



international unit

**Global Opportunities
for UK Higher Education**

www.international.ac.uk

The UK Higher Education International Unit

UK higher education institutions (HEIs) are international organisations. Their international activities make an important contribution to their income and to export earnings for the UK economy. They have growing numbers of international staff and students who contribute greatly to their intellectual and cultural life. They also have many links with HEIs around the world, overseas governments and international businesses.

The UK HE International Unit has been established to coordinate, promote and undertake activities designed to support UK HEIs in a globally competitive world. The Unit will provide timely information and practical policy analysis in the following manner:

Publications

The Unit's fortnightly electronic newsletter, *International Focus*, provides a digest of selected international trends and opportunities for UK HEIs, media stories, new reports and forthcoming events in the HE sector. Short feature articles will also appear.

In addition, an in-depth electronic magazine will appear three times annually. This will include more comprehensive surveys of the international HE landscape and articles by guest contributors.

Website

www.international.ac.uk

The Unit's website features individual country links for news and information, a searchable document library which encompasses reports and statistics on aspects of international higher education, and an archive of in-house publications.

Events

In partnership with other stakeholders in the sector, the International Unit disseminates research findings through regular seminars and conferences.

Policy research

The International Unit conducts and commissions strategic comparative research and disseminates the findings in concise and practical formats. A programme of research is being developed in consultation with our partners and stakeholders. It includes the following initial projects:

- International Competition for Doctoral Research Students
- HEI Organisational Structures in the UK, Australia and North America
- International Research Collaboration: Institutional Obstacles and Opportunities in Comparative Context

A global leader

The UK is a global leader in the provision of higher education. The UK HE sector is central to the UK economy's success and the country's global position. This is evidenced by the UK's prowess in exporting knowledge services, by the size of the sector's contribution to national income, and by innovative means of reaching out to students in the main emerging markets:

- The UK sells more brainpower per capita than anywhere else in the world. In 2005, this amounted to £75 billion in knowledge services – a quarter of all UK exports – and now worth some 6.3% of GDP.
Work Foundation, 2007
- The UK has 1% of the world's population but undertakes 5% of the world's scientific research and publishes 12% of cited papers.
Economist, 2007
- HEIs are worth £45 billion to the UK economy annually and are a major export earner. The annual contribution to the UK's national income made by international students is estimated at £5.5 billion.
HEPI, 2007
- There were 223,850 international students (excluding EU) enrolled at UK HEIs in 2005–06, an increase of 64% in just five years. There were a further 106,000 EU students in 2005–06.
DfES, 2006
- International students make up 13% of all HE students in the UK, third in proportion only to New Zealand and Australia. For those undertaking advanced research programmes, the figure is 40%, second only to Switzerland. The OECD averages are 6% and 16%, respectively.
OECD, 2006
- UK HEIs continue to attract new full-time undergraduates from abroad. The number of new overseas applicants for entry in 2007 was 68,500, an increase of 7.8% on the previous year. The number of EU applicants rose by 33%.
UCAS, 2007
- Students from China make up almost one-quarter of all international students in the UK. The fastest increase is from India: in 2007 there were more than 23,000 Indian students in the UK, a five-fold increase in less than a decade.
British Council, 2007
- 27% of academic staff appointed in the UK in 2005–06 were from abroad.
Universities UK, 2007
- 40% of UK scientific output between 2001 and 2005 involved international collaboration, a 50% increase over the previous five years.
Evidence Ltd, 2007
- In 2006–07, 20 UK HEIs offered undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses through Indian partner institutions to approximately 4,100 Indian students.
British Council, 2007
- In 2006–07, 81 UK HEIs delivered 617 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Hong Kong. This represented more than half of all international HEI activity in Hong Kong.
British Council, 2007
- The UK has become very active in mainland China: Between 2004 and 2005, UK HEIs increased their market share for delivery of UK degrees from 5% to 31%. (In 2005 there were 43 UK HEIs awaiting approval for 115 degree programmes).
British Council, 2007

Trends and challenges

Academics and practitioners in the UK HE sector are aware that the recent successes, not least in international student recruitment, need to be complemented by long-term strategic thinking and practice. New areas of focus are outward mobility, international partnerships in teaching and research, and diversifying funding sources:

- In 2004, 2.7 million students were enrolled in HEIs outside their countries of citizenship. In 2005–06, six countries hosted 67% of these students (23% in the US, 12% in the UK, 11% in Germany, 10% in France, 7% in Australia, and 5% in Japan). UNESCO, 2006
- New Zealand's share of the global market for international students increased more than fourfold between 2000 and 2006. Australia's increased by 58% and the UK's by 35%. OECD, 2006
- The UK hosts about 44,000 international research students, second only to the US. But competition for these students in particular is increasing globally. Most European countries do not charge fees; in the US, about three-quarters of doctoral candidates have their fees covered by institutions or scholarships. NK Education Ltd, 2007
- The number of students in England participating in the Erasmus programme declined by 40% between 1995–96 and 2004–05 – from 9,500 to 5,500. Participation from other EU countries increased during this period. However, North American students have a lower mobility level than their UK counterparts. CIHE, 2007
- About 20% of UK academic staff are from abroad. This is an indicator of success but it also raises potential issues in regard to staff retention. HESA, 2007
- Research spending in China and India is growing. China's share of world publications increased from 2% in 1996 to 6% in 2005. Evidence Ltd, 2007
- In January 2009 the UK government will introduce a points-based system for international student visas. The immigration system should benefit from more objectivity and clarity but implementation could pose problems for the mobility of international staff and students who are crucial to the long-term competitiveness of the HE sector. Universities UK, 2006
- Of the 82 HE branch campuses operating globally in 2006, more than half were American, 12% were Australian, and 5% were from UK HEIs. OBHE, 2006
- UK public spending on HE is about 0.8% of GDP. Canada spends 1.3% and the US 1.2%. In the US, private giving brings the overall investment in HEIs to 2.9% of GDP. This is almost three times that in the UK, at 1.1% of GDP. OECD, 2006
- More than 200 American universities have endowments in excess of £100 million. Five in the UK do so. Sutton Trust, 2003
- In the UK, charitable giving accounts for about 0.6% of GDP and 0.7% of income for HEIs. In the US, the figures are 2% and 8% respectively. Sutton Trust, 2003
RAND Corporation, 2004



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