence. The school is already delivering significant impact, employing over 240 staff, offering professional development for Nigerian educators, and hosting international sporting events.

This partnership reflects the UK's commitment to sustainable transnational education and showcases UK education as a strategic asset. Charterhouse Lagos stands as a model for future UK school partnerships abroad, strengthening bilateral ties and delivering long-term educational and economic benefits.



# Championing the UK as a global leader in research and science and technology

**We will champion the UK as a trusted global partner in research, science and technology by strengthening international collaboration, showcasing UK excellence, and leveraging our global networks to enhance the UK's international standing.**

The UK's universities and research institutions are globally recognised for their innovation, expertise, and leadership. By collaborating internationally, we unlock new ideas, accelerate breakthroughs, and deliver solutions to shared global challenges. These partnerships also play a significant role in delivering the Government's Plan for Change, and Modern Industrial Strategy, driving growth, expanding knowledge, creating skilled jobs, and strengthening the UK's global influence.

They also promote the UK as a destination for collaboration and top talent – including early career researchers – and enhance our global reputation. Working closely with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), we will promote UK research leadership through the Science and Technology Network (STN) – co-sponsored by the FCDO and active in over 65 posts across 50 countries. Working with the British Council, and sector bodies like Universities UK International, we will support UK institutions to build mutually beneficial research partnerships, particularly with Global South partners, that advance inclusive innovation and development.

Through programmes such as Horizon Europe and the International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF), we will connect UK researchers and businesses to the world's largest collaborative networks, strengthening our research base and supporting priority sectors aligned with the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, including clean energy, health, and digital technologies. We also want to attract top research talent and have recently launched a new £54 million Global Talent Fund to attract world-class researchers and their teams to the UK. The Global Talent Fund is just one part of over £115 million funding that is being newly dedicated to attracting the very best scientific and research talent to the UK. The full package includes expanded Encode AI for Science Fellowships, £25 million for Turing AI Global Fellowships, a new £30 million accelerated international route for the Royal Society's Faraday Discovery Fellowships, and a new accelerated international route for the Royal Academy of Engineering's Green Future Fellowships backed by a £150 million endowment.

This global reach is backed by major domestic investment. In June 2025, the UK Government announced a funding package worth £22.5 billion a year by 2029 to sustain the UK's world-leading status in research and innovation.<sup>21</sup> Every £1 of public R&D investment leverages £2 of private R&D and generates £8 in net benefits to the UK economy.<sup>22</sup> Higher education research contributes £63 billion and supports over 120,000 jobs across the UK,<sup>23</sup> demonstrating the domestic and global value of international research collaboration.

This commitment is central to the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, which positions research and innovation as critical levers for driving productivity, attracting investment, and securing long-term economic growth across eight high-potential sectors.

## **S2Cool – Super-Efficient Sustainable Cooling for All Applications**

**Lead Institution:** Northumbria University

**Funding:** £2.4 million via UKRI under the UK Government's Ayrton Challenge

The S2Cool project, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Ayrton Challenge, is a leading example of UK-backed international research delivering global impact and supporting domestic priorities. Led by Northumbria University, the project brings together six UK universities and six Pakistani institutions to develop a compressor-less, energy-efficient cooling system that reduces energy use by up to 65%, eliminates harmful refrigerants, and performs effectively in off-grid and low-income settings.

S2Cool addresses the urgent challenge of extreme heat and rising energy demand, particularly in vulnerable regions. It is supported by over 15 industrial, policy, and NGO partners, including Turnbull & Scott UK, EcoTechX, and Sustainable Energy for All, combining UK research excellence with practical innovation.

The project has established an International E-Centre for Sustainable Cooling, promoting gender-inclusive skills development, technical training, and capacity building across both countries.

Aligned with the UK Government's Mission to Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower, S2Cool demonstrates how UKRI-funded science and innovation can be exported to global markets, open green trade routes, and support net-zero goals. It showcases the UK's leadership in clean-tech and sustainable engineering, while delivering mutual benefit through shared prosperity, knowledge exchange, and strategic influence.

# Empowering young people through global mobility

**We will create opportunities for more young people in the UK to study, work and volunteer abroad, building the confidence and the skills needed to thrive in a globalised world.**

By supporting international experiences, we aim to strengthen two-way relationships based on partnership and mutual understanding. As young people learn about other countries, they also help others learn about the UK, building trust and long-term connections.

