

In this issue**Markets & Intelligence**

Reviewing the rankings

Wales-China consortium launch

IAU Annual Conference: Call for papers

Participate in survey: University entrepreneurship

What international students really think: Facing the challenge of false perceptions

In Focus

US-UK higher education relationship going from strength to strength

Research & Collaboration

Leadership programmes: Chicago and Hong Kong

UK TNE partners for Nepal

Russia seeks UK collaboration

Ningbo fashion, textile and design initiative

Diary Dates

24-27 August 2011
Europe of Knowledge (Education, Higher Education and Research Policy)
Reykjavik, Iceland

28-31 August 2011
The European Education Society 33rd Annual Forum: Bridging cultures, promoting diversity: higher education in search of equilibrium
Warsaw, Poland

26-28 September 2011
5th Annual Teaching and Learning Conference
Durban, South Africa

UK and Brazil agree higher education collaboration initiative

Last week a group of UK Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors joined the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg and Universities Minister David Willetts, on a two-day visit to Brazil to strengthen ties between the countries through industry, culture and higher education.

Brazil represents a key emerging market in higher education with rich returns for collaborative engagement. The country is going through a period of effervescence, as described by its Minister of Higher Education, Luis Costa, with significant investment in expanding the federal HE system to increase the total number of available places from 110,000 to 220,000. Forty percent of professors in Brazilian universities were hired in the last eight years and plans are in place to send 75,000 Brazilian students to study overseas. Brazil produces 2% of global production of scientific research, 13th in world rankings.

The universities visit, led by Professor Sir Steve Smith, President, Universities UK and Vice Chancellor, University of Exeter, proved to be a fruitful one, with agreements made at a British Council round table event to develop a broad framework of activity aimed at building capacity in teaching and research. The round table discussions, which included UK representatives from the universities of King's College London, Surrey, Bath, Warwick, Essex, SOAS, Liverpool, Nottingham and Manchester, followed a recent announcement by the Brazilian government to prioritise collaborative activities with the UK, who will be a key partner in the development of a scholarship scheme as part of the broader framework programme. Brazil fielded high-level representatives from the Ministry of Education and the research councils, CAPES and CNPq, as well as from a select number of universities.

The programme, which the UK government hopes will be modelled on the successful UK India Education Research Initiative (UKIERI), will establish an implementation group led by the UK HE International and Europe Unit (IEU) on behalf of the sector, and will include a range of initiatives to be initiated over the next five years. Significant commitment has been offered from private sources such as Santander Universities Network and an agreement signed during the visit between BG Group and CNPq will see funding for up to 450 new scholarships for Brazilian students to study in the UK over the next 5 years. It is anticipated framework activity will be implemented from 2012 and support has also been offered from Brazil for government, research councils and universities represented at the round table to form part of the implementation group.

Last week's round table and mission was organised by the IEU in collaboration with the British Council, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The IEU is working to prioritise country engagement activities through the the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' International Education Advisory Forum which it is hoped will benefit all UK universities, helping to focus activity on the most promising international markets.

Engagement between UK and Brazilian universities is already well established. Several UK universities are members of the Santander Universities Network and welcome Brazilian students to their campuses. Joint research flourishes between UK and Brazilian institutions in a range of fields, including tourism, bioscience, chemistry, mathematics and law. Institutional links are strong and collaborations involving industry, such as the Ford Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, have been established. Although the UK has small share of Brazilian students, averaging just 1,300 for the last four years, there is willingness on both sides to work together to increase a two-way flow of students.

Latin America as a whole offers a number of advantages for UK universities who wish to engage in this market. There is a positive perception of UK HE in Latin America, especially in terms of its breadth and quality and the shorter length of UK masters' courses. The complex challenges that face the UK and the rest of the world necessitate international cooperation and collaboration in research, teaching, mobility and knowledge exchange.

As with any partner, there are potential risks involved, and one of the barriers which has led to less engagement than there might be with the region, is the varying quality of institutions in Latin America, and compounding that, their relative anonymity on the world stage. While some universities such as the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil or UNAM (the Autonomous National University of Mexico) are relatively world renowned, the continent does not have a single institution in the Times Higher Education list of the world's 200 top universities.

But the potential is there if UK HEIs are willing to tap into it, and creating a framework under which collaborative activity can operate, will serve to strengthen the relationship between Brazil and the UK, not just at higher education level, but also on a national level.

