



Education sparks opportunities

Our work in higher education

April 2024

Director Education's introduction

The best part of my role is meeting those whose lives have changed because of their UK higher education experience, and who have achieved amazing things. Every day, I get to see how education really does spark opportunities.

The British Council works in three areas of education: promoting student mobility, scholarships and alumni networks; supporting international education partnerships; and delivering qualifications.

The UK is fortunate that so many young people choose it as a study destination. They not only strengthen the academic experience for our own students by making our campuses more vibrant, but also take their knowledge of the UK back to their own countries. International students are such a tremendous asset that many other countries want them, too. But we cannot rest on our laurels.

Much of our work is about promoting the UK as a study destination and training agents and counsellors so they can provide accurate and high-quality advice to prospective students. We also deliver scholarships both on behalf of the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, in the case of the prestigious Chevening and Marshall scholarship programmes, and through our own Women in STEM scholarship scheme.

Once students have graduated, we want to stay in touch. We work to celebrate the achievements of alumni of UK institutions, and to support them to develop professional networks, progress in their careers and stay connected with the UK.

Successful graduates are the best ambassadors for UK higher education – and well placed to work with the UK in their professional lives whether as political leaders, business people or advocates and activists for action to address global challenges.

We also want UK students to have international experiences, so they can understand and connect with other cultures and develop skills valued by employers such as resilience and problem solving. To facilitate this, we promote the learning of modern foreign languages, including through our Language Assistants programme in schools. We are also exploring how we can support large scale outward mobility programmes to India and China.

Increasingly, UK institutions are also interested in offering their courses and qualifications overseas – whether through branch campuses or through dual or joint degrees, franchise arrangements or other forms of partnership. Recently, many countries have made changes to the regulatory environment for overseas institutions as a way of facilitating more transnational education agreements. For these countries, transnational education is seen as a way to rapidly increase capacity and quality in education – by providing new education opportunities and supporting the skills to strengthen economies and wider societies.

UK institutions also value international research partnerships. Over 60 per cent of UK research is done in collaboration with international partners, and this is one of the reasons why the UK scores so well for quality and impact in international league tables. We particularly support early-career researchers to build the international networks they need at the early stages of their professional lives.

We are huge advocates for the value of international education partnerships. Not only do they create more capacity – which is essential to meet growing demand – and improve the quality of education; they also connect people and build understanding and trust across cultures.

But, of course, international education partnerships are not without their challenges. Getting them off the ground requires significant investment of time, money and passion – and some risk. We work alongside other UK higher education sector bodies to get the right regulatory frameworks in place – frameworks that give UK institutions clarity on the regulatory environment and give host countries the confidence that the new provision will be high-quality and relevant. We provide small grants for institutions in the UK and overseas to explore working together – either in teaching and learning or in research. We also commission insight reports to support UK universities to develop their own international strategies and organise visits to countries that may be of interest so they can learn more about the higher education landscape and meet potential partners.

Finally, we provide examination services to UK education institutions and awarding bodies, enabling young people to take UK qualifications, which, in turn, helps them to access opportunities in their home country and overseas.

The UK's higher education sector is one of its greatest assets. The British Council is proud to support those across the sector to spark opportunities for people in the UK and other countries.