The UK has taken the positive step to associate to Erasmus+ from 2027 – the EU’s flagship education exchange and partnerships programme. This is a significant investment in our people, opening doors for thousands of young people across the UK of all ages, renewing our people-to-people ties with Europe and beyond, and strengthening the UK’s global standing.

The Turing Scheme is also giving British students life-changing opportunities to build skills, gain global experience and boost employability. In 2025/26, more than 35,200 Turing placements are planned, with 61% of placements for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> This demonstrates the UK’s commitment to opportunity and fairness.

We will nurture the US-UK Fulbright Programme, a bilateral educational exchange programme that promotes mutual understanding between the United States and the United Kingdom through scholarships, research grants, and cultural exchange opportunities for students and teachers.

We will also continue to support temporary exchanges between the UK and other countries via our Temporary Work – Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) visa route which allows eligible undergraduates and recent graduates to engage in activities such as work experience, training, research and job shadowing.

Through mobility, our students become ambassadors for UK education and values, forming lifelong connections and building networks and friendships that enhance mutual understanding and trust. These people-to-people links strengthen the UK's standing on the world stage, building the relationships that underpin future trade, cooperation and influence.

## **Turing – Teesside University**

As part of Teesside University's commitment to providing learning experience for students through extra-curricular initiatives, they have developed international collaborations for student mobility. Teesside's recent partnership with Hong Kong Baptist University has developed a transformative educational experience that equipped students with academic excellence and the skills and mindset to thrive as global citizens.

Turing Scheme funding enabled a pioneering exchange programme with partners in Hong Kong, focused on digital innovation. Eight Teesside students undertook an eight-week overseas placement, collaborating with Hong Kong peers on interdisciplinary projects in games animation and business. Together, they developed a virtual reality experience that celebrated UK and Hong Kong cultures, blending creativity with cultural exploration. Their project targeted a range of students from across disciplines, nations, ages and demographics with added support for students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds.

This collaboration continued online throughout the summer, supported by academic staff from both institutions and culminated in a UK visit by their Hong Kong partners, where the final work was showcased at Teesside's prestigious Animex International Festival of Games and Animation. This gave students opportunities to apply their knowledge in context, connecting with industry on a global stage and enabling the participants to build upon their employability, networking and collaborative skills.

This project, alongside a range of mobility initiatives across the university, fostered cross-cultural understanding, enhanced subject-specific skills, and prepared students to operate confidently in a global context. Turing Scheme funding directly supports these opportunities which broaden student horizons, build global networks and shape internationally engaged graduates.

# A modern approach moving from aid to expertise and leveraging more finance

**We will continue tackling global education challenges, including improving access for women and girls, strengthening foundational learning, and embedding climate adaptation and resilience.**

In a context of declining global Official Development Assistance, the UK's thought leadership in education is more important than ever. We are responding to demand by establishing new Centres of Expertise, and providing targeted assistance for inclusive, high-quality education. The UK is a recognised leader in generating research and evidence to guide bold education reforms, mainstream gender equality and improve learning outcomes. Investing in research on EdTech is a core part of cementing the UK's reputation as a world leader on education research. We work with partner governments to leverage the opportunities presented by education

technology and artificial intelligence, ensuring that any adoption into education systems is cost-efficient, safe, effective and equitable.

Through a partnership approach to global education challenges, the UK builds strong global relationships that support continued cooperation and in many cases future trade and security opportunities. The UK's leadership in education development supports the establishment of relationships focused on mutuality and shared benefit. This expertise also facilitates engagement with like-minded donors and multilateral partners – including the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO – to promote well-integrated national education systems across bilateral and multilateral organisations, ensuring that investment is well-targeted.