Reviewing the rankings: European Universities Association publishes new report

What lies behind the need for rankings? What is actually being measured? What are the differences between the various methodologies? What are their shortcomings? Are they 'all bad'? And who benefits most – institutions or students?

Rankings can bring a number of benefits to those who appear in them, not least global visibility, but the criteria used is often highly selective. This means that institutions with strengths in particular areas that fall outside those measured are at a disadvantage. Ultimately the student may suffer, as they are not able to access the full picture.

Broadening criteria for rankings is an important, but not an easy task when one considers the influence of the Times Higher and Shanghai Jiaotong World University Rankings.

A recent report by the European University Association (EUA) attempts to answer some of the questions that we frequently ask in relation to university rankings, which have proliferated in number over the past few years and acquired considerable attention. Commissioned in response to this recent growth, 'Global university rankings and their impact', is intended to inform higher education institutions about the methodologies behind the most popular global rankings and consider their potential impact.

The EUA explicitly says the report does not aim to compare and contrast the different university rankings themselves, but instead presents and analyses the numerous rankings that attempt to measure university performance. Nonetheless, it is not devoid of opinion.

The report argues that major international university rankings provide an "oversimplified picture" of institutional mission, quality and performance, since they focus primarily on indicators related to the research function of universities. Whilst this is undoubtedly one aspect of higher education, it is by no means all of it, with the result that present rankings exclude the vast majority of higher education institutions (HEIs), and merely favour large, research-intensive universities. Out of the estimated 17,000 universities around the world, only 200-500 – between 1% and 3% of them – are even considered in the international rankings.

The report admits that any endeavour to 'democratise' the rankings is likely to be fraught with difficulty. On the one hand, there is clear evidence that attempts to measure the quality of teaching and learning use indicators that in most cases have a very indirect link to actual teaching quality and learning environment. Criteria can be reductionist, failing to reflect in reality what students should know when they make choices about higher education.

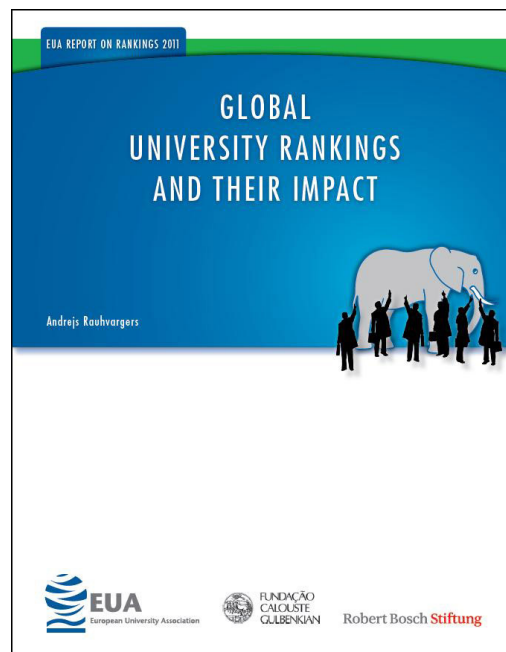
On the other hand, internationally comparative data does not exist, and will not exist at any point in the near future. Comparable data is often not available even from institution to institution within regions or countries, so cross-border comparisons are not possible. The implication, therefore, is that recent European initiatives that seek to broaden the focus of rankings are unlikely to be successful in practice, even if they may have some merit in theory.

Pointing out, however, that rankings are here to stay, the report seems to suggest that such democratisation is still helpful. It would allow more institutions to position themselves, and benefit those that have particular strengths in areas such as learning and teaching, widening access, or interacting with their region. It might also help to lessen the growing tendency for higher education institutions to invest in activities that will improve their position in the rankings rather than in arguably more important areas, such as the student experience.

The report argues that 'unwanted consequences', in addition to the lack of transparency about how these rankings are actually formulated, outweigh the benefits that rankings may offer in terms of fostering accountability, increasing pressure to improve management practices, or encouraging the collection of more reliable data. From the perspective of the higher education sector, however, it must be admitted that the proliferation of rankings has succeeded in focusing attention on higher education, acting as an awareness-raising mechanism and platform for leveraging university brand.

