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Strategies for Securing Equity in Access and Success in Higher Education
Nairobi, Kenya

17-19 November

6th European Quality Assurance Forum: "Quality and Trust: at the heart of what we do"

Antwerp, Belgium

18-19 November

Global Conference on Education
California, United States

Beyond the BRICs? A snapshot of higher education in Mexico

In June this year a delegation of UK Vice-Chancellors joined the Deputy Prime Minister and the Universities Minister on a visit to Brazil to strengthen ties between the two countries. The visit was a great success, with the delegation agreeing to develop a broad framework of higher education collaboration between the UK and Brazil. All eyes are on Brazil now as the development of the framework gathers pace. But as Mexico prepares for its forthcoming presidency of the G20 group of the world's most economically powerful countries, should UK higher education institutions (HEIs) be careful that the focus on collaboration with Brazil does not eclipse potential for cooperation with other Latin American countries?

Like Brazil, Mexico is a key emerging market in the field of higher education (HE), undergoing significant expansion and development. But while there is a great deal of enthusiasm in Mexico for developing collaborative agreements with UK institutions, Mexican HEIs often encounter reluctance to engage on the part of the UK, and have started to focus their attention on European partners they have found to be more willing – Germany, France and Spain. Mexican universities are keen to urge UK institutions to think beyond their conventional focus on BRIC countries, towards a broader model of engagement that might encourage cooperation with regions rather than individual countries.

An expanding higher education sector

Mexico is set to be the world's seventh largest economy by 2050, and is already Latin America's largest importer and exporter. With a rapidly expanding economy and a young population – 50% of the country's 112.3million citizens are under 25 years of age – the country is faced with the challenge of ensuring that there will be enough skilled workers to support economic and demographic expansion. To address this challenge, Mexico has invested significantly in expanding its higher education system. An ambitious programme in 2006 to increase the number of HE places resulted in the creation of 75 new institutions and 160,000 new HE places.

International HE collaboration is a clear political priority of the Mexican Government, and is integral to its efforts to address the skills gap. The country's Education Secretary Rodolfo Tuiran speaks regularly of the importance for Mexico of strategically expanding international mobility within the education sector. These are words which appear to be backed up by policy decisions - funding for international scholarships is one of the few areas where the Mexican Government has approved a substantial budget increase for Mexico's National Council for Science and Research (CONCACyT). The overall number of Mexicans studying abroad has grown exponentially from just over 14,000 in 2000 to over 25,000 in 2008.

Contrary to perceptions in the UK that the Mexican HE sector's efforts at internationalisation are hindered by concerns about the safety of international students, the sector in Mexico has developed a spectrum of two-way collaborative relationships with HEIs in a range of countries, including the United States, Argentina, Germany, France, and Central America. A number of these relationships, including those with Germany and Central America, were brokered by ANUIES, the Mexican equivalent of Universities UK, and have been ongoing for well over ten years. It is normal in Mexico for universities to have developed advanced internationalisation strategies, and to have clear ideas about the sorts of collaboration they are interested in developing, and which universities to engage with.

Opportunities for collaboration between Mexico and the UK

While the main trading partner for Mexico in the field of HE is the United States there is in some areas already a strong HE relationship between Mexico and the UK. The US received 13,450 Mexican students in 2008, while the UK was the second most popular destination, with 1,800. The UK, however, is the main recipient for Mexican postgraduates studying overseas – of the 2,424 Mexicans studying postgraduate programmes overseas in 2009, 33% were at British institutions.

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Mexico
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Beyond the BRICs? A snapshot of higher education in Mexico

The potential to develop joint degrees and two way mobility has been substantially improved by a seven-figure investment by the Mexican Government to address the lack of English language provision across the Mexican HE sector. 50% of undergraduate courses delivered by private providers in Mexico are already delivered in English.

The Mexican sector is keen to expand collaboration with the UK in a number of areas in particular. The Mexican National Council for Science and Research (CONACyT) provides high profile international scholarships to support Mexican students in foreign countries, for which the UK is by far the main recipient. While at present CONACyT mainly provides doctoral scholarships, it has been granted funds by the Mexican government to offer international post-doctoral scholarships. CONACyT is keen for a substantial portion of these to facilitate travel to the UK by early career researchers, and has already begun trialling the process of developing post-doctoral collaborative activity with the University of Edinburgh.