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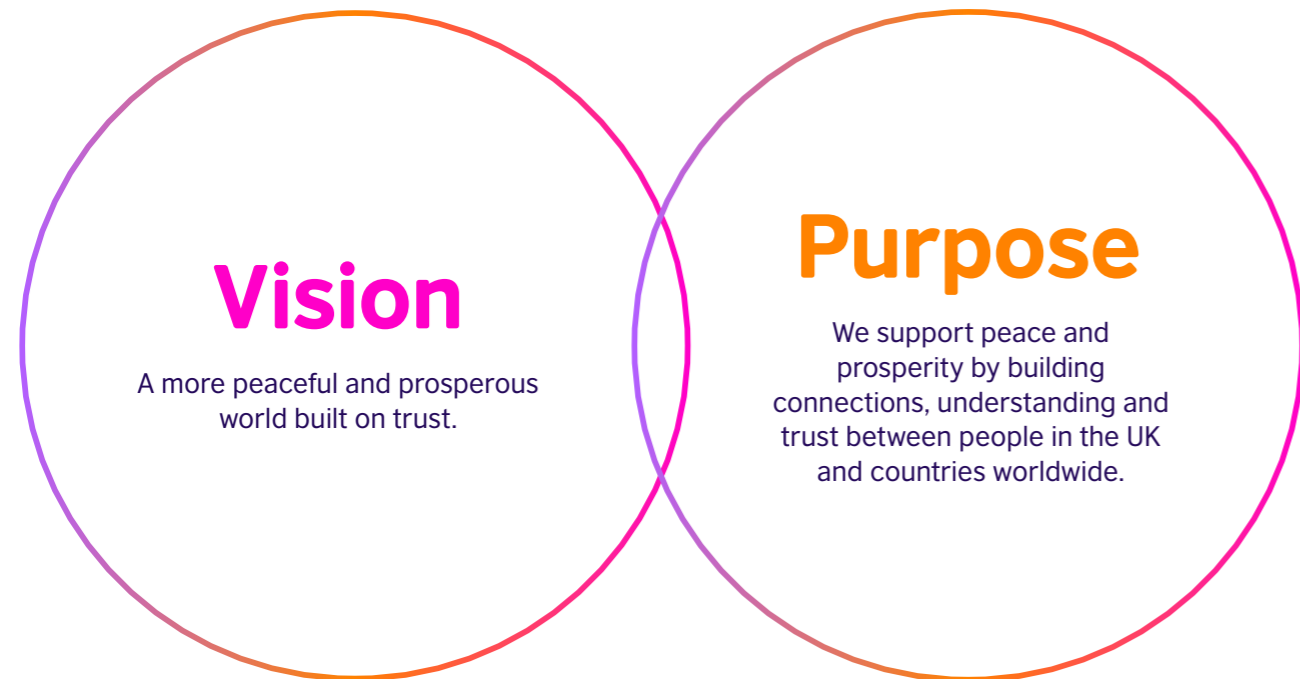
Maddalaine Ansell
Director Education,
British Council



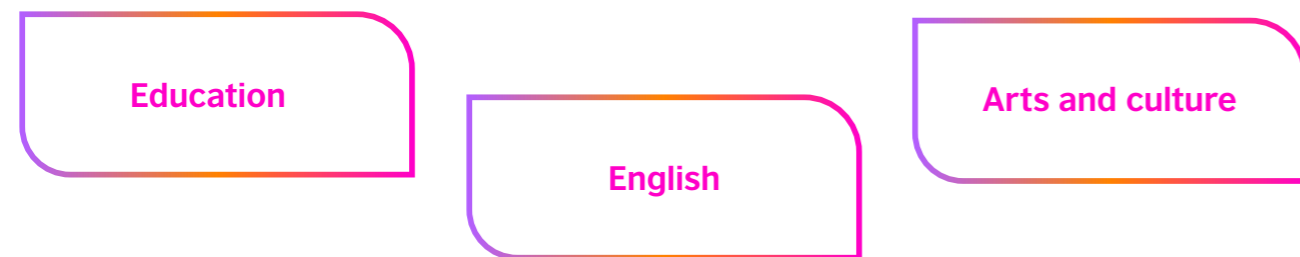
**Together
we spark
success**

Who we are

We are the UK's cultural relations organisation. We combine the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language, our global presence and relationships, our unparalleled access to young people and influencers, and our creative sparkle.



Our core sectors



Our approach

By working with governments and our partners in arts and culture, education and English, in the UK and other countries, we make a bigger difference, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world. We take a long-term approach to building trust and remain at arm's length from government.



We work with people in over **200 countries** and territories and are on the ground in more than **100 countries**.



We reach around **650 million people** annually.



Founded in **1934**, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.



Education sparks opportunities



Our work in higher education

Education is particularly effective at building trust and understanding because it reaches young people at a formative stage, and positive experiences stay with them all their lives.

The UK's strength in education makes it an excellent partner for people-to-people, institution-to-institution and government-to-government connections.

Our approach

We achieve our objectives by working closely with the UK higher education sector and partners around the world. This includes policymakers in government, higher education providers, sector bodies and students and those that influence them.