By bringing to light the various shortcomings, the report considerably enhances transparency about rankings themselves. Although this does not solve the many problems, it goes some way to changing the situation: from a user's perspective, the report provides information on what is being measured, the evidence versus the reality, how the scores are calculated and, even more importantly what they mean for institutions and students.

Click [HERE](#) to download the EUA report.



Markets & Intelligence

Wales' Colleges launch China consortium

Marking the beginning of a strategic international direction for Wales' colleges, twelve Further Education Institutions are joining forces to build relationships with partners in Chongqing, China to the benefit of both nations. On the 10 June the Consortium for Chongqing, China was launched by Wales' Colleges/ColegauCymru.

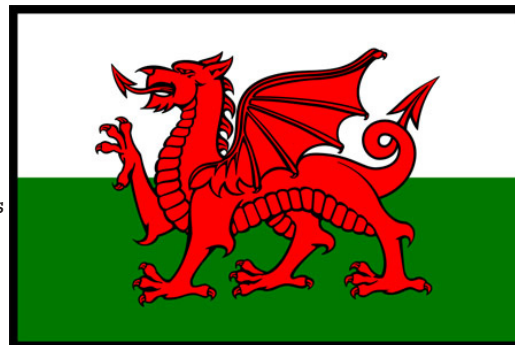
Chongqing is one of the fastest growing cities in the world and aims to be the world's IT centre. Chongqing's ambitions bring particular challenges. It needs to integrate and train around eight million migrant workers moving from the country to newly created jobs and therefore Chongqing is keen to develop partnerships with Wales' further education colleges in developing relevant vocational skills.

The seeds of the consortium grew out of a China-Wales skills exchange in Chongqing in March 2011 that coincided with strategic meetings between a delegation of college principals from Wales and Chongqing together with senior representatives from both governments and partners including the British Council and ColegauCymru.

Consortium Chair, Bryn Davies of Ystrad Mynach College said that this was "just the beginning."

"We need to ensure that we can make the most of the exciting opportunities that this link between the colleges of Wales and Chongqing offers. Both countries have much to learn from one another.

"The key focus for Chongqing is to raise the skills levels of the workforce including its burgeoning migrant population. The key focus for Wales is to establish an international mindset among our learners, broadening their horizons and improving their employment opportunities both in Wales and in the global marketplace."



IAU 2011 International Conference: Call for papers

A call for papers has been put out for the 2011 International Association of Universities Annual Conference in Nairobi, Kenya from 16 – 18 November. The theme of the conference is 'strategies for securing equity in access and success in higher education'.

The call is for papers focusing on one of the following two specific aspects of the overall theme of the conference: Financing Equity in Access and Success and Institutional Goal Setting, Monitoring and Evaluation of Equity in Access and Success.

Click **HERE** for more information. To register email: iau@iau-aiu.net or phone: +33 145 684 800.

Contributions invited: '100 Good Practices in University Entrepreneurship'

RedEmprendia (www.redemprendia.es), a South American association promoting responsible innovation within universities seeks input from universities to their next publication: '100 Good Practices in University Entrepreneurships'.

The purpose of the report is to provide a reference document and disseminate good entrepreneurship practices developed by universities. RedEmprendia therefore invites submissions from universities of good practices in entrepreneurship currently being used in your institution. All proposals received will be subjected to a peer review process to assure its quality. Click **HERE** to download the submission template and guidelines (submissions may be written in Spanish, Portuguese or English). Completed forms should be sent to: manualemprendia@unican.es by 15 September.

Markets & Intelligence

US study shows UK higher education needs to challenge false perceptions overseas of high costs and visa woes

A new report from the US-based Institute of International Education (IIE) confirms the UK's presence as a popular and welcoming destination for international students with a high quality education system. However, the report also highlights the perception abroad of the UK as an expensive place to live and study compounded by the impression that opportunities for scholarships are more abundant in competitor countries like Japan, Canada and the US. It is clear the UK higher education sector must do much more to challenge these perceptions. This is particularly true, in light of a forthcoming International and Europe Unit study of international pricing which has found that the UK does not charge the highest fees to international students nor is it the most expensive country in which to live and study.

The IIE report '**What International Students Think About US Higher Education**' examines the attitudes and perceptions held of US higher education by international students who are considering studying in the United States.

The study surveyed their preferred study destinations, their reasons for studying internationally, the perceived obstacles they faced and benchmarked their opinions of the US as a potential study destination compared to other key host destinations.

