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Higher-education news from around the Web

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Report Underscores Britain's Competitive Advantage in Helping Rebuild Iraqi Academe

As the security situation in Iraq slowly improves and the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki focuses its attention on the country's decimated higher-education sector, British universities are well positioned "to assist in the rebuilding of Iraqi higher education," a new report says.

The report, "UK Higher Education Engagement With Iraq," says that Mr. al-Maliki's [Iraq Education Initiative](#), which aims eventually to send some 10,000 Iraqi students abroad each year, presents opportunities as well as challenges for British institutions.

Britain enjoys a competitive advantage in Iraq, thanks in part to traditional connections between British and Iraqi academe. But countries such as the United States and Germany have succeeded in attracting Iraqi students and "competition is intensifying," the report says. The United States, in particular, has been "ratcheting up activities in Iraq throughout 2008 and 2009," according to the report, and "the likely effect will be a competitive infringement on the UK's well-established position."

The report's recommendations include the "creation of competitive visa processes and procedures with a specific emphasis on in-country visa processing" and "in-country provision of English learning and testing services."

The document was published by the [UK Higher Education International Unit](#), the [British Universities Iraq Consortium](#), and the government ministry with [oversight of higher education](#), and it recommends a broad-based partnership approach to involvement in Iraq, involving higher-education institutions, business organizations, and governmental and nongovernmental groups, such as the British Council. —*Aisha Labi*