

PRESS RELEASE – 24 June 2009

Key role for UK in rebuilding Iraq's universities, report says; UK government allocates £300K for new programme

UK universities have a key role to play in building Iraq's higher education sector according to a report published today.

Published by the UK Higher Education International Unit, the British Universities Iraq Consortium (BUIC) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *UK Higher Education engagement with Iraq* - considers the prospects for greater academic collaboration between the UK and Iraq. It analyses key trends in Iraqi higher education, the pathways and roadblocks to future UK-Iraq collaboration, and it provides recommendations for policy makers to consider to deepen UK engagement with the Iraqi academic community.

As Iraq rebuilds its higher education system, it is looking for assistance in respect of capacity-building and training opportunities overseas for its citizens. The £1bn Iraq Education Initiative, launched in January by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, is a unique opportunity to foster links between UK universities and universities in Iraq. Many students will benefit from degree level education in the UK, and elsewhere.

In the light of this Initiative, *UK Higher Education engagement with Iraq* assesses the scope for greater collaboration between the two higher education systems in terms of capacity-building; consulting opportunities; student recruitment; and research collaboration.

David Lammy MP, Minister of State for Higher Education, said: "This report highlights the importance of UK universities working more collaboratively to support reform in Iraq, and I hope the sector will take advantage of the opportunities that will arise from Iraq's keenness to work in partnership with the UK.

"British universities must work together to maximise their contribution to rebuilding and reinvigorating Iraqi universities and that will make it easier for them to develop stronger educational and scientific ties with the UK and other countries.

"The Government is keen to support education development in Iraq and I am pleased to announce that £300K is being allocated from 2009-11 for a Leadership and Management Training programme for Iraq universities."

Professor Rick Trainor, President, Universities UK, said: "Iraq was once home to some of the finest universities in the Middle East but it faces an uphill struggle to regain that status. It's now home to a sizeable pool of under-developed and under-provided academic talent. As this report highlights, the UK is uniquely placed, through academic collaboration, to facilitate Iraq's capacity-building ambitions."

Dr John Withrington, Chair, British Universities Iraq Consortium, and Dean of International Development, University of Exeter, said: "The 21 universities in the British Universities Iraq Consortium have worked together for several years to help renew ties between the higher education systems of both countries, and to provide Iraqi students with university education of the highest quality. We warmly welcome the Iraq Education Initiative as a clear commitment on the part of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, and BUIC stands ready to do its part."

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Notes to editor

1. The press release and the report are under embargo until 00:01 Wednesday 24 June 2009.
2. The report will be available for UK universities to download from the Secure Area of the International Unit website (login required) at:
www.international.ac.uk.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Farnell, Communications Officer, UK HE International Unit: 020 7419 5609 or email elizabeth.farnell@international.ac.uk

The UK Higher Education International Unit coordinates, promotes and undertakes activities designed to support UK universities in a globally competitive world. The UK HE International Unit is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland), GuildHE and Universities UK. www.international.ac.uk

The British Universities Iraq Consortium represents a group of British universities working together with the British Council and other agencies to support the capacity building of higher education in Iraq. www.buic.ac.uk

The key role of the new **Department for Business Innovation and Skills** is to build Britain's capability to compete in the global economy. It combines BERR's strengths in shaping the enterprise environment, analysing the strengths and needs of the various parts of British industry, building strategies for industrial strength and expertise in better regulation with DIUS's expertise in maintaining world class universities, expanding access to higher education, investing in the UK's science base and shaping skills policy and innovation. www.bis.gov.uk