One of the major weaknesses the Mexican HE sector identifies within its own institutions is the disconnectedness of HE in Mexico from business and innovation. This is recognised as a particular strength of the UK HE sector, and one that Mexican HEIs are keen to take advantage of through increased collaboration - envisaged either as opportunities for Mexican students to spend time at UK institutions with close connections to industry, or as the development of joint courses with such institutions in the UK.

UK institutions are showing an increasing interest in Mexico, as is the UK Government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, with plans being mooted for a UK ministerial visit to Mexico in the first half on next year. With Mexican and other Latin American universities making ever-more regular appearances in world university rankings, and a range of countries are already taking advantage of the region's significant potential, it is important to make the most of the visit as an opportunity to demonstrate publicly the UK's interest in increasing higher education collaboration in Mexico and Latin America more generally.

International Unit extends its overseas network with MoU signing

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the UK Higher Education International Unit and the Institute of International Education (IIE) in the United States.

The MoU, signed at the recent UK-US Policy Forum in Windsor by IIE's CEO and President, Allan Goodman and the International Unit's Chair, Professor Colin Riordan, identifies areas of mutually beneficial collaboration, including:

- Joint research projects related to topics such as mobility statistics, emerging trends in the internationalisation of higher education, and mobility and UK-US cooperation opportunities offered by the European Union.
- Joint and Double Degrees and Doctoral Programs. The IU and IIE will undertake to work together to facilitate discussion between UK and US institutions regarding collaborative programs, and to enhance each other's policy work in this area through, for example, the sharing of good practice examples and case study material.
- Share resources and best practices in international education.
- Promotion of the IU and IIE membership resources to each other's members.

It is intended that the MoU will provide a platform to explore activities that promote and enhance opportunities for global cooperation between higher education institutions in the UK and the US.



Research & Collaboration
Science collaboration between University of Aberdeen and Qatar

Scientists from the University of Aberdeen will travel to Doha, Qatar this month to discuss the next stage in a series of projects in pioneering new sustainable energy-efficient buildings. The Gulf State will host the 2022 FIFA World Cup with a demanding building programme to complete over the next ten years and is keen to lead the world in new construction practices.



After a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed this spring between the Qatar-based Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (GORD) and the University of Aberdeen, the first of a number of collaborative projects were discussed at a follow-up visit to Aberdeen by the Chairman of GORD and key advisors.

The University of Aberdeen team from the School of Engineering and the Department of Chemistry (School of Natural and Computing Sciences) will contribute their expertise in research and innovation in building materials and methods designed in order to support Qatar's efforts to become a world leader in an environmentally-friendly, sustainable built environment which demonstrates reduced energy consumption and carbon emissions. The first project will be launched in early 2012.

New network brings together PhD students in Africa and Europe

A project to establish a unique network for doctoral students and early career researchers in African and European countries has been by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU).

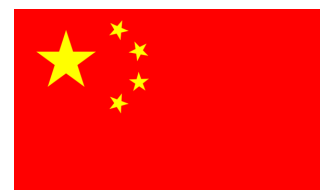


DocLinks will raise awareness of doctoral education, create the first-ever single publicity channel for resources relevant to PhD study, and establish contact and exchange between PhD students and early career researchers in Africa and Europe.

It is anticipated that the project will make a valuable contribution to students and universities across both continents. The project is supported by the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Union and will run over two years. The initial phase will analyse the needs of the target audience, while the second phase will include the development of a dedicated website and virtual platform for interaction, as well as two residential schools. The ACU is coordinating the project with six other African and European partners. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

China collaborative opportunity for UK Universities

The Shenzhen Institute of Advanced Technology (SIAT) in Southern China is looking to establish joint programmes for postgraduate students, as well as expand its international links through exchanges of PhD students and staff, and joint research.



SIAT is currently focussing on several research areas including robotics and intelligent systems, bio-medical engineering, information technology and digital engineering, biology, and new energy.

All these areas could lead to pilot postgraduate programmes. Engineering programmes are of particular interest to SIAT, as they have not had international collaborations in this area. SIAT's English website is available [HERE](#).

For more information contact: Chris Butland, UK Trade & Investment (UKTI), British Consulate-General Guangzhou: chris.butland@fco.gov.uk / +86 20 8314 3099.

Leicester launches English language initiative in Kurdistan

Leicester University will collaborate with a Kurdistan university to set up an English language centre for students. The centre will be located in Erbil (Hewler), the capital city of the Federal Region of Kurdistan - Iraq. The announcement comes as the Government of Kurdistan pursues the growth of higher education as one of its top priorities.