Our work is fully aligned with the UK government's International Education Strategy, and we work closely with key government departments, including the Department of Business and Trade and Department for Education, to support the UK's International Education Champion, Sir Steve Smith.

We also support the international priorities of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish and Welsh governments.

Our role in sustainable development

We aim to ensure inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. To achieve this, our approach and programmes are guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as our commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

‘We work alongside the UK’s Department of Business and Trade and Department for Education, and we closely support the international priorities of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish and Welsh governments.’

Our focus

Our work in higher education covers three core areas:

1 Promoting student mobility, scholarships and alumni networks

2 Supporting higher education partnerships

3 Delivering qualifications

We can make a unique difference in these core areas due to our global presence, longstanding relationships with international governments and the UK sector and proven record of delivery.



 **639**

Our Going Global Partnerships programme has supported **639** higher education institutions in the UK and worldwide to work together through collaborative partnerships.

 **43,000**

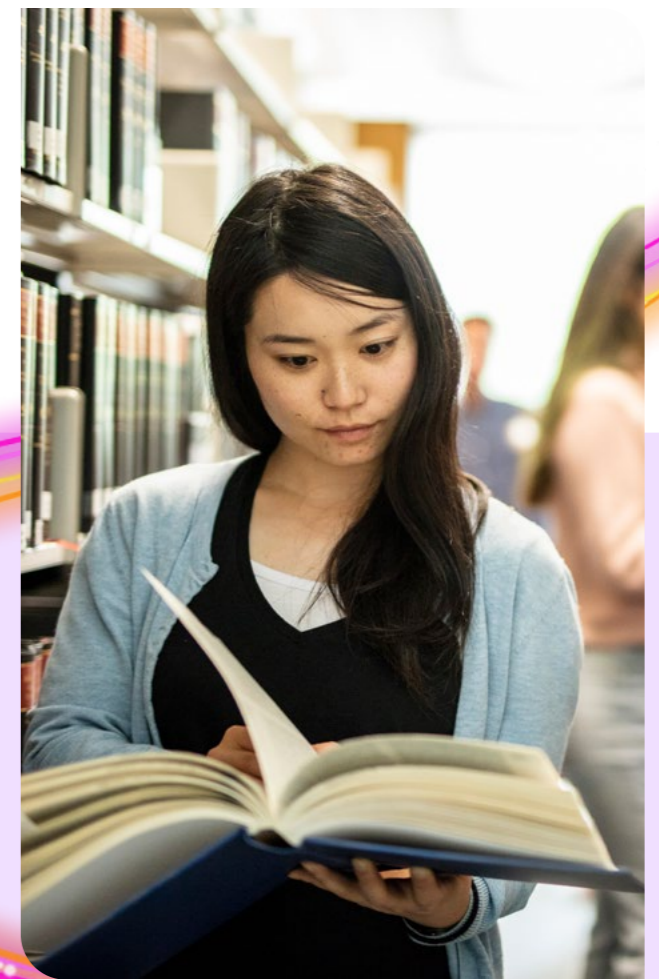
Our Alumni UK platform for former international students has more than **43,000** registered members, and 19 per cent have actively engaged in British Council and UK government activities.

 **21,000**

Our support of the UK Agent Quality Framework has led to **21,000** agents and counsellors joining our engagement hub. Of these, 7,800 from 90 countries are now certified, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the UK as a study destination and the UK's ethical code of conduct.

 **6.2M**

In 2023–24, we helped attract **6.2 million** unique visitors to the Study UK website, which offers advice and support on studying in the UK.





Opportunities that spark brighter futures

Promoting student mobility, scholarships and alumni networks

We support the UK education sector to attract international students by providing insights on international recruitment, research and global policy. We also help to create development and networking opportunities for UK alumni overseas, strengthening their continued engagement with the UK.

Positioning the UK as a study destination

We promote the UK as a leading study destination, not only to support young people's education and careers, but because international students bring new ideas and knowledge to UK campuses, broaden the university experience for domestic students, help to sustain and enrich UK universities and have a positive impact on local economies. International students often use the knowledge and connections gained in the UK to bring positive change in their own communities.

We work with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and the British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA) to support the delivery of a world-class international student experience and help students find routes to employment.