The UK's leadership in global education development strengthens the UK's reputation in education and provides opportunities for long-lasting partnerships:

- The UK is a founding member of the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd), which combines donor guarantees and grants to unlock affordable education finance for lower-middle-income countries with a focus on girls and the most vulnerable. Through this mechanism every \$1 of ODA unlocks \$7 of concessional multilateral development bank loans.<sup>25</sup>
- We continue to maximise the impact of UK contributions to global platforms including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which strengthens national systems and promotes girls' education, foundational learning and climate resilience, helping 372 million children to get a better education since 2021.<sup>26</sup>

- The UK was at the forefront of developing Education Cannot Wait, the global fund dedicated to education in emergencies, which provides safe, inclusive learning for children affected by conflict and crisis, reaching over 11 million children since its inception.<sup>27</sup>

These investments are guided by UK expertise in education reform, including the FCDO Education Advisory Cadre, ensuring our support is targeted and responsive to country needs.

The UK is also proud to support the mobility of academics and students including those recently impacted by global crises such as those in Ukraine and Gaza.

## The British Council's contribution to the delivery of the IES objectives

Through its global education team worldwide, their connections with education stakeholders at all levels, and in-depth knowledge of local contexts, the British Council supports the sustainable growth and diversification of UK tertiary education, making a significant contribution to the International Education Strategy. Engaging with governments, educational institutions and directly with students, they position the UK as an attractive study destination and strategic partner of choice. Having worked for many years to promote international student mobility to the UK, they have also responded to the rapid growth in UK TNE, helping to create new opportunities for UK institutions to deliver courses remotely.

The British Council's new TNE strategy, launched at the annual Going Global Conference for leaders in tertiary education in London in 2025, has four key actions:

- **Improve data and insight** – delivering market intelligence, student-focused research, and interactive dashboards to guide investment and innovation.
- **Promote UK TNE's reputation for quality** – through global convening, alumni advocacy, and thought leadership.
- **Inform policy and support growth** – enabling regulatory reform, system-level agreements, and new partnerships.
- **Showcase TNE's transformative power** – demonstrating the contribution of UK TNE to the Sustainable Development Goals.

British Council country teams work very closely with DBT, DfE, FCDO, and sector bodies to plan and deliver high-level delegations of senior education leaders to the International Education Champion's focus countries. These have been a catalyst for system alignment, built a shared understanding of strategic priorities, and created a platform for new partnerships. The British Council also supports more than 50 senior inward delegations to the UK each year to learn about quality assurance systems, university leadership, and inclusion policies, and to identify new teaching and research partners to meet growing demand in their home countries.

The British Council also provides strong support to the TVET sector, connecting policymakers, practitioners and employers in the UK and partner countries to co-create education systems and curricula which equip rapidly growing young populations with the skills they need for the jobs of the future.

The British Council works with DfE to support policy dialogue and mutual learning on shared education priorities with countries which have high-performing education systems.



# Making UK qualifications the global benchmark

**We will expand global recognition of UK academic and professional qualifications to support skilled migration, trade in services, and international education.**

Mutual recognition of qualifications is central to the UK's global impact. By breaking down barriers, we make UK qualifications the global benchmark, trusted by governments, employers and learners alike.

We will continue to work towards a clear understanding of how overseas credentials line up against UK standards making it easier for people and businesses everywhere to engage with the UK.

We will reinforce the UK's position as a global leader on qualifications through trade deals and international agreements. The UK European National Information Centre (ENIC), working with more than 900 organisations worldwide, will support compliance, transparency and alignment with international frameworks.

# **Sustainable recruitment of high-quality international higher education students**

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**International higher education students in the UK gain more than just a world-class education. They join one of the world's most vibrant, diverse and inclusive learning communities, form lifelong friendships and professional networks, and earn qualifications respected around the globe.**

According to the British Council's 2025 *Alumni Voices* survey, over 84% of UK-educated alumni reported recommending UK education at least once within the last 12 months.<sup>28</sup> These alumni become lifelong ambassadors for the UK, with many progressing into senior roles in government, business, academia and civil society. One in ten countries have had a Prime Minister or Head of State who studied in the UK demonstrating the long-term influence and reach of a UK education. Our second ambition will build on these successes by putting stronger process, experience and outcomes at the heart of sustainable international student recruitment.

International higher education students bring significant benefits to the UK. They are vital to our research strength: nearly half of all full-time postgraduate students are international, driving advances in health, climate science and technology. Their perspectives enrich the experience of domestic students, broadening horizons and preparing the UK workforce to thrive in a global economy. Economically, they contribute to jobs and growth across all four nations, through tuition fees, living

costs and wider spending in towns and cities. Moreover, when they return home, international students have the skills, competencies and networks to drive growth and prosperity in their home countries.