The capacity-building project will provide new opportunities for students to take English language qualifications in their home country, and in the region. The International English Language Centre will equip students for courses in English at home or abroad and will be a focus for strengthening English language speaking in the region.

The project will see development visits by staff from Leicester's English Language Teaching Unit who will work with and train lecturers in Kurdistan to build a centre that will administer qualifications and assist in improving the English language skills of the population - an aim that the Kurdistan government sees as a key part of its modernisation programme.

In Focus: Reflections from Australia

Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive, Universities UK

Recently returned from a week in Australia courtesy of the British Council and the Australian International Education Conference (AIEC), I am struck by the similarities between our UK and Australian higher education systems. Even though we could not be further away from each other across the globe (as the gruelling 22 hour flights from London to Sydney testified) nonetheless – apart from geography and political responses to immigration - we share much in common.

I had been invited to make a presentation at the AIEC conference, on free speech and human rights in the context of the recruitment of international students. The conference itself was primarily an Australian affair but with a large international presence – in particular from China, Malaysia and India.

Delegates spoke frequently about the increased investment their governments were making in higher education to secure growth. For China and India the investment was financial. In Australia it seemed as much as anything else political: for instance their government had just announced a liberalisation of their immigration controls for international students to increase their country's share of the international student market, a policy that was being widely and publicly promoted as part of their growth strategy.

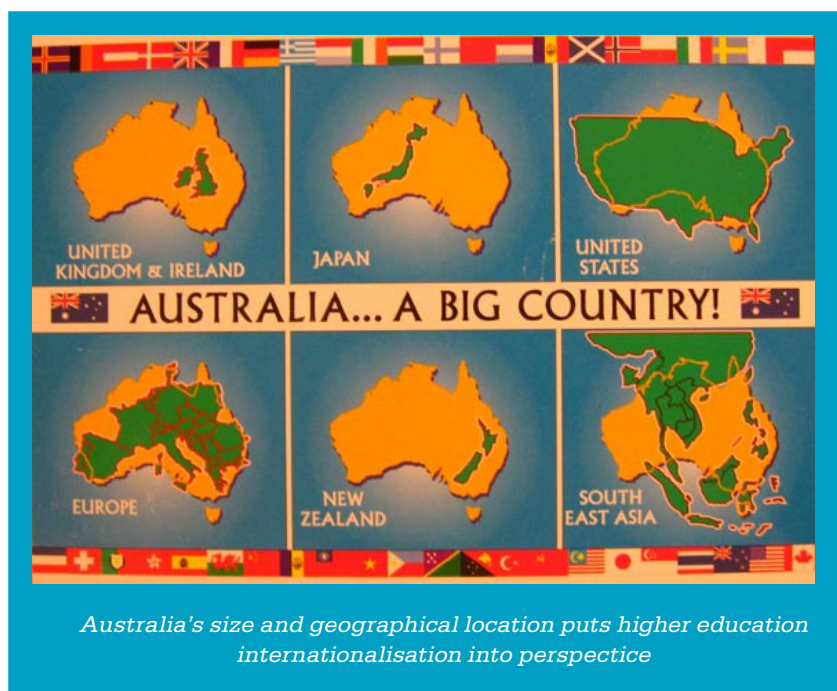
It all felt very bullish, with the need to invest in higher education a theme that ran through many of the conference presentations. It felt like a stark contrast to our UK discourse of cuts. But perhaps that is not surprising: the Eurozone crisis is distant, and neither that crisis nor the banking meltdown have yet to make a major direct impact on the Australian economy, though that of course may change in the future.

It was not just the Eurozone crisis that felt far away. Europe generally also felt far away, and indeed to some extent the United States too. Instead it is China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Pacific Rim who are the meaningful neighbours. Indeed it was impossible not to be made aware during the course of the conference how on occasion our UK perception of 'international' is, albeit subconsciously, westernised. The idea of the UK or Europe providing hubs to the spokes of developing countries misses the point: talking with Chinese and Indian delegates it was clear where they thought their hubs were; and they were certainly not uniquely in Europe.

By way of contrast, Australia's teaching funding system felt far more familiar – not least in terms of graduate contributions. Australia has long had significant graduate contributions, but with their public/private balance of their funding weighted towards the private. We seem to be following them in that regard. But the difference is that their system has been in place for years, and does not now appear to be particularly controversial. Perhaps that is partly due to the fact that they do not have variable fees, their focus therefore being on graduate repayments so avoiding the toxic language of fees. They are now, like us, moving to a system of deregulated student numbers, but with no variable fees it seems that they can control the costs more easily.