Through the **Study UK campaign**, we position the UK as a preferred study destination, focusing on the strengths of the UK's education system, including its employability and career prospects, academic excellence and quality of teaching.

Launched following consultation with the UK higher education sector and audience research, the new Study UK website features a course finder, to support the decision-making process of prospective international students considering the UK as a study destination.



**One
in four**

One in four of the first-year international students in the UK who were surveyed by Study UK said the campaign influenced their choice of study destination.

Supporting outward mobility

We recognise and promote the value of UK students studying in other countries, based on our experience of being the National Agency for Erasmus+. We continue to support outward mobility in schools through our **Language Assistants programme**, by promoting modern foreign languages and supporting international partnerships.

Providing English assessment

Our work in English language assessments supports international students and other individuals to access new life, study and work opportunities – both internationally and in their own countries.

Training and supporting those who advise international students

Our research shows that students making decisions about study destinations are influenced by a complex range of factors. School counsellors and education agents are among the primary sources from whom students seek advice on their course of study.

We provide a **digital platform for agents and counsellors** to access free, certified training and a wealth of resources, so they can offer accurate and up-to-date information on the UK as a study destination.

This ensures all international students are well-informed as they make key decisions about their future, which, in turn, contributes to them having a positive experience in the UK and maintains the UK's solid reputation as a study destination.

This digital platform is complemented by on-the-ground teams of British Council staff, who are the contact point for agents and counsellors and support them through local events and training to address their needs. These expert teams operate in the 42 countries that send more than 1,000 new students to the UK each year.

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‘As part of the UK Agent Quality Framework, we work with more than 21,000 agents around the world to improve the experience of students considering study in the UK.’



Building lasting relationships with the UK

Alumni UK is our global network for graduates from around the world who have studied in the UK as an international student or on a UK transnational education programme overseas.

This global community helps international students strengthen their connections with the UK and extend their own networks after their UK study experience. Complementing institutions' existing alumni networks, it provides opportunities for members to develop their skills, further their careers and contribute to wider society.

UK alumni are important agents of change for building trust and understanding between the UK and other countries, promoting UK higher education and working towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

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‘International students often use the knowledge and connections gained in the UK to bring positive change in their own communities.’

Scholarships

We support more than 1,000 students each year with scholarships to study in the UK, helping to widen access to UK higher education and support economic and social development globally.

We work closely with the UK government to deliver scholarship programmes and also manage awards on behalf of agencies and governments overseas.

Our scholarships opportunities include:

- **Women in STEM Scholarships** for female scholars of STEM subjects to come to the UK, helping to close the gender gap and build a cadre of female scientists to collaborate with the UK on global issues
- **GREAT Scholarships**, offering students from 15 countries the opportunity to get £10,000 towards their tuition fees for a wide range of one-year taught postgraduate courses
- **HESPAL Scholarships** for master's and PhD students from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, to create the next generation of senior academics who can maintain international quality standards at Palestinian universities and develop renewed and sustainable links between Palestinian and UK universities
- **Chevening Scholarships**, for exceptional scholars from around the world, and **Marshall Scholarships**, for young Americans of high ability, both funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

71

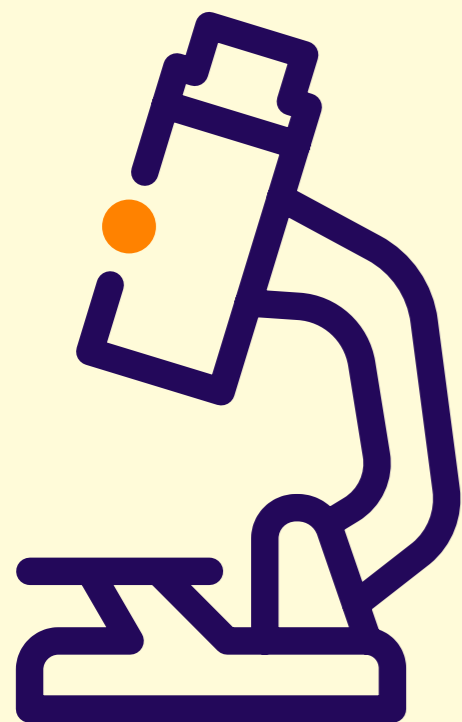


In 2024, we are partnering with **71** universities to offer 210 GREAT scholarships, including 15 scholarships in justice and law and 15 scholarships in science and tech.

