

PRESS RELEASE – (Embargoed until 00.01 Tuesday 31 March 2009)

Report examines the UK's European competitors for international students

A report out today says that UK universities are a success story in the internationalisation of higher education but cautions that they also need to look at more collaborative approaches to international partnerships in order to ensure this success is maintained.

UK Universities and Europe: Competition and Internationalisation takes as a starting point the leading position of UK universities, and highlights the opportunities they have to learn from their continental neighbours some complementary approaches to internationalisation.

The report examines the policies of seven other European countries at national and institutional levels, in regard to both the competition for international students and more collaborative, partnership approaches to international activities. It constructs a picture of where, over the coming five years, the competition to UK universities is likely to originate at undergraduate and taught masters levels.

The report's recommendations include:

- UK universities should implement all Bologna Process reforms and brand themselves internationally as 'Bologna-compatible' and at the forefront of the development of the European Higher Education Area.
- UK universities should adopt and implement collaborative partnership models for internationalisation.
- Universities should establish small consortia to develop and implement internationalisation strategies.
- UK universities should seek to broaden and deepen their relationships with, and work more systematically with, the UK Foreign Office and Department for International Development.
- UK universities should do more to provide and encourage second-language training as part of undergraduate degree programmes.

The report provides UK universities with recent data on the various 'pull factors' employed elsewhere in Europe such as funding, immigration regimes and teaching in English, and analyses their implications for the UK.

Professor Rick Trainor, President of Universities UK, said, 'The UK sector is well aware of the emergence of new competitors for international students. While much of this attention has rightly been directed at Asia, increasingly Europe is seen as a potential competitor.'

A number of practical recommendations for UK universities are laid out and the report suggests that longer-term collaborative models of internationalisation not only complement the UK's mainly competitive approach to international activities, but may provide more certainty and resilience during the global recession.

Professor Trainor added, 'Among the ways that UK universities can cope with the increased international activity of our continental neighbours, and their growing tendency to teach in English, is by placing more emphasis, as they do, on collaborative, partnership approaches.'

- Ends -

Notes to the Editor

- For further information please contact: Elizabeth Sheahan, Communications Officer, UK HE International Unit: 07739 560830 / 020 7419 5609
Elizabeth.sheahan@international.ac.uk
- The Report was published jointly by the UK HE International Unit and UK HE Europe Unit, associate organisations of Universities UK. It was authored by researchers at the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education and Kingston University London.
- The report will be available from Tuesday 31 March to UK university staff via the UK HE International Unit website's secure area (login and password required).
- The countries studied in the report are Germany, Netherlands, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Spain. These are portrayed as constituting varying levels of competitive threat to the UK HE sector over the next five years.
- The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental initiative which aims to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010 and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide. It has 46 participating countries. For more information, see www.europeunit.ac.uk.

About the UK HE International Unit & UK HE Europe Unit

The UK Higher Education International Unit coordinates, promotes and undertakes activities designed to support UK universities in a globally competitive world. It 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.

The Europe Unit is a sector-wide body which raises awareness of European issues affecting UK higher education, coordinates the UK's involvement in European initiatives and debates, and strengthens the position of the UK HE sector in debates on the Bologna Process and EU policy. It is jointly funded by Universities UK, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, GuildHE and the Quality Assurance Agency.