Alumni Voices

Insights from International Graduates of UK Education

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACER Australian Council for Educational Research

AHELO Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes

DEI Diversity, equity and inclusion

EU European Union

GDPR General Data Protection Regulation

HEPs Higher education providers

HESA Higher Education Statistics Agency

JISC Joint Information Systems Committee

MOOCs Massive Online Open Courses

NHMRC National Health and Medical Research Council

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SIG Special interest group

UKCISA The UK Council for International Student Affairs

Executive summary

The focus of the longitudinal study was to capture data on international graduates of UK education. The British Council, in partnership with ACER, designed and developed a survey consisting of an online questionnaire and interviews, to gather information from international alumni systematically and periodically, with the purpose of building a valuable longitudinal dataset. This research report relates only to the first year of the survey. The long-term aim is to conduct this survey annually, for an initial period of five years.

The longitudinal survey has the following three overriding objectives:

- To gather robust evidence of the value of international education in the UK. This means value to the UK in terms of long-term relationships, business links, trust and reputation etc., and value to the student through employability, social capital etc.

- To evaluate the Alumni UK programme: understanding what is working in the programme and collect evidence on the programme's overall impact.

- To support the British Council in exploring longitudinal studies: what works well, what are the challenges, and what can be learnt from this process.

The study comprised two parts. Part 1 involved the review, advice, and delivery of an online quantitative survey shared with registered participants of the UK Alumni platform. Part 2 included the delivery of consultations in the form of interviews with 23 survey respondents from seven countries.

The survey was administered and analysed by ACER. The survey tool used for administration was Lime Survey, and the analysis was conducted using SPSS. In total, there were 2,728 valid responses, out of 39,804 registered users of the Alumni UK Platform at the time of the survey (December 2023 to January 2024),

resulting in the response rate of 6.86%. However, only 9,524 users have engaged with the platform in the last 12 months, indicating that 28.6% of active users responded to the survey.

Consultations (23 in total) took the form of online semi-structured interviews. These consultations benefitted from the quantitative online survey results to ensure any information shortage or gap not collected through the large-scale survey were addressed. A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify common themes across the data sources and to develop a conceptual understanding of the study's impact.

The survey and interviews covered the following broad areas:

- UK education experience
- Career [questions modelled on the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey]
- The Alumni UK platform
- World today (perceptions of the UK, and the UK's place in the world)

In terms of **UK education experience**, the findings revealed overwhelmingly positive views regarding their overall experience (97.7% of respondents rated their experience as 6+ on a scale of 1-10), the UK itself, and their likelihood to recommend both studying and visiting the UK. Respondents rated the social aspects of their UK education experience positively (94.1% rated 6+), despite challenges posed by the pandemic in many cases. Loneliness was reported by some interviewees, but many engaged in various activities and appreciated university events and support networks.

Respondents generally found their UK education beneficial for their careers, citing its impact on their professional development, international opportunities, and networking capabilities. The value of a UK education was recognised, though some interviewees noted that the rising costs of living in the UK and high university fees may influence others' decision to study in the UK.

Interviewees had mixed experiences regarding inclusivity, with many reporting feeling included and welcomed but others facing challenges with accommodation and cultural adaptation. Universities were praised for their inclusive practices, but a need for more improvements was suggested to foster a more supportive environment for all students.

UK education was perceived as enhancing various skills and attributes, particularly intercultural skills and global citizenship. Digital skills development was perceived to be less emphasised in studies, although there were differences in what interviewees defined as digital skills, with some suggesting it refers to being able to use common applications and internet proficiently, whilst some others referred to coding and programming development. Additional broad skills that were mentioned as improved during their UK education experience, included adaptability, analytical skills, language skills, and emotional intelligence.

In terms of their **Career**, the findings indicate that respondents highly value their UK education, with many successfully integrating into the workforce and leveraging their experiences to pursue their career goals after finishing their studies. The survey queried respondents about their most important activities, revealing that paid work for an employer was the most common activity, selected by 41.6% of respondents. Almost 90% of respondents were engaged in work or activities related to their career plans, with the majority quickly finding employment after graduation.

Nearly half of respondents chose their current work because it aligned with their career plans, while many saw it as an opportunity for industry progression. Education was the largest represented sector among respondents, followed by professional, scientific, and technical activities. Middle and senior management were the most common job levels.

Responses were evenly split regarding whether current jobs involved trading or collaborating with UK organisations or individuals. Just under half of respondents gained work experience while in the UK, with categories including internships, part-time work, volunteering, and post-graduation employment.

Respondents utilised various tools and resources for job searching and career planning, including in-person meetings, online and social media engagement, professional and academic networks, maintaining contact with previous alumni, special interest groups, and international exchanges.

In terms of the **Alumni UK platform**, while respondents appreciated the platform's offerings, a couple suggested desire for improvement to enhance engagement and cater to diverse user preferences. Suggestions from interviews focussed on making the platform more interactive and user-friendly. Majority of respondents (60%) learned about the platform through targeted emails from the British Council, emphasising the effectiveness of direct communication.

Respondents engaged in various platform activities, with attending virtual events being the most common (41.9%). The platform was perceived as modestly helpful for professional networks, learning, and career progression. Career-oriented opportunities like Jobs Board and Career coaching were the most appealing services.

Around 56.4% of respondents recommended the platform in the last year. Interviews revealed that the platform was generally easy to use, with some reported initial registration difficulties. Suggestions for improvement included enhancing interactivity, adding diverse content, and considering the development of a mobile app.

In terms of **World today**, findings suggest a generally positive perception of the UK, with some variations based on regional contexts and experiences. The results also highlight areas where the UK is perceived positively, such as in academia and culture, but also areas where the respondents agreed less with the statements about the UK, such as it contributing its fair share to global development.

Overall, respondents held a highly favourable view of the UK, with 92.6% rating it 6+ on a scale of 0 to 10. Respondents overwhelmingly viewed people from the UK as open and welcoming (8.01) and saw the UK as a force for good in the world (7.87). The UK's world-leading arts and cultural institutions (8.79) and academic research were particularly highly rated (9.16).

However, opinions on the UK's contributions to aiding development in poorer countries were slightly lower (7.44). Views on the UK's contributions to aiding development varied across global regions, with Sub-Saharan Africa showing the highest average rating and EU Europe the lowest. Overall, respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa rated the UK most positively across all statements, while those from EU Europe were slightly less positive.

Overall, the longitudinal study's first year provided valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of international graduates of UK education. Moving forward, continued annual surveys promise to deepen our understanding of these dynamics and inform initiatives aimed at enhancing the value proposition of UK education and alumni engagement programmes.

Introduction

Background

The British Council commissioned ACER to provide expert guidance and support in the research to collect data from the Alumni UK members, as part of a multi-year longitudinal study for the Alumni UK programme.

Alumni UK was launched by the British Council in November 2022. This is a global network for people from around the world who have studied in the UK as an overseas student or on a UK transnational education programme overseas. The programme extends international students' connection with the UK and each other once they have finished their studies, giving them the opportunity to join a global community where they can share their experiences, have access to professional development training, develop their skills to further their careers and employability offers. To date, more than 30,000 alumni have signed up to the online platform from over 100 countries.

The longitudinal study presents an opportunity to capture data on international graduates of UK education. The British Council, in partnership with ACER, designed and developed a survey consisting of an online questionnaire and interviews, to gather information from international alumni systematically and periodically, with the purpose of building a valuable longitudinal dataset.

This research report relates only to the first year of the survey. The long-term objective is to conduct this survey annually, for an initial period of five years.

Purpose and scope of the longitudinal survey

In October 2023 the British Council commissioned ACER to support the development of their longitudinal survey.

The longitudinal survey has the following three overriding objectives:

- To gather robust evidence of the value of international education in the UK. This means value to the UK in terms of long-term relationships, business links, trust and reputation etc., and value to the student through employability, social capital etc.
- To contribute to evaluating the Alumni UK programme: understanding what is working in the programme and collect evidence on the programme's overall impact.
- To support the British Council in exploring longitudinal studies: what works well, what are the challenges, and what can be learnt from this process.

Conducting this study will help the British Council to improve the Alumni UK programme based on the feedback collected, to demonstrate the value of the programme and the investment in it (internally and externally), and to show the value of UK Alumni platform and its benefits more broadly.