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'I grew up in a low-income community witnessing my mother's role as a community health worker in the Brazilian universal healthcare system.

My decision to study public health as an Afro-Brazilian woman was rooted in the belief that I could contribute to the discussions in the field and pursue my interest in the social aspects of health promotion.'

Jhulia Nelly dos Santos,
Women in STEM scholar from Recife, Brazil, who studied for an MSC in Public Health at the University of Bristol.



According to Universities UK International:



77 per cent of international graduates of UK universities are more likely to do business with the UK.

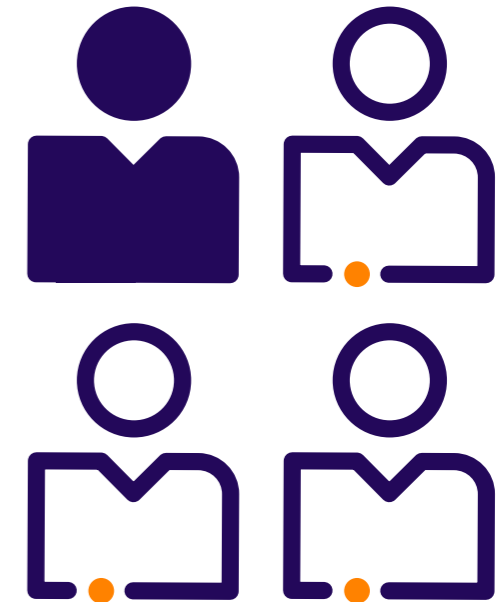


80 per cent would recommend studying in the UK.



88 per cent would plan visits as tourists.

According to the Higher Education Policy Institute:



Almost **one in four** countries has a head of state or head of government who has studied in the UK.



Connections that spark understanding

Supporting higher education partnerships

Our collaborative partnership opportunities enhance the work that many higher education providers already do, by supporting new connections, strengthening joint programmes and research and extending their international reach.



Through funding opportunities, we support higher education providers to establish mutually beneficial partnerships.

Across themes such as science, gender equality and transnational education, these partnerships can lead to more collaborative international research, stronger capacity, new mobility opportunities, and more inclusive, internationalised education.

By building connections in other countries, institutions can expand their global networks and establish lasting relationships for the future.

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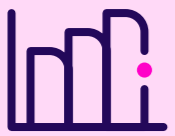
The types of partnership we support



Science and research collaborations: where institutions establish links to connect researchers with peers in other countries and work together to develop more impactful and relevant research collaborations.



Transnational education (TNE) partnerships: where institutions develop more scalable and sustainable transnational education by creating links with host institutions and developing joint programmes.



Capacity strengthening partnerships: where institutions work together to contribute to higher quality teaching and learning and enhanced learner outcomes.



Gender equality and inclusion partnerships: where institutions work together to address gender equality and inclusion challenges within higher education from a global perspective.



Industry collaborations: where institutions build stronger connections with industry partners to make higher education more relevant for the workplace and build stronger employment pathways for learners.



Through our Going Global Partnerships programme, we have:

 **633**

Funded **633** mutually beneficial higher education partnerships between the UK and other countries.

 **528**

Enabled **528** overseas institutions to work in partnership with the UK sector.

 **111**

Supported **111** higher education providers (covering 524 departments) across the UK to collaborate internationally.

 **£25.1M**

Distributed **£25.1 million** of grants for collaborative partnerships.



Supporting system-level collaborations

Collaborating at the system level can lead to stronger, more internationalised higher education systems, helping to pave the way for new international partnerships, enhanced transnational education and mobility opportunities, and trusted international relationships.

We work directly with policymakers in government to remove barriers and enhance international co-operation, building on trusted relationships developed over many years and drawing on our international experience across a range of contexts.

Our work involves identifying common areas of interest and identifying solutions that work for both the UK and our partners. This includes strengthening capacity in quality assurance and assessment, supporting system alignment through benchmarking and the mutual recognition of qualifications, and enabling more collaborative science and research.