The surveys were conducted between 2009 and 2010 in countries across the four major sending regions of Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America and received almost 10,000 responses from potential international students. The research was carried out in collaboration with EducationUSA who work around the globe advising international students on US higher education opportunities. Many of the respondents were surveyed as they attended EducationUSA-sponsored higher education fairs, for example, in South Africa and Nigeria or through College Day fairs in the UK. Administering the student survey to those who had already indicated an interest in US higher education makes it unsurprising that many respondents held it in such high regard.

The report found that the US is thought of as the destination of choice for three-quarters of prospective international students worldwide. Furthermore the majority of prospective students considered the US to have a high quality higher education system and a wide range of choices of institutions. The US is currently the largest host country of international students with a record high of 690,000 international students in 2009/10.

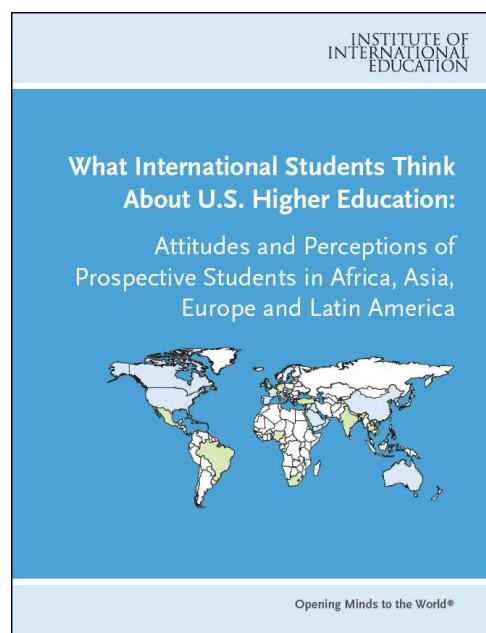
However there was also much in the report that should be of pressing interest to institutions in the UK as the surveys benchmarked major HE exporters against each other, comparing the impressions international students have of different countries including opportunities, such as scholarships, and barriers, such as high cost of living or language.

While the UK is the second most popular international study destination after the US, it was perceived by respondents to be the country with the highest cost of living. However, the forthcoming International Pricing Study Report benchmarked data on the costs of living from universities in ten different countries. Universities in the US, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and Singapore reported having living costs higher than any of the UK universities surveyed. The research also highlighted that living costs vary considerably within countries, especially between metropolitan and rural areas.

The IIE concluded that cost is a primary obstacle to overseas study. It was identified as a key factor affecting the decision to study abroad from respondents from all countries surveyed, not just developed countries. This should underline the importance of addressing the impressions of the UK held abroad. The UK's visa procedures were also considered difficult or complex compared to most countries benchmarked, except the US. Again this indicates that there is need for accurate information to be disseminated to key markets to challenge these misconceptions.

The report did highlight the attractiveness of Anglophone countries as study destinations due to the importance of English as language of scholarship, commerce and science. Studying in the UK or another Anglophone country can bring the benefits of improving your English while studying other subjects. It was among students from East and South East Asia that English language was most likely to be perceived as a barrier to study compared to other regions, such as Latin America. Anomalously, English language as a barrier to study was considered by prospective student to be less of a problem in Canada and Australia than in the UK or US.

Click [HERE](#) to download the report.



In Focus: US-UK collaboration

US-UK higher education relationship going from strength to strength

The relationship between the UK and the US has been in the spotlight in the last few weeks following the enthusiastic welcome received by President Obama during his State Visit to the UK in late May. For the UK, the relationship with the US is the subject of much debate and at times anxiety but President Obama's speech to both Houses of Parliament was notable for its focus on the breadth, strength and value of relationship between the two countries.

Within the wide range of issues discussed by President Obama and David Cameron it was good to see the value of the UK-US bilateral higher education relationship recognised with prominence as one of the specific areas in which the countries will strengthen cooperation in the coming months.

UK-US higher education, science and innovation collaboration

During the State Visit, the President and Prime Minister issued a joint statement highlighting the importance of UK-US collaboration in the fields of higher education, science and innovation. With both countries being home to the top-ten ranked universities in the world, the statement outlined the success of the UK and US in higher education as well as a call for stronger and deeper engagement for the benefit of students.