The Alumni UK programme is a global network for people from around the world with a UK higher education experience.

Methodology

Approach

The British Council initiated the development of the survey instruments (questionnaire, interview guides) as part of their Alumni UK programme. ACER provided expert guidance, operational management of the survey, data collection and management, initial data analysis, and reporting.

This longitudinal study comprised two parts. Part 1 involved the review, advice, and delivery of an online quantitative survey shared with registered participants of the UK Alumni platform (39,804 registered users). In total, there were 2,728 participants in the survey from 118 countries, with a response rate of 6.86%. However further investigation highlighted that only a proportion of these users utilise the platform on a regular basis. 9,524 in total having accessed it in the last year, thus indicating that 28.6% of 'active' users responded to the survey.

Part 2 included the delivery of consultations in the form of interviews with 23 survey respondents[1] from seven countries: Brazil, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey. In total, there were 12 females and 11 males, all of whom graduated from a UK university between 2017 and 2024. Approximately 11 interviews had low engagement with the platform (less than two times per year), while the remaining 12 had higher engagement.

The survey and interview questions are provided in **Appendix 1**.

As an incentive for participating in the survey, respondents were offered a chance to enter into a prize draw. They were asked to indicate if they would like to be considered, and if so, for which prize:

a. Travel to participate in a face-to-face alumni event in the UK
b. 12-month subscription to British Council's digital library
c. Access to a professional development course

Similarly, as an incentive for taking part in the interviews, all interviewees were offered a free one-year subscription to the British Council's digital library.

More details on data preparation are provided in **Appendix 2**.

Quantitative survey

ACER and the British Council met weekly during November and December to review and finalise the questionnaire initiated by the British Council's longitudinal study development team. The regular discussion ensured that the questionnaire is suitable for longitudinal research and made sure the questions asked were fit for purpose and accessible to all groups.

The British Council consulted with UKCISA (the UK Council for International Student Affairs) and JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) in addition to several UK higher education providers including the alumni UK advisory group of several higher education providers (HEPs) with regards to the survey content and design. The draft survey was also tested by international alumni in several geographical locations prior to global roll out.

The survey was administered and analysed by ACER. The survey went live on 13th December, and ran for just over one month, closing on 23rd January. During this time, ACER provided regular updates on survey responses.

The survey tool used for administration was Lime Survey. The platform has been used for many ACER projects, including large-scale surveys such as OECD's Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO). The platform meets GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) requirements and can handle the desired question types and survey functionality, including appropriate branching and save/ return functions. ACER survey staff ensured there was always sufficient server infrastructure in place throughout the administration to ensure all participants had quick and reliable access to the survey.

Prior to analysis, ACER performed a series of data-cleaning activities including validation checks and the recoding of missing data. ACER then assigned codes for all items and response options, systematically coded missing responses and non-responses, and reverse coded any negative items. Throughout this process, ACER created a codebook that will enable the British Council to identify the meaning of all codes. The codebook also identifies any re-coding processes that have been undertaken during the validation and database creation.

All quantitative data was fed into SPSS and analysed using a range of descriptive analyses including cross tabs of survey items against a range of respondent characteristics including region, graduation year,

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1 Survey respondents who were interviewed for this study are referred to as interviewees in this report.

engagement levels and disability. In many cases there was no significant relationship between the variables examined.

Qualitative interviews

With the permission of participants, consultations were audio-recorded to enable researchers to collate detailed notes. The consultations took place in February 2024. Consultations took the form of semi-structured interviews, and the sampling for these was agreed with the British Council in December 2023. The following sampling approach was followed:

- Country targets: to include representatives from the following priority countries: Brazil, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey
- Diversity and Inclusion: balance of gender, disability, and year of graduation
- Other stratifying variables: variety of platform engagement levels (low and high)
- Sample size: recommendation for three interviews in each country.

Prior to the interviews, ACER developed and shared interview protocols that identify questions to be discussed and the approach to be used with the British Council, for them to review and provide feedback. These consultations benefitted from the quantitative online survey results to ensure any information shortage or gap not collected through the large-scale survey were addressed.

A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify common themes across the data sources and to develop a conceptual understanding of the study's impact. There were a series of internal workshops with the researchers for reflection on the project, and several subsequent discussions of all findings within the project team, all of which contributed to the final analysis.

Wherever possible, a consistent approach to reporting was used, to ensure possibilities for comparison and identification of contradictory evidence, gaps in evidence, and emerging themes. The findings section focusses on insights from the research questions, based on the collected data from both survey and interviews.

Ethics

This research was conducted according to ACER's research ethics [2]guidelines and under approval from ACER's research ethics committee (approval HREC-0145). For consultations, the audio recordings were stored on a secure server and will be destroyed at the end of the project.

All participants were given details about their participation, their rights, and how the data collected would be processed and stored. All participants were asked for their consent prior to starting the interview. Interview tools and accompanying documents were reviewed and signed off by the ACER Research Ethics Committee. The ACER Ethics Committee is registered with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and follows the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. This ensured the highest ethical standards throughout our research were maintained.

All research participants and responses were anonymised. Participants had the right to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty and were reminded of their rights at the beginning of each consultation. Participants gave consent to participate, and consent for recording, before each consultation began.

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2 ACER's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is registered with Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and follows the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research - https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement ethical-conduct-human-research-2023

> **A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify common themes across the data sources and to develop a conceptual understanding of the study's impact.**

Limitations of the study

Any research methodology has its limitations. In the case of this project the need to balance opportunities for data collection with the context in which data collection had to take place meant that compromises needed to be made. These may have introduced bias into the data collected, and findings derived, due to a number of design and implementation factors.

One of the limitations is that respondents were drawn from those who were registered with the Alumni UK platform. In evaluating a programme of this kind, it would be valuable to survey a range of respondents – for example those who have chosen not to register with the platform – but as that was not possible there are limits to the conclusions that could be drawn based on collected data. Alumni's perceptions of the UK may be biased, as the research participants registered voluntarily on the platform and chose to participate in the survey of their own accord. Therefore, this sampling bias impacts the results in a sense that they cannot be fully generalised.

Whilst a random sampling was employed for interviews, there was some degree of fluidity in session confirmations, cancellations and rescheduling, meaning that sometimes dates and timings changed with very little notice. This may mean that bias was introduced into the selection of interviewees, despite all efforts being made to avoid this.

In addition, it should be acknowledged that there may be some social desirability bias in respondents' answers (where they provide more socially acceptable or desirable answers), or a simple response bias (where they do not accurately recall information) and this may also distort the data. By employing mixed-method approaches, and triangulating data sources, this study has attempted to enhance the validity and reliability of survey and interview research findings.

Finally, as is often the case in research, some respondents may have struggled to find enough time to take part, as the data collection process was conducted over just three months. Consequently, not everyone was able to submit their data. This meant that we were unable to have as many respondents, and as high a response rate, as we may have had if the study was longer. Nevertheless, we did receive some fascinating feedback from those who did participate, thereby gaining valuable insights for future implementations.

Study findings

As noted, the study commenced in December 2023 with the launch of the (pilot) first round of the quantitative online survey.

The survey ran from mid-December 2023 to mid-January 2024. A total of 2,728 respondents completed the survey. There were respondents from nearly 120 countries, with 60.6% being males and 38.7% being females (0.7% preferring not to say). At the time, the Alumni UK Programme database had 34.98% registered females, 48.43% registered males, 1% registered other, and around 15% missing data on gender.

55 respondents (23 female, 30 male) declared having a disability status (with an additional 47 respondents preferring not to say). All British Council Global regions were represented in the survey, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Global regions by country of origin

Global regions	Frequency	Percent
Americas	238	8.7
East Asia	534	19.6
EU Europe	138	5.1
Middle East and North Africa	207	7.6
South Asia	754	27.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	555	20.3
Wider Europe	216	7.9
Other regions[3]	86	3.2
Total	2728	100

As can be seen in Table 1, EU Europe had the smallest number of respondents (5.1%), whilst South Asia had the largest number of respondents (27.6%).

The survey was followed up with 23 in-depth interviews with survey participants from all global regions to deepen the understanding of overall observed trends and to gain feedback on the survey itself.

The survey and interviews covered the following broad areas:

- UK education experience
- Career [questions modelled on the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey]

- The Alumni UK platform
- World today (perceptions of the UK, and the UK's place in the world)

The study findings will be presented in line with these categories.