This work has led to bilateral, government-to-government agreements in India, Brazil, Nigeria and Viet Nam, all of which will pave the way for UK education providers to offer TNE programmes with local partners. Through our Pakistan-UK Education Gateway, a new, practical handbook for TNE has been approved by the Higher Education Commission, creating new opportunities for TNE partnerships.

 **20**

We contributed to **20** jurisdictions accepting UK qualifications in 2022–23.

Spotlight: science and research partnerships



Our collaborative research grants support stronger international links between the UK and other countries, leading to more diverse and collaborative research that can address both local and global challenges.

Designing new climate solutions through virtual reality

A partnership between universities in Glasgow and Egypt has used transformative, virtual-reality-based teaching approaches to engage students in the design of new climate solutions.

Partners

University of Glasgow
The American University in Cairo

Opportunity

Our Going Global Partnerships UK-Egypt Higher Education Climate Grants – supporting institutions in Egypt and the UK to work in partnership to address climate resilience.

Activity

The partners designed a new, competition-based approach to teaching renewable energy solutions, which saw Egyptian students work in teams to develop immersive virtual reality (VR) applications.

Participants received mentorship from senior graduates and faculty to strengthen their research capacity and got to connect with industry representatives in the VR space.

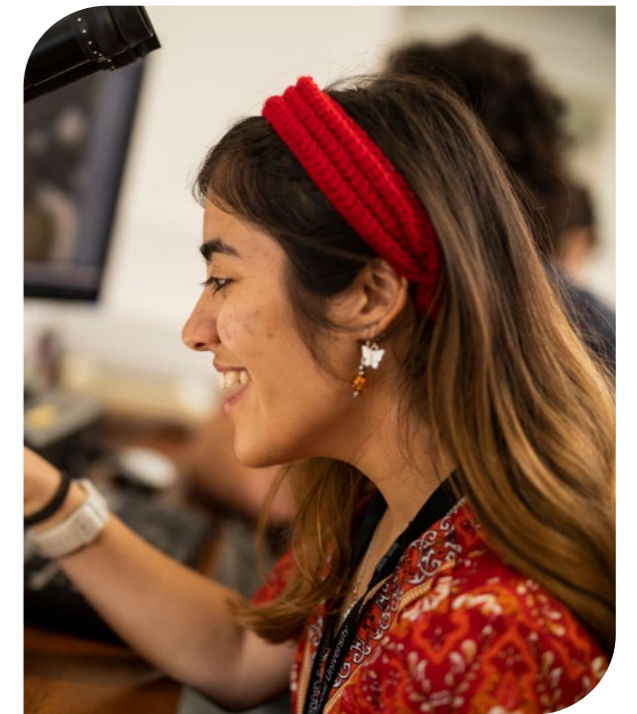
Impact

Participating students at The American University in Cairo have demonstrated enhanced digital literacy, teamwork and collaboration skills, and a stronger understanding of climate change issues. The team-based approach also helped to accelerate their learning in a much shorter time.

This has led to new joint research proposals between the two universities, including an approved master's project on the use of sensors and VR, as well as a proposal to empower Egyptian female students through immersive game design.

As a result of the partnership, the University of Glasgow has developed a new interdisciplinary module, where students from five different engineering disciplines work together on the Sustainable Development Goals, which has so far been delivered to 220 students.

The opportunity to raise awareness of their expertise in the VR space has also enabled the University of Glasgow to strengthen links with UK institutions and businesses, leading to an invitation to host the 2024 Immersive Learning Research Network Conference and an Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council grant to explore how VR can enhance manufacturing processes.



International Science Partnerships Fund

We are one of the UK partner organisations delivering the International Science Partnerships Fund, which is managed by the UK's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

This fund puts research and innovation at the heart of our international relationships, supporting UK researchers and innovators to work with peers around the world on the major themes of our time: planet, health, tech and talent.

Through the fund, we offer a range of opportunities, including grants to support research collaborations that tackle global challenges, and fellowships for early-career researchers.

Spotlight: capacity strengthening partnerships



Our capacity strengthening grants help to build stronger, more equitable, inclusive and international higher education around the world, by enhancing the quality of higher education, facilitating greater recognition of qualifications and creating pathways to international standards.