On higher education the statement declared that:

"The UK and the US are world-leading knowledge economies and enjoy the most productive bilateral higher education relationship in the world, with each country being the other's top destination for overseas study - a partnership worth more than \$1 billion annually.

"The Prime Minister and President welcomed the forthcoming meeting of the UK-US Higher Education Policy Forum. They also encouraged further strengthening of institutional higher education links including international internships and other modes of mutual mobility for students and faculty members-between the US and UK and in cooperation with other global partners-to better equip American and British students with the skills needed to succeed in and bolster the global economy."

A number of organisations in the UK and the US including the British Council, the UK HE International and Europe Unit and the Institute of International Education are already working together on the initiatives outlined above.

The full statement can be found on the Number 10 website [HERE](#).

UK-US Higher Education Policy Forum

The second UK-US HE Forum, mentioned in the joint statement, is taking place in October in the UK. This event follows on from an initial event in New York in October 2010. The Forum has three core objectives:

- to strengthen and re-position the US-UK higher education relationship;
- to explore how to better engage industry as a partner in achieving that goal; and
- to discuss how the strength of the transatlantic partnership can effectively engage with the wider world.



*"Mr President, how do you rate our relationship?
Well done, medium or rare?"*

"Well done every time"

In Focus: US-UK collaboration

US-UK higher education relationship going from strength to strength

Following the 2010 New York discussions a number of participants together with senior experts from the sector are working together in four groups to take the dialogue started last year forward, supported by the British Council USA and the UK HE International and Europe Unit. These groups are focused on mobility, research, teaching and learning and international/multilateral engagement and are tasked with producing a set of proposals in each area that will be further refined and then presented for consideration during the Forum. Ideas that are being considered by the working groups include ways to link graduate schools, increasing joint degree programmes, linking student mobility and employability and using UK-US partnerships to engage with other countries.

At the October 2011 meeting the Forum participants will be asked to agree on a set of proposals for action and to agree on an associated implementation plan. These proposals will provide a focus for the enhancement of the UK-US higher education relationship over the next three years.

New Partnership Fund

In addition to high-level discussions there are also practical opportunities to facilitate the development of partnerships between universities in the UK and universities in the US. In 2010 the British Council ran a programme to provide seed funding to 31 new and innovative British-American higher education projects.

The New Partnership Fund scheme received hundreds of applications from universities in the UK and US. Winning projects came from a range of universities, including Nottingham, Wolverhampton, Queen's Belfast and Surrey in the UK and Yale University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Santa Monica Community College in the US. Subject areas ranged from highway engineering and cancer research to harnessing entrepreneurship for social and economic development.

A number of the awards will also facilitate multilateral partnerships including joint US-UK collaborations with India, China, Brazil, Rwanda and the Palestinian Territories among others. Georgia Institute of Technology, for example, will collaborate with the University of Manchester on a new research partnership with Beijing Institute of Technology's School of Management and Economics exploring nanotechnology. The University of South Florida, the University of Exeter and King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia will be working on sustainable water infrastructure.

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**Research &
Collaboration**
East or West - Try both! - International Leadership Development Programmes - 2012

The Leadership Foundation has announced its International Leadership Development Programme (ILDLP) visits for 2012 to Hong Kong and Chicago. The cities will provide the base for UK delegates to explore global higher education in the US and China. Delegates will meet like-minded peers to discuss how they are dealing with global economic, social and political challenges.

The visit to Hong Kong will take place on 25 – 29 March 2012. This follows the success of an initial programme earlier this year. Hong Kong's political and economic proximity to mainland China means that it is a critical player in global higher education.

Participants will examine how closer relationships are developing through higher education between Hong Kong and the mainland and will explore new possibilities for transnational education and research partnerships.

The Chicago trip will run from 13 - 17 May 2012. The Leadership Foundation's first trip to the city will focus on higher education and business partnerships.

Both visits will be four-day programmes giving participants the chance to understand the challenges facing higher education in the east or west. Each trip will combine visits to universities and colleges in the region and visits to policy agencies and businesses.

No more than 12 participants will be accepted on each programme in order to create the best atmosphere for learning and for establishing sustainable networks.

More detailed itineraries for Hong Kong and Chicago will be available in the autumn. To find out more or to reserve a place contact Nicola Longley at nicola.longley@lfhe.ac.uk or click **HERE** to visit the event website.