Topic A: UK education experience

Asked to rate their **overall experience** of a UK education, 97.7% of respondents rated their experience as positive (6+ on a scale of 1-10). This was supported by the interviews' findings, in which all interviewees commented that they thought their education in the UK was positive, in particular praising the quality of teaching.

In addition, 96.1% of respondents **rated the UK favourably** (6+), as a result of their UK study experience. This again was supported by the interviewees, although for many of them the COVID-19 pandemic has somewhat limited the full experience of living in the UK.

In terms of **recommending a UK study experience** to anyone: 87.2% have done so in the last 12 months, with some not having had a chance yet, and 1.1% saying they would not recommend it. When asked about this in the interviews, the most mentioned reason for not recommending it was the cost of living in the UK and high fees for international students. Bad weather was also mentioned by a couple of interviewees.

Similarly, asked if they have **recommended the UK to anyone as a place to visit** in the last 12 months, 88.9% said yes, and 1% said they would not recommend it (again the cost was mentioned as the main reason). The majority commented on the UK being a great place to visit, with many cultural attractions available at low to no cost.

76.5% of respondents have **been in touch** with someone in the last 12 months that they first encountered during their UK education experience. In terms of how they stay in touch with the networks that they made during your UK study experience; the responses provided are summarised in Figure 1 below.

3 A small number of respondents were from the following countries but (mistakenly for the analysis in this report) were not categorised within any of the global regions listed in Table 1. The uncategorised countries are Mongolia, Panama, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Somalia, St Lucia, Sudan, Ukraine.

Figure 1: Ways of staying in touch

Figure 1 shows that Phone and Social media are the most popular ways of staying in touch for the Alumni community.

Phone or Messager Service (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber, phone)

- 1,753 observations
- 64.3%
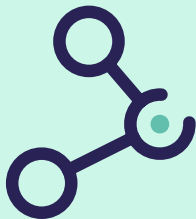
Social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook)

- 2,171 observations
- 79.3%

Email

- 1,212 observations
- 44.4%

Written letters or cards

- 149 observations
- 5.5%

Do not stay in touch with anyone

- 90 observations
- 3.3%

Social aspects

The respondents were asked to rate the social aspects of their UK education experience (including opportunities to meet new people, build networks, engage in extracurricular activities). The scale went from 0 to 10, with 0 being very bad to 10 being very good.
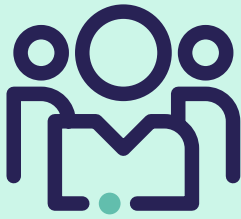
94.1% rated the social aspects of UK education 6+

41.4% rated the social aspects of UK education 10

In the interviews, interviewees highlighted a mixed experience regarding the social aspects of their UK education, to a large extent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Loneliness was mentioned by a few interviewees, for example:

"Of course, because of the COVID, I got trapped in the university dorms for more than a year. So yeah, it was really horrible. And as an Egyptian, social communication is very important. And also for me personally. It's very, very essential part of my life. So when I was in the UK I felt extremely lonely. I almost lost my mind. Because it was hard. Actually, it made me change my whole life plans. So I invested a lot of money in getting to the UK doing my licensing examination to practise as a doctor and also to get that master's degree. But I threw all this away because of the social aspect, because during that period, the social aspect was like, non-existent, it was horrible."

Despite challenges, most individuals engaged in various activities such as being class representatives, participating in extracurricular activities, and joining societies like French or computer science societies. To illustrate:

"As soon as we got there, they made lots of lectures and meetings to explain to us how the activities of sports and societies work at the university. ... For instance, if you are feeling alone on campus every Friday, they provide you with a meeting where you can go to meet new people and they provide refreshments for people who will go there, and they do not charge you for this. And you have the opportunity to meet new people. And there are countless events, lots of events all the time. I used to joke with friends that it would be necessary to spend one year there without studying to be able to take part in every activity because there are lots of things to do. I used to take part in the French society because I studied ... And it was very nice because I had the opportunity to speak with the French students to exchange experience to learn more about France. …. I also used to run every day on campus because they have really good sports facility there. And I started at the volleyball society board. I thought that was a bit time consuming, but everyone was friendly. And nice."

Many universities were praised for their focus on social opportunities, offering events, lectures, and support for various interests. Opportunities for personal development, including charity work, sports clubs, and employability courses, were available but required active seeking out. While some experienced isolation due to the pandemic, others managed to maintain connections through mentorship programmes, networking, and friendships formed during their studies. Cultural immersion, religious practice, and celebration of ceremonies were highlighted positively, such as by this respondent:

"So, everyone was open-minded and welcoming. I didn't have any difficulties, especially as being Muslim in the UK, which I think is different in some parts of Europe."

Other interviewees also mentioned appreciating interactions with native English speakers. However, cultural challenges and instances of stereotyping were also mentioned, particularly affecting individuals of diverse backgrounds such as those being of Islamic faith and/or of a different race.

"I also noticed that some things were not culturally friendly, like for Nigerians, there are some things we enjoy, so I felt like Okay, you have a mixed campus of people from urban countries, you may want to research a little bit about things that will make them feel more included and not just give them the culture shock of just whatever goes there."

The interviewees noted that they were able to participate in events, travel, and engage in research projects, albeit to varying extents. Overall, the interviewees found avenues for social engagement and personal growth positive during their UK education experience.

The world of work

The respondents were asked to rate the relevance of their UK education experience for the world of work.

96.7% rated the relevance of their UK education for the world of work 6+

43.4% rated the relevance of their UK education for the world of work 10

The interviews showed that the interviewees generally viewed their UK education experience positively, citing its impact on their professional development, international opportunities, and networking capabilities, despite variations in direct applicability of their studies to their current roles. Overall, it was reported that UK education was widely regarded as valuable for its international recognition, especially in industries where UK qualifications are highly regarded. One example:

"Well, I think the UK education speaks for itself. So in terms of employability, I think, maybe specially Indonesia, not many people do have such privilege of having studied in the UK, so it helps them out among other candidates. So I think that is one point. The second point is during the interview, of course, maybe people who had education from abroad are more open minded because maybe they work together with other people from other parts of the world. So I think that is that kind of exposure is very important, and it makes me stand out among other candidates."

Several interviewees noted that their UK education prepared them well for international projects and opportunities, especially in fields like pharmaceuticals, banking, and consulting. Some of it was due to their proven proficiency of English language, and some of it

was due to the fact that they were working for a global organisation, so having an international degree was beneficial to their work. For example:

"I am working at XX, an international consulting company at the moment, and their requirement was for international experience or language requirements. For example, I wanted to hire a friend who is also involved in the community, and he has received requests through by the manager asking for their English language certificate. So first statement is that you cannot work in open-source software community without English, so I have that as I did study abroad in United Kingdom.

Therefore I have got something in my hand, that I can speak English and I can communicate with other people on an international level. And that was also a reason why I was chosen."

Some interviewees highlighted the development of critical thinking skills and research methodologies during their UK education, which they applied to their daily work as doctors, consultants, researchers, and business administrators. To illustrate:

"The thesis project has been so useful. We get to, you know, use that experience and that knowledge that we derived from that education to put it into place, and it

helped us a lot... Because that is where I actually learned how to do all this research. During my study programme. That's where I learned how to do all this research and it has helped me to a very large extent."

However, while some interviewees felt that their UK education directly contributed to their career success, others expressed uncertainty or noted that it may have helped them 'stand out' amongst other applicants, but then it is up to them to prove themselves, and fully utilise the skills gained. This indicates that there may be an element of credentialism to holding a UK education certificate. Meaning that the prestige associated with holding a UK certificate, and in turn the access that this can provide to top companies, was the real value rather than the teaching.

As one respondent noted:

"…it's going to help you and then if you come from country like the UK, it's going to help you even more, but it was just a door opener tackling the first HR hurdle. The rest is up to you…"

Furthermore, insights from the qualitative interviews suggest that the perception of the value for money of UK degrees is changing. A number of interviewees noted the increase in the cost of UK education, and caveated their recommendation that they would only recommend it to those who could afford it. For example:

"I feel like quite sad for my university in particular, because it was so international, and I think it would not be the same if I went back now because obviously like naturally not as many people are going to come. The costs are ridiculous now. So yeah, I feel a little bit different towards it now, but that doesn't have to do with my experience."