Supporting international recognition of artificial intelligence qualifications

A partnership between Cardiff and Viet Nam has helped to strengthen the quality of artificial intelligence (AI) qualifications in Vietnamese universities, which will support the journey to international recognition and increase future transnational education and student mobility opportunities.

Partners

Cardiff Metropolitan University
Hanoi University of Science and Technology
Ho Chi Minh University of Technology
Vietnam National University
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Opportunity

Our Going Global Partnerships UK-Viet Nam Partnerships for Quality and Internationalisation – enabling long-term higher education collaboration between the UK and Viet Nam.

Activity

After completing a series of comprehensive benchmarking reports for AI and computer science programmes across the Vietnamese partner universities, Cardiff Metropolitan University designed and delivered an extensive professional development training programme to over 100 staff and researchers in Viet Nam.

Participants learned about the quality context and new pedagogical approaches, including the flipped classroom, whilst networking and sharing practice with peers across departments and universities.

Impact

As well as gaining new insights and best practices, training participants have been equipped with innovative pedagogical approaches they can apply practically through the modules and programmes they lead.

Meanwhile, a new community of practice is continuing to facilitate knowledge sharing across the partner universities, helping to further enhance teaching and learning and quality assurance, and inform policy in Viet Nam.

To support knowledge sharing on a wider scale, the partnership has also launched an online toolkit of resources covering key aspects of benchmarking, quality assurance and professional development.



Spotlight: gender equality partnerships



Our Gender Equality Partnerships grants aim to advance gender equality through collaboration and systemic change, building on the potential of the higher education sector to influence wider society.

Addressing sexual violence on university campuses

Universities in Aston and Indonesia have worked together to combat sexual violence on Indonesian campuses, helping to promote a culture of safety through education, national networking and policy recommendations.

Partners

Aston University
Universitas Airlangga

Opportunity

Our Going Global Partnerships Gender Equality Grants – advancing gender in higher education and wider society.

Activity

Focusing on the city of Surabaya, in Java, the partners produced two key pieces of research – a comprehensive report on the incidence and awareness of sexual violence in universities and an evaluation of current policies and procedures on sexual violence, culminating in a report with recommendations for nationwide policy improvements.

This fed into the development of online training materials for staff and students, to raise awareness of the issue and foster a culture of safety across campuses.

The project also established a national network of support, involving internal and external stakeholders, to provide a sustainable framework to combat sexual violence in the future.

Impact

The partnership has made great gains to empower women within Indonesian universities, while providing dedicated support for sexual violence survivors to get fair justice.

To sustain this impact, the project benefits are now being shared on a wider scale. The national network established through the partnership will continue to share outcomes, and the online training will now be used to educate more staff and students across Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Aston University is using its increased understanding of the Indonesian education system to support more collaborative projects with Indonesian partners and create positive change across higher education.

Addressing key gender equality themes

Our Gender Equality Partnerships Grants aim to address four priority themes:

- preventing violence against women and girls, with a focus on higher and further education institutions as safe spaces for women
- addressing women's under-representation in higher and further education leadership
- enabling access and tackling subject segregation, particularly in the STEM field
- strengthening pathways into employment for women further and higher education graduates.



Spotlight: transnational education partnerships



Backed by our global transnational education (TNE) strategy, we work with partners across higher education in the UK and globally, from policymakers, to institutions, to wider sector partners, to develop scalable and sustainable UK TNE around the world.

Developing new TNE guidelines in Nigeria

The absence of well-defined policies on establishing TNE partnerships in Nigeria was impacting the number of UK-Nigeria collaborations. To counter this, we worked with both the UK government and the National Universities Commission in Nigeria to oversee the development of new guidelines for TNE partnerships.

After conducting an extensive quality review of the existing guidance, we launched a new set of comprehensive TNE guidelines to support the development of future partnerships. This was supported by a roundtable discussion to increase understanding of the regulatory requirements for partnerships among different stakeholder groups.

These guidelines are now underpinning our work to support the growth of TNE in Nigeria, alongside inward missions to support new collaborations and providing research, insight and grants to develop and create an enabling environment.

Securing mutual recognition of qualifications in India

After 15 years of negotiations across two successive governments, the UK's one-year master's degree was still not recognised in India, and neither were degrees awarded from branch campuses or via transnational education.