Leadership Foundation

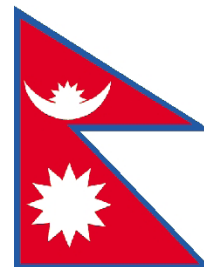
for Higher Education

UK TNE partners for Nepal

The Embassy of Nepal would like to invite 10-15 universities or colleges interested in transnational education or partnership opportunities with Nepal to a reception, 28 July 2011.

Education has been identified as a priority sector for foreign investment and the Embassy and Britain Nepal Chamber of Commerce (BNCC) are preparing a trade mission to Nepal towards the end of September/early October to identify and examine investment and trade opportunities for UK HEIs.

UK universities interested in attending the reception and buffet supper, email: officesecretary@nepembassy.org.uk.

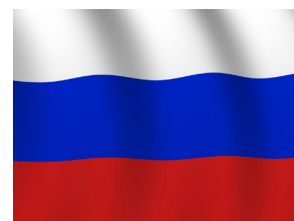

Russian university seeks UK collaborative partners

Moscow University of Finance and Law (MFUA) is looking for UK universities to collaborate with through staff and student exchange programmes, short-term customised courses (study abroad and credit transfer), collaborative research projects and joint events.

MFUA has around 40,000 students and 12 branches across cities in Russia.

The university is also interested in collaboration on bachelor and master's degree programmes, pathway programmes (university preparation programme in home country then transfer to MFUA), joint programmes (MBA, MA, MSc, BA, BSc), exchange programmes, and foreign internships.

Interested UK universities should contact: Natalya.Ravdina@britishcouncil.org



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If you have any feedback or suggestions regarding this newsletter and its contents or would like to bring to our attention news from the international higher education sector, please email info@international.ac.uk

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Research & Collaboration

Fashion, textile and design: Ningbo delegation visits the UK

In an **earlier issue of International Focus** we reported on a visit by 12 UK university representatives' to Ningbo in March 2011. The visit was the first phase of a Sino-UK Collaboration Programme in Textile and Fashion Design under the Knowledge Economy Partnership Strand of Internationalising Higher Education (IHE), the British Council's global education initiative. The programme follows a model similar to that of the successful UKIERI project between India and the UK, which allows for several types of collaborative activities to be coordinated under a broader framework programme.

The Ningbo initiative offers significant opportunities for UK universities with strengths in the creative industries. There are about 10,000 textile and fashion small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) in the city of Ningbo and its surrounding areas, and many of them have links with local universities and colleges. Ningbo itself is a thriving port city of some 5.7m residents, located midway between the Chinese Mainland and the Yangtze River Delta, which enjoys the most developed economy in China.

In May 2010, Ningbo Fashion and Design Technology Innovation Alliance was set up to promote collaboration between industry, teaching and research. Many SMEs in the Ningbo area have expressed a strong desire to globalise their brands, but lack the proper channels. The Alliance and collaborative programme with the UK will help achieve this goal.

And the UK creative industries sector as a whole is one of the areas in which the UK can rightly claim to be world-leading. Over a million people work in the UK's creative industries, with a further 800,000 employed in creative occupations in businesses outside the creative sector. The sector accounts for more than 7% of UK GDP and has shown consistent, above-average growth for more than a decade. It is also proportionately larger than any creative sector in Europe (the creative industries account for 2.6% of EU GDP) and consistently punches above its weight in global markets.

The second phase of the UK-Ningbo programme, at the end of May 2011, saw a delegation of 16 representatives of HEIs, local government and the business sector from Ningbo visit the UK. The group was hosted by the 12 UK universities, all leaders in the creative industry fields: London College of Fashion, Middlesex, Southampton Solent, the Arts University College at Bournemouth, Coventry, Northampton, Derby, Nottingham Trent, Bradford College, Central Lancashire, Salford and Manchester Metropolitan.

As a result of the visit, several lines of activity were agreed, including a proposed collaboration and joint programme between Chinese universities and UK industry, student and staff exchanges, internship opportunity provision to UK students with Chinese industry, and training provision by UK universities.

In phase three, the UK delegation will return to Ningbo to attend the International Fashion Festival this October for which there is discussion to stage a joint fashion show.

British Council China will follow up with the Ningbo delegates for collaboration ideas, and also provide guidance to the UK delegation on how to move things forward.

Zhang Jing

Director - Higher Education China

British Council Beijing