After they graduate, international alumni become lifelong ambassadors for the UK, strengthening our global influence, from the thousands of scholarship alumni to the many future world leaders studying here today. Through our scholarship programmes, we provide students with a world class education and deep exposure to our values of democracy and openness, and gender equality and disability and inclusion.

The launch of Alumni UK in 2022 by the British Council has created a global network of UK-educated graduates, enhancing long-term engagement and international influence. These networks and experiences bolster the UK's reputation as a destination for education, research and innovation.

## Alumni UK

Alumni UK is the British Council's global network for international graduates of UK universities. Recognising alumni as a powerful source of connection and influence, the programme fosters sustained, positive relationships between graduates and the UK.

Through digital platforms, professional development, networking, and funding opportunities, Alumni UK supports graduates in 134 countries, strengthening their ties to the UK, expanding their networks, advancing their careers, and enabling them to contribute to their communities. Each year, in partnership with the GREAT Study UK campaign, outstanding alumni are celebrated for the difference they make through the GREAT Study UK Global Alumni Awards.

The programme's Disability and Inclusion Network champions accessibility and inclusive practice worldwide, offering insights into the lived experiences of disabled international students. Alumni Ambassadors deliver projects that reduce inequality and drive economic empowerment, while Climate Action grants have funded alumni-led initiatives impacting over 200,000 beneficiaries.

*"Being part of Alumni UK has been transformative. It's opened professional pathways I didn't know existed and connected me to a global community I now consider a family."*

**Muhammed Ali Alkış – Alumni UK Regional Ambassador for Wider Europe**

# A strategic approach to sustainable international student recruitment

**We will support the sustainable recruitment of high-quality international students to the UK's world-class higher education institutions by putting student experience, quality outcomes, and responsible recruitment at the heart of our approach.**

We are committed to building a more resilient, diverse and long-term pipeline of international talent, individuals who return home equipped to lead in government, business, science, education and the arts. This will be achieved through sustainable recruitment that prioritises:

- **Well-managed and responsible recruitment**
- **A high-quality student experience**
- **World-class outcomes for graduates**

Through the Education Sector Action Group, we will work with the sector to support institutions in putting the student

experience first, including strong support systems, adequate infrastructure and access to local housing. We will encourage institutions to diversify their recruitment, reducing reliance on any single country and strengthening cultural exchange on UK campuses.

We will also encourage sector-led initiatives to support the integrity of the UK's immigration system, such as the Agent Quality Framework (AQF) to help tackle the risk of poor practices, protect students, and drive improved standards in the recruitment of international higher education students.

We will work closely with the sector to ensure that our institutions recruit international higher education students in a way that maintains quality and student experience. This includes considering factors such as skills and entry requirements, adequate infrastructure, local housing, and support systems, whilst respecting institutional autonomy.

# Maintaining a competitive offer

**We will ensure the UK's offer to international higher education students remains globally competitive and aligned with the UK Government's wider immigration and skills priorities.**

To safeguard the UK's global competitiveness, we have retained the Graduate Route, a world-leading, streamlined and highly attractive post-study visa that enables international higher education students to remain in the UK for up to 18 months after graduation (or three years for PhD graduates). This provides a clear pathway into skilled employment and allows graduates to contribute to the UK's economy and skills needs.

As part of the Immigration White Paper commitments, we have already implemented a capped expansion of the High Potential Individual (HPI) route to include those graduating from the top 100 international institutions. We have also made it simpler and easier for leaders and potential leaders under the Global Talent visa to come to the UK by expanding a

fast-track option for researchers with fellowships to cover qualifying fellowships from institutions such as the University of Manchester and expanding the evidential requirements for architects.

In addition, we have changed the conditions given to students, enabling graduates to establish businesses in the UK upon completing their studies and while transitioning to the Innovator Founder route.

As part of wider reforms to the higher education system, the UK Government will introduce an international student levy on English higher education providers of £925 per international student per year of study from Academic Year 28/29. The levy will be fully reinvested into higher education and skills, including the reintroduction of targeted maintenance grant for disadvantaged domestic students, helping to break down barriers to opportunity as part of the government's Plan for Change and making our higher education system more inclusive for the benefit of all students.