In 2022, we supported new negotiations between the UK and Indian governments, which led to the signing of a mutual recognition of qualifications for the UK's one-year master's qualification, as well as UK qualifications from branch campuses in other countries.

This agreement has helped to further enhance UK TNE opportunities in India, including a raft of new partnerships, which will directly support the education priorities of both countries by enhancing co-operation, increasing education exports, diversifying student recruitment and supporting the transfer of skills.

Internationalising higher education in Brazil

Brazilian students face an extremely lengthy wait time to get qualifications from non-Brazilian institutions recognised, particularly those with UK masters' degrees. Reduced funding in recent years has also seen less of a priority on internationalising higher education in Brazil.

To counter this, we led government conversations, supported by the UK's Department for Business and Trade and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, resulting in a signed memorandum of understanding to formalise interest in co-operating, with a priority on internationalisation. This agreement has, for the first time, opened the possibility of a formal forum for negotiation on mutual recognition of qualifications.

The agreement is now supporting our work to further internationalise Brazil's higher education sector, with a focus on TNE development, including new institutional partnership grants between the UK, Brazil and Mexico, and technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of policymakers, institution leaders and staff.

‘Research shows that transnational education can directly contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 4: inclusive and equitable quality education, SDG 3: good health and well-being, SDG 5: gender equality and SDG 17: partnerships for the goals.’

Findings taken from research commissioned as part of our transnational education strategy development.

Engaging the global higher education sector

Going Global conference

Since its inception in 2004, our Going Global conference has provided a strategic forum for leaders in international education to connect, share knowledge and build a global network of senior leaders and policy influencers to shape the future of further and higher education and address global problems.



In 2023, Going Global welcomed **400** leaders in higher and tertiary education, business and government from around the world.

Research and insight

Our research and insight supports the higher education sector to navigate new markets and make more informed decisions. From in-depth research and market analysis, to the latest trends and data, we help universities and colleges shape their international strategies and strengthen their global networks.

Our offer includes:

- in-depth research on priority education themes
- market intelligence briefs on leading and emerging education markets
- blogs and insights on the latest trends and data.

Discover our latest research and insights at www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight



Qualifications that spark success

Delivering qualifications

We provide examination services to UK education institutions and awarding bodies, enabling them to extend their reach into international markets, diversify their offer and transform their qualifications with new technologies. This enables young learners and adults to enrich their education by taking UK school exams (GCSEs and A-levels), university exams and professional qualifications such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants qualifications.

In the longer term, this supports individuals to develop their education and careers, internationalise their experience and access opportunities in their home country and internationally. It also helps to strengthen the UK's reputation for quality education and generates significant export revenues of approximately £50 million a year for the UK.

‘International students often use the knowledge and connections gained in the UK to positive effect in their own communities.’



Partnering with us

Trust-based relationships

We have worked in partnership for mutual benefit with governments and sector stakeholders around the world over many years and are often their first point of contact when they wish to connect with the UK.

People

Our in-country experts can offer insight and advice on local education systems and identify potential partners. Our education leads and country directors often sit on advisory boards, steering committees and task forces of key countries and regions that influence the TNE landscape.

Sector knowledge and connections

Our on-the-ground presence and market insight in over 100 countries gives us access to a unique network of experts, and enables us to work at scale, amplifying impact for the UK.

Convening power

We bring individuals, institutions and governments together to scope out partnerships and connect with the UK, facilitating regular inward and outward missions, and supporting International Education Champion Sir Steve Smith. We attract ministerial and high-level sector delegations from across the world to events including the Going Global conference series and the Education World Forum.

Responsiveness and ability to adapt

We have a reputation for being able to adjust our approach to new or unexpected circumstances, for example the Covid-19 pandemic.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We enhance the UK's contribution to the SDGs, contribute to national education and learning reforms and embed equality, diversity and inclusion across all of our work, internal policies and programmes, prioritising gender equality, anti-racism and disability inclusion.

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‘Our education leads and country directors often sit on advisory boards, steering committees and task forces of key countries and regions that influence the transnational education landscape.’





Find out more

www.britishcouncil.org/work/partnership-stories

Get in touch

www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/contact