There were though familiar concerns being expressed about the impact of student choice on STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths] and other high cost subjects and the resulting viability of individual courses. But student choice has a different resonance in a country where only 10% of students study out of state. There seems to be a general assumption that the majority of students attend their local state university rather than shop around in other states, which provides their universities with more stability than we have.

But again, that attachment to the local university is perhaps not surprising if it takes a long airplane flight to get to that other university. However you look at it, the impact of geography is powerful.



Markets & Intelligence

HESA study on International Benchmarking in UK higher education

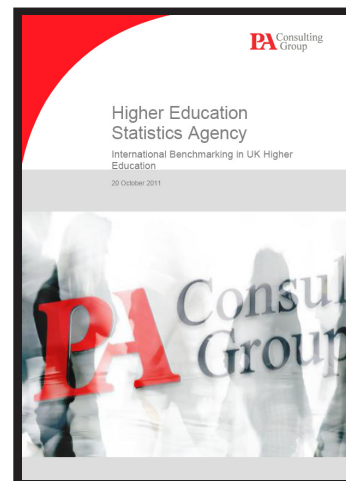
UK universities must address the growing international competition for business, research funding and students, according to a recent report International Benchmarking in UK Higher Education. The report, commissioned as part of a Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) project **Realising Business Benefits through the use of Benchmarking**, underlines the increasing internationalisation of higher education.

The study finds that the international outlook of UK universities still varies widely. While some institutions have established routine international comparisons, many others still confine themselves to comparisons to UK institutions in order to establish their international performance.

A continuation of this, says the study, poses severe risks for UK universities as international standing has to be demonstrated based on international comparisons.

Accordingly, the report recommends institutions make better use of information resources available and collaborate in developing internationally focused benchmarking initiatives.

Click [HERE](#) for the full report.



'Prepare for Success' tool for international students

A free transition resource for international students has been launched. Prepare for Success is a web-based learning resource for international students preparing for study in higher or further education in the UK. The project received Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) funding through the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and was developed by eLanguages at the University of Southampton.

The transition tool offers a menu of multimedia learning resources such as learning activities designed to help international students find out about academic life in the UK and the skills needed for effective study prior to their arrival.

Since its launch, Prepare for Success has attracted students from 213 countries and had over 375,000 visits. It is being used in more than 150 institutions worldwide.

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

UK-US Partnerships Forum

The British Council is running a one-day forum aimed at staff at UK institutions to discuss and learn about best practices on developing partnerships from US universities and a US perspective on partnering with the UK. Delegates will also hear case studies on how to engineer the perfect institutional and corporate partnership.

Speakers include:

Bill Swisher, Director, Office of Corporate and Institutional Partnerships, Carnegie Mellon University;

Dr. Robert Clarke, Interim Director for the Biomedical Graduate Research Organization, Georgetown University;

Daniel Obst, Deputy VP, International Partnerships, Institute of International Education;

Dr. Vicki Colvin, Director, Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology, Rice University;

Dr. Heather Barclay Hamir, Director Study Abroad, University of Texas- Austin;

Dr. John E. Dooley, Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs, Virginia Tech;

Dr. Eugene Tracy, Interim Dean of Arts and Sciences, The College of William & Mary and;

Dr. Ronald Gronsky, Professor, Advanced Materials Analysis and Special Faculty Assistant for the Chancellor for International Relations, University of California - Berkeley

There will also be updates from the US sector, funding details of the UK-US-India strand of UKERI2, and a preview of new market intelligence.

The event takes place on 02 December 2011 at 1 Whitehall Place, London. The event fee is £300 per delegate (\$475 USD) and registration is now open by clicking [HERE](#).

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Markets & Intelligence

And finally....Huddersfield ranked best in the world

Forget Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Yale. The best university in the world is in fact the University of Huddersfield. Well that's according to its international students, who could be considered good judges for such an accolade.

Huddersfield topped the annual International Student Barometer (ISB) conducted by independent research body, i-graduate.

The ISB surveys 48,000 international university students in the UK and across the world. It asks a series of questions about their studies, campus facilities and life as a student abroad.

Huddersfield's average score was 87.4%, almost five percentage points ahead of the average for all universities.

It scored particularly highly on employability and work experience, with students being given the chance to earn money during their studies.

The University's teachers and courses also scored very well and the clean and modern campus earned high marks.

Click **HERE** for more information on the ISB.



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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