Further details on the levy are set out in the International Student Levy Government Technical Consultation that was launched alongside the 2025 Autumn Budget. These actions align with the UK Government's Immigration White Paper reforms, which aim to strengthen the UK's immigration system while supporting sustainable recruitment of international students.

The UK Government's approach to international student recruitment will continue to align with the UK's migration and visa policy framework, maintaining the integrity of the Graduate Route and ensuring that the UK remains a destination of choice for high-quality students. We will continue to welcome genuine students who want to benefit from the UK's world-class higher education system, while taking firm action against those who seek to exploit our immigration routes.

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## Why I chose to study in the UK

*“When I first arrived in North Wales to study Archaeology at Bangor University, I was struck by how quickly it began to feel like home. The scale of the university, the approachability of staff, and the warmth of the local community made it easy to settle in as an international student. Over time I chose to stay on for my Master’s and completed my PhD, because I could see a clear path to grow academically, professionally, and personally in the UK.*

*Studying in Wales has given me the chance to learn in the classroom and in the field. Bangor’s strong focus on research-led teaching means that students are directly involved in real archaeological projects. On community excavations across North Wales, I helped local volunteers uncover and interpret artefacts from their own landscapes. I worked with the Plas Glyn-y-Weddw Gallery and Porth y Swnt museums on exhibitions about the archaeology of the Llŷn Peninsula, delivering workshops for schools and teaching students and residents how to create digital 3D models of objects. These projects showed me how heritage, education, and tourism can work together to support a region.*

*Alongside my studies, I have also taken on national and sector-wide roles. As a UKCISA #WeAreInternational Student Ambassador and Chair of UKCISA’s Student Advisory Group, I represented international students in discussions about policy and practice. These leadership and public engagement opportunities, combined with my academic training, have given me skills and experience that will be invaluable for a career in archaeology and heritage. Above all, I have always felt that my contribution is welcomed and that my voice is heard in the UK.*

*Since completing my PhD, I have had the opportunity to work as a Research Assistant at Bangor University, which led to my current position as a geoarchaeologist with Headland Archaeology Ltd. based in Hereford. During this time, I was also able to stay connected to my university by serving as the Representation Coordinator at Bangor University’s Students’ Union. Thanks to the invaluable experience I had at Bangor University and in the UK, I have been able to grow both personally and professionally while also giving back to my community.”*

**Nebu George (India), Bangor University**



# Promoting the UK as a global study destination

**We will continue to promote the UK as a preferred destination for study and research through the Study UK campaign, delivered and co-funded by the British Council as part of the GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland Campaign.**

Working in partnership with UK universities, Study UK showcases the UK's world-class education, high-quality student experience and excellent graduate outcomes in a diverse range of countries through digital marketing, social media and international events. The campaign also provides around 120 scholarships each year, complementing our flagship scholarship schemes: Chevening, Commonwealth, Marshall and Fulbright.

## Scholarships

The FCDO's three international scholarship programmes play an important role in building connections between the UK and a global cohort of future leaders and their home countries.

The **Chevening** Scholarship Programme (est. 1983) awards around 1,400 scholarships and fellowships annually to scholars with outstanding leadership potential from more than 150 countries and territories each year. There are c.60,000 Chevening alumni.

*Chevening alumnus Luong Hoang Thai is Director General at the Vietnamese Ministry of Industry and Trade. During his time as a Chevening scholar he studied International Business at Lancaster University. His studies have directly supported his career as an expert in trade negotiations. In his capacity as Vietnam's Chief Negotiator during the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), he played a pivotal role in securing Vietnam's endorsement of UK membership. His strategic leadership has significantly advanced Vietnam's position in global trade while strengthening bilateral economic relations with the United Kingdom.*

The **Commonwealth** Scholarship Programme (est. 1959) awards around 650 scholarships annually to scholars from low and middle-income Commonwealth countries and British Overseas Territories. They support innovators and leaders with strong potential to contribute to development needs in their home countries. There are c.32,000 Commonwealth Scholar alumni.