Inclusivity

The interviewees were asked about the inclusivity of their UK education experience. For the purpose of this study, inclusivity was defined as encompassing the extent to which they felt included and that their individual needs were catered for in teaching, accommodation, life on campus, and similar.
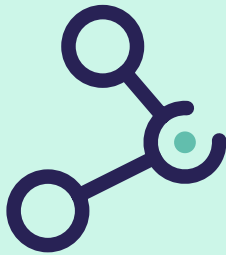
92.4% rated the inclusivity of their UK education 6+

31.7% rated the inclusivity of their UK education 10

In the interviews, interviewees expressed a range of experiences, some positive some less so, regarding their feelings of inclusivity during their UK education. Some interviewees reported feeling fully included and welcomed in their university environment, reporting that their professors treated them as equals, and they felt the sense of belonging. They appreciated the multicultural environment and the opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. For example:

"It was because I never felt alone. I was in my small community, and I always felt like I am one of them. And as I told you before, my mentor is still mentoring me even though he's not paid. …. This was also the case when I was in the programme. From researchers to professors, everyone treated us like we are one of them and it is not only for me, but I can also assure you that there were at least nine international mentees or students back then. And we all felt this sense of belonging to the university and to our professors. They were like our friends all the time…"

In the majority of responses, interviewees praised their university for its inclusive practices and support for international students, allowing them an opportunity to meet people from different cultures and gain new experiences. For example:

"With reference to inclusivity I was very happy because people were very mindful that I'm from very different culture and my religious practices are very different. For instance, after Christmas when they were sharing the cake, and realised that I'm not having that cake - it was announced that alcohol is not added. So the guys are very mindful and sweet. So I really appreciate those things. And with reference to inclusivity I never felt leftover or discriminated in any area. That's why I believe that it was a wonderful experience and before visiting you get a very different mindset regarding the people, and it completely changed especially with my supervisor. He gave me lots of liberty, and he also arranged for me to meet with other people who are from different countries. One was from Africa, and she shared her own experiences and was very open of other opportunities. I found people very open minded and friendly as well. So it has completely changed my mindset for foreigners."

However, there were also some challenges reported. Several interviewees encountered challenges with accommodation, including issues with availability, comfort, and responsiveness of accommodation management. These challenges sometimes contributed to feelings of exclusion and dissatisfaction. For example:

"Our accommodation - they were working on rebuilding, but it was really loud, and we had to live there because nothing else was free. …. I was a little bit surprised if I am paying for my studies, but I had to experience such as this…"

In addition, while some interviewees found it easy to adapt to UK culture and reported feeling accepted, others struggled with cultural differences, such as finding a place to pray on campus or feeling overwhelmed by the presence of students from other cultural backgrounds. As one respondent noted:

"Yeah, um, I say I gave it a six because I struggle a bit with looking for place to pray in campus and in the city centre. Because it's not like easily available. One time I had to use empty meeting room to pray. But it's not like they are not allowed but it's just not really easy to find."

The cultural issues were sometimes mentioned as leading to the feeling of being excluded or marginalised on campus, whether due to their ethnic or religious background, international student status, or other factors. It highlighted instances of some interviewees feeling overlooked or unheard, especially in academic settings. To illustrate:

"That's a very difficult thing. I have experienced more exclusivity on the campus being a straight white man to be very honest, especially when everybody was looking at you as this stereotypical cis white man, completely forgetting that I'm from another country and even in the country I'm living in I have immigration background. So I'm an immigrant myself. So this was very clear in some lectures to be experienced. Yeah, I don't know. You hear things … And if you feel uncomfortable with it, yeah, nobody cares. But on the other side …being forcefully told that political discussions and religion have no place in the university … and then being always targeted as the typical one who does not have a core needs and feelings and so on.."

Despite these challenges, many interviewees expressed overall satisfaction with their UK education experience, citing factors such as quality of teaching, positive cultural diversity, and personal growth opportunities. However, more could be done to improve the integration of students, accommodation quality, and dealing with feelings of exclusion in order to foster a supportive academic environment for all.

Skills developed versus Skills needed

The survey asked which skills and attributes have been developed by a UK education, and which skills and attributes are important for career development. As Figure 2 shows, broadly all skills and attributes scored highly (a mean

Figure 2: Perceived skills development versus Importance for career
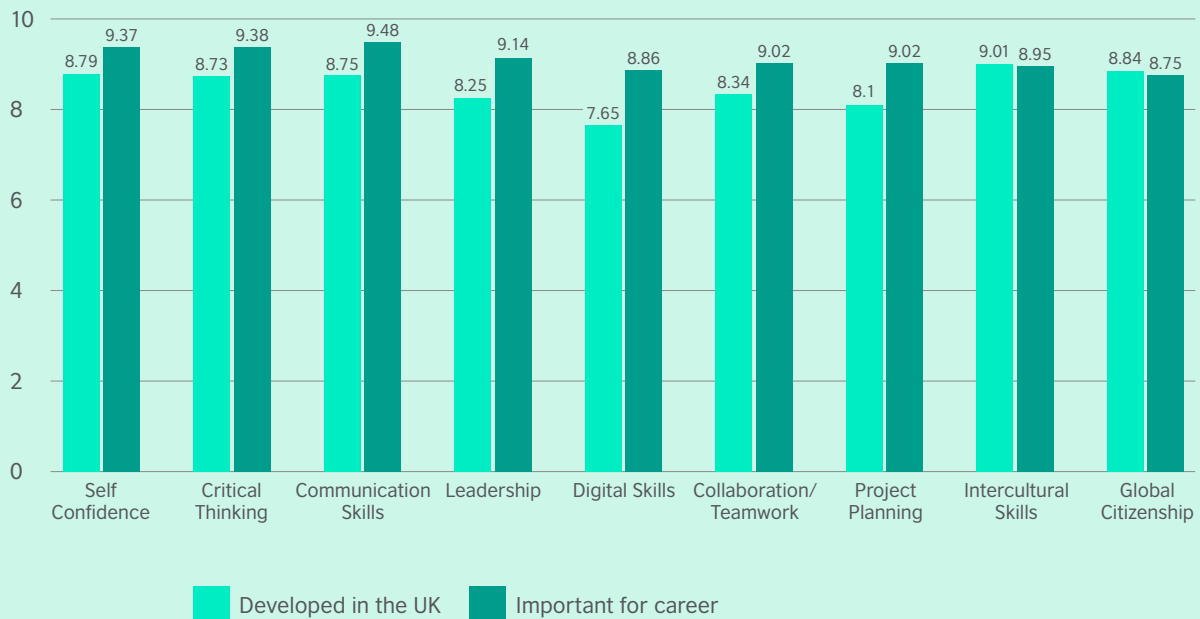
score of between 8 and 9.5 out of 10 for most). **Intercultural Skills** and **Global Citizenship** were rated particularly highly as attributes developed by a UK education.

The skill group which scored lowest in terms of how it is developed through a UK education was **Digital Skills**. There is a 1.21-point gap between how highly this is developed by UK education, and how important it is for career development.

These findings were supported by the interview data. The interviewees generally emphasised that their experiences at UK universities significantly enhanced their **Self Confidence, Critical Thinking skills and Leadership skills**. These skills were developed gradually through continuous engagement with course material, discussions, and analysing issues from various perspectives. It was mentioned by a few interviewees that they thought the UK education system is more theoretically focussed compared to some other systems like in Nigeria or Germany, and this provided a significant boost to their intellectual abilities.

Intercultural and **Global Citizenship skills** were also highly praised by the interviewees, stating that exposure to different cultural contexts and a global perspective, such as through international studies or interacting with diverse peers, enhanced their experience by challenging their worldview and encouraging them to think more broadly. Furthermore, some interviewees reported that they feel it taught them to challenge assumptions and biases, whether in academic work or broader societal discussions.

On the other hand, **Digital Skills** had less positive views. Overall, while some interviewees felt that their UK university experience did improve their digital skills, others perceived limited impact or found that improvement depended on personal effort and the relevance of digital skills to their chosen fields. They noted that the curriculum lacked emphasis on digital proficiency, especially in non-technical fields. Several interviewees expressed a desire for more instruction in coding and programming, particularly as these skills are increasingly sought after in the job market.

Finally, the interviewees were asked about **Other skills** they have developed during their UK education. They expressed a wide range of skills in their answers, including: Adaptability, Analytical skills, Career development, Cybersecurity skills, Emotional intelligence, Entrepreneurship, Healthcare, Language skills, Multitasking, Research skills, Resilience, Time management skills, and Work ethic.

Intercultural Skills and Global Citizenship were rated particularly highly as attributes developed by a UK education.

Topic B: Career

The survey asked about the most important activities for the respondents. This question is also asked in the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey. The summary is presented in the table below.

Table 2: Most important activities

Which of these activities do you consider to be your most important activity?	Frequency N=2717	Percent
Paid work for an employer	1136	41.8
Engaged in a course of study, training or research	394	14.5
Running my own business	387	14.2
Self-employment/freelancing	272	10
Developing a creative, artistic or professional portfolio	229	8.4
Taking time out to travel – this does not include short-term holidays	88	3.2
Unemployed and looking for work	65	2.4
Voluntary/unpaid work for an employer	57	2.1
Caring for someone (unpaid)	43	1.6
Retired	26	1
Doing something else	20	0.7

Table 1 shows that the most important activity was paid work, as chosen by 41.6% of the respondents. This raises to over 65% when self-employment and running your own business are included. Others were continuing their studies or professional development (over 20%), and only a small number declaring themselves as unemployed and looking for work (2.4%).

Of those who chose *Engaged in a course of study, training or research* option:

95% agreed that their "current study fits with my future plans"

91.3% agreed that they are "building on what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current studies"

Of those currently employed *(Paid work for an employer; Self-employment / freelancing; Running my own business)*:

87.7% agreed that their "current work fits with my future plans"

89.2% agreed that they are "utilising what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current work"

The respondents were also asked about how long it took them to find work after finishing their UK studies. The following Figure 3 summarises the result.

Figure 3: Time for finding work

- 49% — Immediately
- 20% — Within 3 months
- 10% — More than 3 months, but less than 6 months
- 10% — More than 6 months, but less than 12 months
- 6% — Between 12 months and 18 months
- 6% — More than 18 months
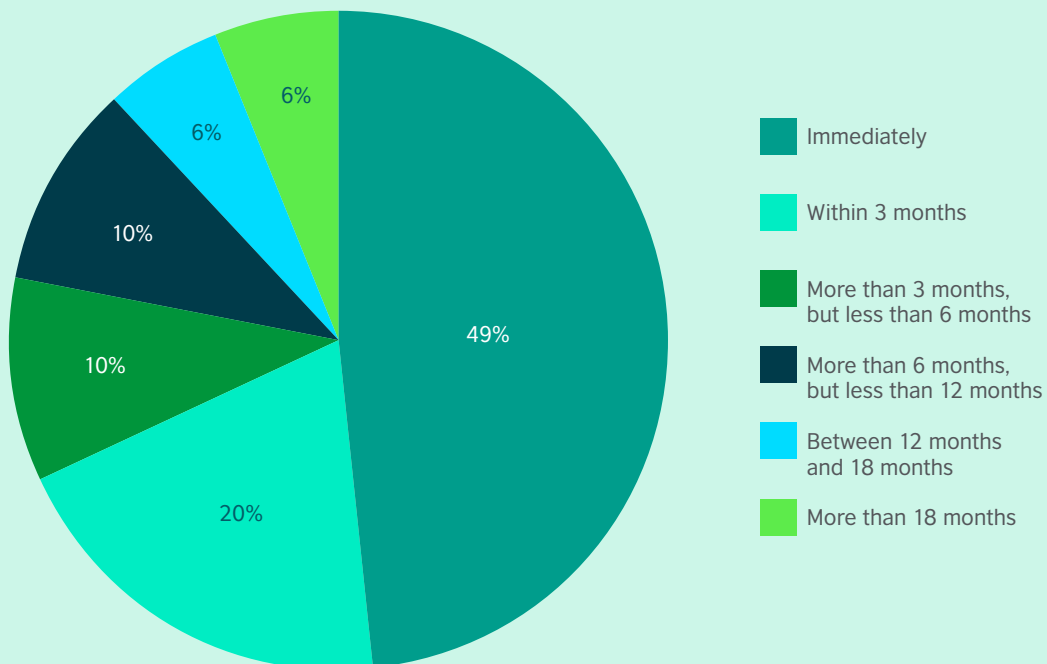
As shown by Figure 3, the survey respondents reported finding work quickly (88.6% found work within 12 months of graduating), although we do not know how many of them found work relevant to their qualifications. Some cross-analysis with the main reasons for their current activity is presented in Figure 5. As mentioned previously, the interview data shows that most of the interviewees were employed, and whilst most reported that they felt the UK degree was an advantage, in many cases these were advanced degrees for their already established career paths, and sometimes they were even sponsored by their employer. This was supported by the survey data on whether the qualification was needed. Figure 4 (below) shows 79.3% of respondents reported that their UK qualification was either required for their current employment or advantageous.

Figure 4: Need for qualification in employment

Yes, both the level and subject of qualification was a formal requirement

- 572 Observations
- 33.1%

Yes, the level of qualification was a formal requirement

- 157 Observations
- 9.1%
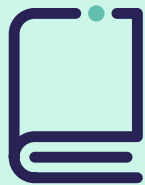
Yes, the subject of the qualification was a formal requirement

- 56 Observations
- 3.2%

Yes, while the qualification was not a formal requirement it did give me an advantage

- 586 Observations
- 33.9%

No, the qualification was not required

- 330 Observations
- 19.1%

I do not know

- 27 Observations
- 1.6%

The survey also asked about the main reason that the respondents decided to take up their current work or activity.

Table 3: The main reasons for taking up work or activity

What was the main reason that you decided to take up your work or activity?	Frequency N=1804	Percent
It fitted into my career plan/it was exactly the type of work I wanted	893	49.5
It was an opportunity to progress in the industry I am interested in	383	21.2
To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want	140	7.8
In order to earn a living	98	5.4
I did not receive any other job offers	86	4.8
It allowed me to work in the right location	56	3.1
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	42	2.3
It was well paid	38	2.1
To work in my family business	32	1.8
In order to pay off debts	8	0.4
I prefer not to say	28	1.6

As Table 3 shows, nearly half of respondents (49.5%) chose their current work or activity because it fitted into their career plan, and 21.2% thought it was an opportunity to progress in their industry of interest.

When this data was cross-analysed with the time it has taken them to get a job (Figure 3), it seems that those who reported finding job quickly were those who reported that their job or activity fitted into their career plan or was in their industry of interest.

Figure 5: Time for finding work

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		It fitted into my career plan/ it was exactly the type of work I wanted	I did not receive any other job offers	It was an oppor-tunity to pro-gress in the industry I am interest-ed in	To see if I would like the type of work it involved	To gain and broaden my exper-ience	It allowed me to work in the right location	It was well-paid	In order to earn a living	In order to pay off debts	To work in my family business	I prefer not to say
1	Immediately	524	15	167	8	49	32	18	31	2	21	15
2	Within 3 months	184	15	72	12	28	6	8	18	2	4	4
3	More than 3 months, but less than 6 months	74	11	42	11	15	6	4	9	2	0	4
4	More than 6 months, but less than 12 months	54	15	57	5	20	7	4	14	1	6	3
5	Between 12 months and 18 months	34	10	23	4	16	1	2	8	1	0	1
6	More than 18 months	23	20	22	2	12	4	2	18	0	1	1

Figure 5 shows the relationships between the responses to a question of time for finding work and the main reason for work or activity.

The respondents were asked to select the business sector that best describes their main area of work. Table 4 below presents the results.

Table 4: Business sectors chosen

Which business sector[4] best describes your main area of work?	Frequency N=1798	Percent
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	49	2.7
Mining and quarrying	7	0.4
Manufacturing	66	3.7
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	44	2.4
Water supply	5	0.3
Construction	46	2.6
Wholesale and retail trade	41	2.3
Transportation and storage	23	1.3
Accommodation and food service activities	10	0.6
Information and communication	160	8.9
Financial and insurance activities	147	8.2
Real estate activities	22	1.2
Professional, scientific and technical activities	174	9.7
Administrative and support service activities	49	2.7
Public administration and defence	59	3.3
Education	433	24.1
Human health and social work activities	116	6.5
Arts, entertainment and recreation	45	2.5
Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (i.e. UN, OECD, EU etc.)	54	3
Other	248	13.8

Table 4 summarises the chosen business sectors for the survey respondents. Education was the largest sector represented in the sample (24.1%), followed by Other (13.8%) and all the other options were chosen by less than 10% of respondents.