*Constance Nyamikola undertook a Masters in Education Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Bristol in 2013 as a Commonwealth Scholar. She used what she learned while in the UK to go on to become Head of Training and Support at Teach for Uganda, an NGO that nurtures change leaders committed to advancing equitable access to quality education in Uganda. Constance has trained fellow leaders who have been placed in more than 150 remote rural schools reaching around 75,000 children overall.*

The **Marshall** Scholarship Programme (est. 1953) funds approximately 40-50 Americans with leadership potential to undertake postgraduate studies at UK universities. Marshall has produced over 2,000 alumni.

*Dr Kurt Campbell undertook a doctorate in International Relations at Oxford University on a Marshall Scholarship before a career in the US Navy and academia. He subsequently served in senior roles at the White House during the Obama and Biden administrations. As National Security Council Indo-Pacific Coordinator, he was pivotal in shaping US foreign policy, particularly in East Asia and the Pacific and in securing AUKUS, the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the UK and the US.*

# Growing UK education exports at every level

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**Everything set out in this strategy – the quality of UK education, the trust it inspires overseas, and the mutual benefits it delivers – has made education one of the UK's most successful exports.**

As set out in the Plan for Change, the UK Government's priority mission is to deliver strong, secure and sustainable economic growth, increase productivity and prosperity, and create good jobs across every part of the UK.

That is why we have set our third ambition for the UK's education sector: to grow the value of education exports to £40 billion per year by 2030. This strategy lays the foundations to realise that ambition by endorsing the quality of UK education at every level and providing clear Government backing.

In 2022, education exports were worth £32.3 billion, placing them ahead of sectors such as automotive, and food and drink.<sup>29</sup> The total economic impact of the higher education sector alone exceeds £265 billion,<sup>30</sup> with international higher education students contributing to every UK citizen being approximately £560 better off.<sup>31</sup> This is not just an abstract figure – it fuels jobs, growth and investment in every part of the UK.

# Unlocking the full potential of our education sector

**We will work with the full breadth of the sector, aligning with the UK's Plan for Change to reach the ambition of £40 billion in annual education exports.**

While higher education accounts for the lion's share of education exports – £23.7 billion in 2022<sup>32</sup> – other education export sectors also demonstrate strong potential for global growth. The expansion of transnational education (TNE) is particularly notable: in 2022, total TNE exports reached £3.0 billion across all sectors, representing a 30.3% increase from the previous year.<sup>33</sup>

Beyond higher education and TNE, the UK's education export landscape is enriched by other dynamic education export sectors. In 2022, schools contributed £980 million, English language training (ELT) generated £560 million, further education exports totalled £190 million, and education

products and services, including EdTech, added £3.89 billion.<sup>34</sup> These figures highlight the breadth of the UK's international education offer and the opportunities for further growth.

Unlocking the potential of these sectors will deliver growth across the whole education landscape, while also supporting UK security, economic growth, and future international partnerships. This will generate lasting influence abroad and long-term economic prosperity at home.

This vision is aligned with the UK Government's Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, which sets out plans to reinforce our world-leading skills system at home so that it continues to meet the needs of employers, supports innovation, research and development, and improves people's lives.

# Creating opportunities for UK education providers

## **We will support the International Education Champion to drive education export growth and partnerships in their focus countries.**

The Champion will continue to promote UK education exports in India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam. We will also prioritise opportunities in China and Hong Kong, recognising continued strategic importance.

Professor Sir Steve Smith plays a pivotal role in galvanising the UK education sector, forging high-value relationships, and identifying opportunities for growth. Through strategic planning and targeted support, HMG teams in the UK and overseas, including Trade Advisors and diplomatic colleagues, will continue to enable the Champion's work and help tackle barriers to market entry and expansion.

This action will ensure that the UK's world-class international education offer is promoted effectively, and that providers are supported to succeed in high-potential markets.

Our teams in the UK and overseas will also work closely with the Champion, His Majesty's Trade Commissioners (HMTs), the UK's network of Trade Envoys, the FCDO's Diplomatic Network, ESAG, and the British Council to:

- Lead trade delegations and host inward visits.
- Advocate for improved market access
- Enable direct engagement with overseas governments and partners.

We also recognise the potential for greater UK investment in international private education and value its role in expanding the UK's educational footprint in overseas markets. Our overseas network will continue to identify where UK investment can make a meaningful contribution to growing the private education landscape and enhance economic ties with our partners.