Based on the provided responses in the Other option, the categories into which the respondents' professions can be summarised were as follows:

- Academic and research
- Accounting
- Administration
- Advocacy and policy
- Business consulting
- Engineering and technology
- Governance and public administration
- Healthcare and pharmaceuticals
- Hospitality and tourism
- Human resources and development
- Information technology and AI
- Innovation and entrepreneurship
- Legal services and law practice
- Marketing
- Social policy and human rights
- Telecommunication

4 This list of categories follows the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) https://ilostat.ilo.org/methods/concepts-and-definitions/classification-economic-activities/.

Whilst all the business sectors categories had garnered some responses, the volume of Other categories indicates that it may be worth revising the categories presented in this question for future surveys.

The respondents were asked about their job level. Figure 6 illustrates their answers.

Figure 6: Job levels

- Individual contributor/middle management — 35%
- Senior management — 27%
- Director level — 16%
- CEO level — 12%
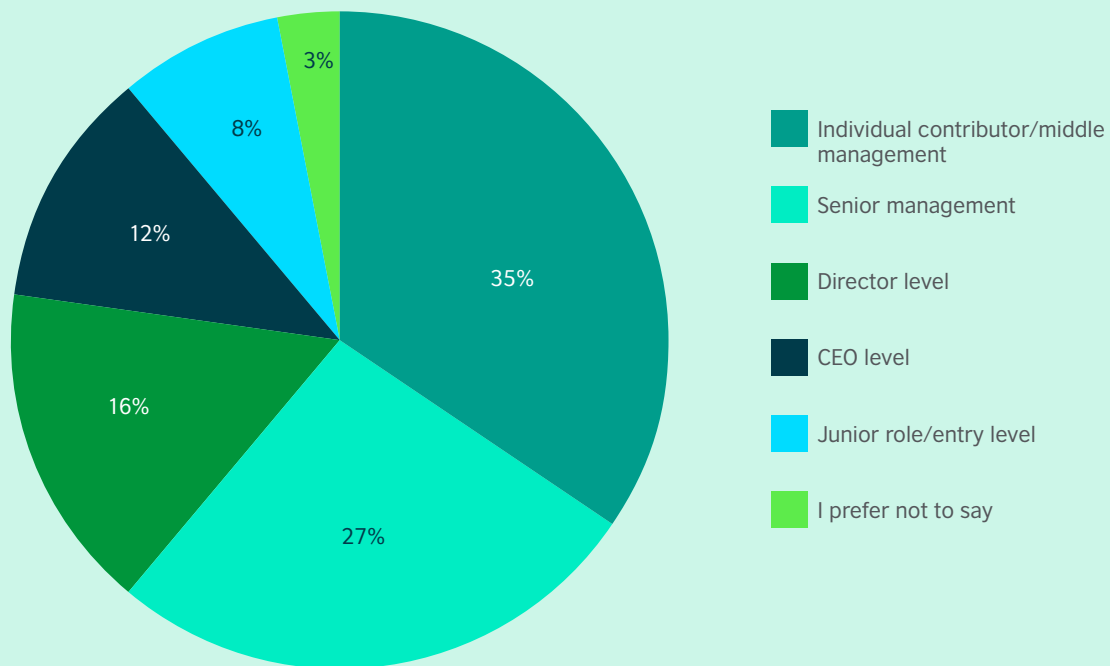- Junior role/entry level — 8%
- I prefer not to say — 3%

Figure 6 shows middle management and senior management to be the most representative options for the survey respondents, whilst junior/entry level were chosen the least (of those who chose to answer the question).

The survey also asked if their current job **involves trading or collaborating** with organisations and/or individuals in the UK, and answers to these were evenly split with 47.7% answering Yes, and 46.8% answering No. This question was also asked in the interviews, and most interviewees responded that it depended on the company they worked for, and that it was not usually exclusive to working with the UK but more globally.

The survey also asked about any **work experience** they may have gained whilst in the UK. Just under half (48.6%) engaged in some type of work experience. Of these respondents, the types of experience can be broken down into the following categories (they could choose all that apply):

a. Internship/placement as part of the course (13%)

b. Volunteered whilst studying (13.3%)

c. Worked part time whilst studying (29%)

d. Stayed in the UK after graduation and was employed (10.7%)

Finally, the survey asked about the main tools or resources that are used to search for new job opportunities or plan the next stage in their career. The suggestions ranged from traditional face-to-face meetings to online platforms and social media. Some key categories and patterns identified are:

- In-Person Meetings, such as face-to-face meetings, both locally and internationally or attending alumni events, gatherings, and conferences

- Online and Social Media Engagement, such as utilising platforms like LinkedIn, WhatsApp, WeChat, Instagram, Discord, Twitter, and Facebook, and joining online networks and groups

- Distance and Online Learning, such as engaging with fellow students and professors through online education platforms, and studying via distance learning, leading to occasional face-to-face meetups

- Professional and Academic Networks, such as

collaborative research, publication sharing, and research collaborations, and involvement in academic or professional associations and organisations

- Actively maintaining contact, such as staying connected through emails, phone calls, and text messages, and sustaining connections through Alumni Associations

- Special Interest Groups and Affiliations, such as membership in specific professional groups and active involvement in local clubs

- International and Cultural Exchanges, such as meeting friends and professors during travels or visits to the UK, and hosting British alumni colleagues

Topic C: The Alumni UK platform

As previously mentioned, another important objective of this study was to gather some feedback on the Alumni UK platform. This section focusses on respondents' views on the platform and their thoughts and opinions on how the platform can garner more engagement.

In terms of engagement, initial analysis showed that only 30.3% of registered users used the platform more than two times in the last 12 months, and 3.8% never used it once they have registered.

The survey asked about the respondents' first encounter with the Alumni UK platform. Figure 7 below summarises the results.

Figure 7: Hearing about the Alumni UK platform

- 57% — Through targeted email from the British Council
- 12% — Through my local British Council office
- 11% — Through my university
- 8% — Web search
- 6% — Through a colleague or a friend
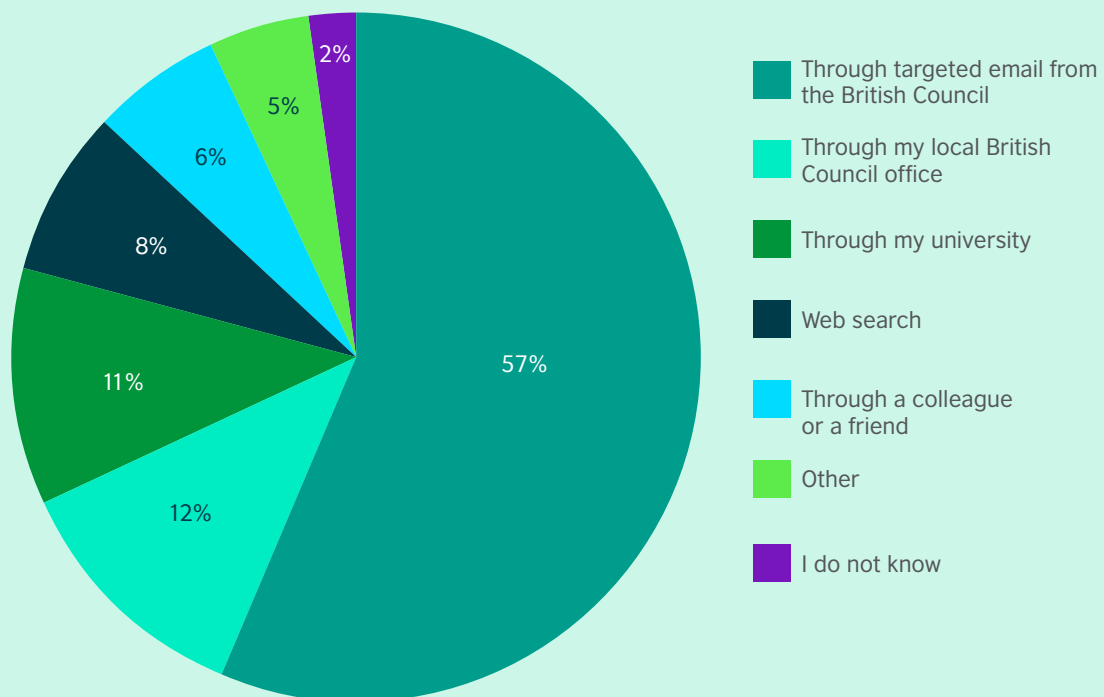- 5% — Other
- 2% — I do not know

Figure 7 shows that majority of respondents heard about the Alumni UK platform through targeted email from the British Council. The next most common approach was through the local British Council office, follow closely by the university information. This shows that the direct approach by the British Council is the most effective way of raising awareness amongst alumni of the platform.

The Other option was also available for this question in the survey, and it shows responses such as:

- Social media (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn)
- British Council event
- Other alumni events

The next question asked the respondents about **activities they took part in** through being part of the Alumni UK network, over the last 12 months. The responses were:

- Accessed Alumni UK professional development opportunities (31.1%)
- Connected with new people they didn't previously know (28.8%)
- Attended Alumni UK virtual events (41.9%)
- Connected with people they already knew through their UK education experience (23.6%)
- Attended Alumni UK physical events in the country where they currently live (23.9%)
- Have not done any of the above (25.3%)

The follow up question asked the respondents about the activities they found most useful, and the responses were:

- Accessed Alumni UK professional development opportunities (28.5%)
- Connected with new people they didn't previously know (13.2%)

- Attended Alumni UK virtual events (25.3%)
- Connected with people they already knew through their UK education experience (8%)
- Attended Alumni UK physical events in the country where they currently live (24.9%)

The results show that all activities are considered similarly important. This implies a strength of the Alumni UK network in being able to reach a diverse audience is in the breadth of its offering. Nevertheless, attending physical events was the one that was conducted the most. This was supported by the findings from the interviews, in which a majority of the participants were positive about the platform activities, but the events were mentioned by nearly all interviewees as an activity that they would most likely engage in and would like more of to be available. Furthermore, some interviewees who had only attended events noted they would like to engage in a wider range of platform activities but did not have the time. Conversely, some also shared that they felt the training on offer was not relevant to their career stage or specific path. This indicates that events, and the networking opportunities they provide, are a driver of engagement for those who are less likely or less able to participate more broadly in Alumni UK.

The survey also asked about the extent to which the participation in the Alumni UK programme has helped the respondents in the:

- Development of professional networks
- Professional learning and skills development
- Career progression

Figure 8 shows the mean results, on the scale of 0 being "not helpful at all" and 10 being "extremely helpful".

A strength of the Alumni network in being able to reach a diverse audience is in the breadth of its offering.

Figure 8: Helpfulness of the platform

To what extent has participation in the Alumni UK
programme helped you in the following areas?:

Figure 8 shows that the Alumni UK platform was
perceived as modestly helpful across all three
categories (mean ranging from 5.81 to 6.51), with
Professional learning and skills development slightly
highly rated than the others.

The survey also asked the respondents about **the most
appealing services** for a member of Alumni UK. The
responses were:

- Careers coaching, mentoring (49.5%)
- Jobs Board (42.1%)
- MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) (25.7%)
- Guest authors (including alumni and others)
  contributing to the platform content (23%)
- Microgrants for social action projects (20%)
- Courses to support early career researchers (19.3%)
- Content from other areas of British Council activity
- (18.5%)
- Buddy scheme for prospective students (12.6%)
- English language quizzes or exchange (8.8%)
- Arts content (7%)
- I prefer not to say (5%)

The responses clearly show that the career-oriented
opportunities, such as *Jobs Board* and *Career coaching
and mentoring* are the most appealing services for
those using the platform. Considering *Career
Progression* was the lowest rated option in terms of the
platform's helpfulness, this may be a useful area to
consider developing in the future.

Lastly, the respondents were asked if they have
recommended the Alumni UK platform to other
international UK graduates that they know in the last
12 months. Figure 9 below illustrates the results.

Figure 9: Recommendations of the Alumni UK platform

Legend:
- No, I have had no opportunity to do so
- Yes, several times
- Yes, once or twice
- No, I would not recommend it
- I prefer not to say

Pie chart values: 41%, 30%, 27%, 1%, 1%
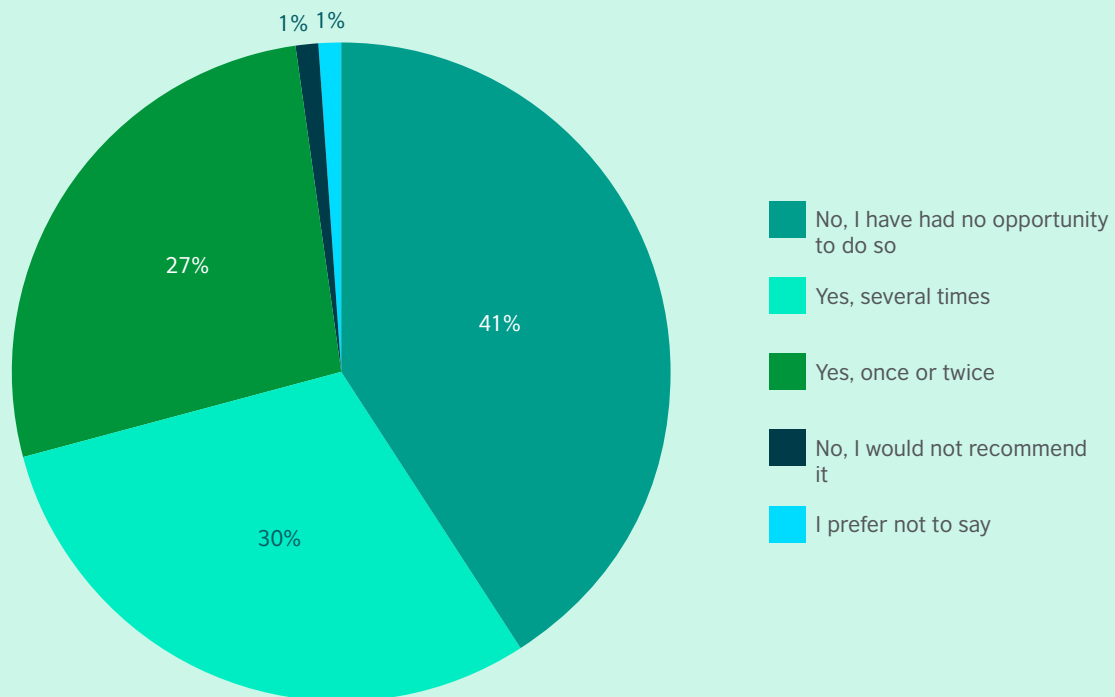
As can be clearly seen in Figure 9, a large proportion of the respondents (40.9%) have not had an opportunity to recommend the platform in the last 12 months. However, just over half (56.4%) of respondents have recommended it at least once or twice. This may indicate that there is more to be done when it comes to the Platform use.

The interviews focussed on getting more details about the interviewees' experience in engaging with the Alumni UK platform. Generally, the platform was considered **easy to use and access**, although some interviewees encountered a few initial difficulties understanding the need for an additional security step involving the code sent to their email address. However, mainly the registration and logging in processes were straightforward for most.

The interviewees engaged with the platform using a **variety of devices**, including laptops and mobile phones. Preferences for device usage varied among interviewees, with some preferring laptops due to better functionality and larger screens, while others opted for mobile phones for convenience.

Interest in an app for the platform was also mixed. While some interviewees believed an app would be beneficial, others felt it is not necessary or wouldn't significantly improve their experience. The potential benefits of an app that were mentioned included increased engagement, easier access to content, and improved compatibility with mobile devices, whilst some of the mentioned disadvantages included concerns about mobile storage space on their devices or feeling that the website adequately serves their needs.

In terms of **engagement**, the engagement levels varied among interviewees, with some actively participating in events, networking, and utilising platform features, while others had limited engagement due to time constraints or recent registration with the platform.