## **GREAT FUTURES, Saudi Arabia**

In April 2024, the GREAT FUTURES campaign (delivered by the GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland Campaign) facilitated the largest overseas education mission ever sent by the UK Government to any country with more than 70 senior representatives from UK education and skills providers participating in the GREAT FUTURES Skills Roundtables held during the Human Capability Initiative (HCI) and EDGEx in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Co-chaired by the UK Department for Education Minister for Early Education, the UK Government International Education Champion (also the Special Representative to Saudi Arabia for Education), and the Saudi Arabian Commerce Minister and Education Minister the roundtables convened government and business to discuss and establish long-lasting skills partnerships that deliver against our closely aligned national industrial strategies, the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy and Saudi Vision 2030.

The initiative formally announced a UK-Saudi partnership to future-proof skills and demonstrated the shared commitment to develop human capital in the Kingdom, with further high-profile announcements made by London Business School and UCL Consultants.

GREAT FUTURES continued in September 2025 with the UK and Saudi Arabia co-chairing the Economic and Social Pillar of the UK-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council with education as one of five strategic priority areas for partnership. The UK Government Minister for Skills and Special Representative to Saudi Arabia for Education together co-chaired a roundtable alongside Saudi Ministers on driving innovation in education, bringing together education and skills leaders to build new partnerships.

# Promoting the UK's education offer globally

**We will promote the UK education offer as high-quality, innovative and values driven. We will support exporters, including through the UK Export Academy and the wider HMG overseas network.**

Through the Education Sector Action Group (ESAG), we will work with the sector to:

- Showcase UK providers at international trade shows and missions.
- Deliver expert-led training via the UK Export Academy.
- Provide guidance on market entry, regulation and partnership development.

## Appliansys

Coventry based education technology company Appliansys, has been working around the world to bring the opportunities of digital tools to students and classrooms in the world's low and no internet locations.

Key to Appliansys' success and impact has been the identification of strategic partners who share their vision. Working closely with the Department for Business and Trade in the UK and overseas, Appliansys were connected with Tata Motors in India. In 2024, Appliansys and Tata Motors together designed a pilot programme to reach 5,000 schools across India. This project stands to unlock learning opportunities for a wealth of students and continues Appliansys' successful international growth strategy.



# Providing financial tools to support export growth

**We will support UK education providers to access financial instruments and practical support, including UK Export Finance, to help overcome barriers and grow internationally.**

- UK Export Finance (UKEF) plays a pivotal role in unlocking finance, providing billions of pounds each year to support UK exporters. UKEF can help education providers manage risk and secure deals in challenging markets by offering the capital needed to grow and compete globally.
- To better support small and medium-sized education providers, we will launch new products and digital services, and work with a wider range of banks and non-bank lenders, including specialist SME finance institutions.
- As part of the UK Government's new Trade Strategy, the Ricardo Fund has been launched to remove regulatory barriers and unlock export opportunities. The fund empowers UK regulators and overseas trade teams to tackle complex regulatory issues and shape international standards.

# Driving growth through sector-led action plans

**We will work with education providers and businesses to develop industry-led action plans to increase the value of education exports.**

Through the Education Sector Action Group, each sub-sector will:

- Share market intelligence.
- Resolve barriers.
- Align priorities.
- Produce a tailored action plan to grow export revenue and contribute to the shared £40 billion target, alongside the other ambitions of this strategy.

These plans will set a clear direction for each sub-sector and its stakeholders. They will also reinforce one another, for example, international pupils in UK schools progressing to UK degrees, English language learners moving into FE and HE, and graduates contributing to the UK's research base or entering industry.

## Measuring progress

Our target of £40 billion is ambitious and reflects the significant growth opportunities in areas beyond international student recruitment. Success will mean hitting the target while operating sustainable levels of international student recruitment, in line with the Immigration White Paper. We will measure progress towards the new £40 billion target using HMG's estimates of UK revenue from education related exports and transnational education activity. Our target is based on data that uses an improved methodology and assumptions around projected revenue. We will continue to improve the accuracy, timeliness and robustness of these statistics as data quality improves.

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# THE UK'S MODERN **INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**



UK Government

January 2026