The interviewees were also asked for their **suggestions for improvement** of the platform. Some suggestions offered were:

More diverse events and opportunities, both live and virtual

e.g. events for individuals at different stages in their career, opportunities for work placement, events and conferences across countries

Better organisation and functionality of the platform

e.g. gamification of the platform to enable getting points or badges for usage

Expansion of networking opportunities and resources

e.g. networking events for specific professions, Special Interest Group streamlining, cross-countries collaborations
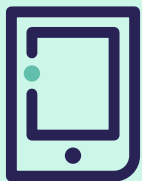
Access to additional educational and learning materials

e.g. access to British Council digital library, digest or a newsletter with educational news, sharing of the latest research

Overall, the suggestions aimed to make the platform more interactive and appealing to users with varying interests and preferences, to ensure greater engagement and participation.

Topic D: World today

The final section of the survey collected information on respondents' opinions on the world today and in particular the UK's place in it.

The first question in this section was about whether as a result of their participation in the Alumni UK programme, they view the UK favourably or unfavourably. The scale used was 0 being extremely unfavourably, and 10 being extremely favourably. Figure 10 shows the results.

Figure 10: Favourability towards the UK
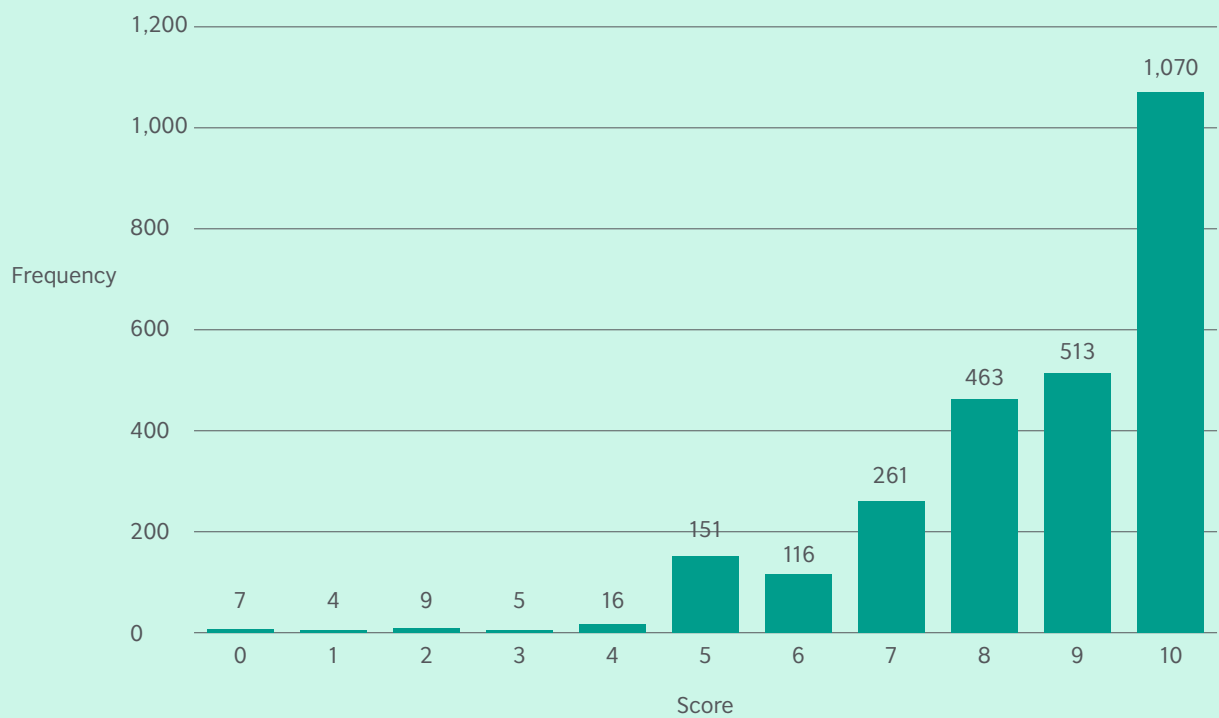
Figure 10 shows that overall respondents view the UK highly favourably. 92.6% chose a 6+ rating, indicating that the strong majority of the respondents have a positive view of the UK.

The survey then asked the respondents to express their views on the following statements:

- People from the UK are open and welcoming
- The UK is a force for good in the world
- The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions (e.g. classical/popular music, digital arts, theatre, literature, visual arts, film, museums and galleries)
- The UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries
- The UK has world leading universities and academic research

The results are shown in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11: Feelings about the UK
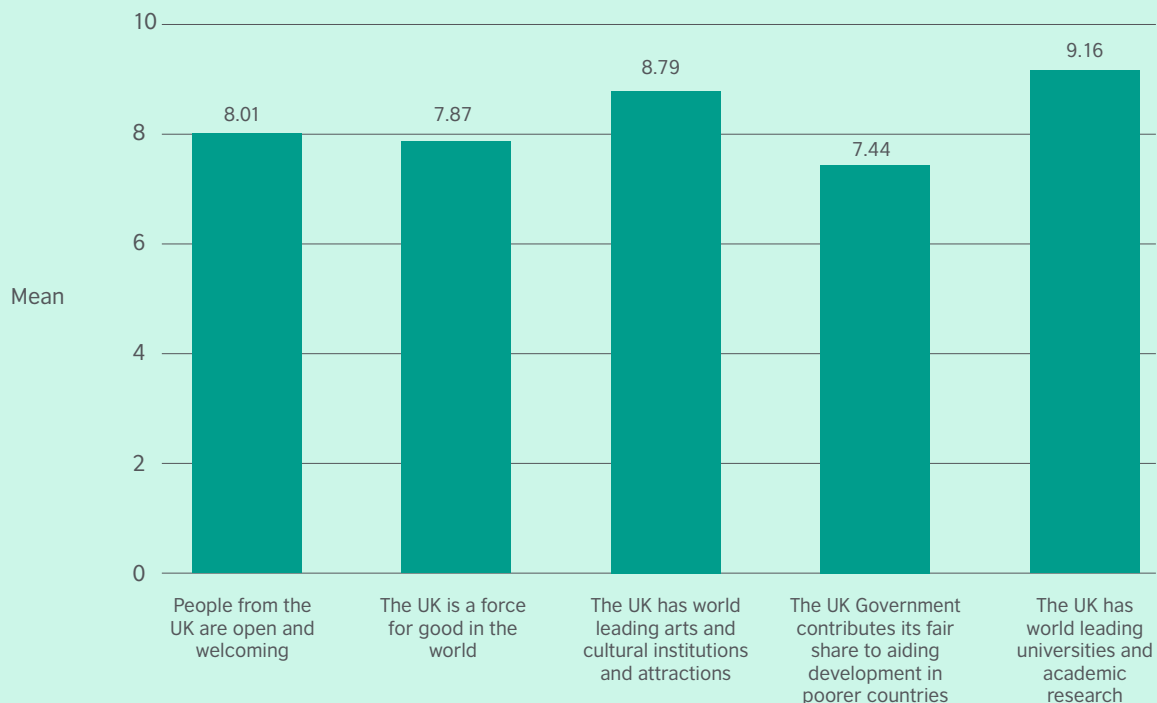
As shown in Figure 11, the overall feelings are in line with the previous question about favourable views of the UK, with high ratings for all the statements.

People from the UK were perceived as **open and welcoming** (8.01), not surprising considering the positive results from the questions about interviewees' UK experience. The interviews further showed that the interviewees' views of the UK were mostly positive, although there was an acknowledgment that it depended on their personal experience. For example:

"I'm very sad to say this, but UK is a very politicised place … Not every single human being is like, closed and cold towards you. Some are like, quite welcoming and quite relaxing to talk to and quite like yeah, they're nice to talk to and they're there. They will listen to your ideas, and they will put their own ideas and they're willing to abandon or like even lose arguments sometimes which kind of shows like they're willing to change and that's prompted, that's pretty good. That's like what you're supposed to do in an argument anyway. You're supposed to like kind of listen to the person in front of you and say that try to understand what their point of view is. Unfortunately, there is less of that now. Yes, from my point of view, there is a mixture of people in UK. The professors were welcoming I would say. But anyways, I received questions during my first

day about being a tourist not a student. I was a little bit surprised, and I was pushed into an external position, not inclusive position. And anyways I would say some people are open and include you and some see you as you are from another country and are looking to you as a tourist."

The survey respondents rated the UK's universities and academic research extremely highly (9.16). This may not be surprising considering that these are the respondents who chose a UK education and may therefore respond positively due to the implications for their own skills, knowledge and prestige. The interviews supported these findings, showing that interviewees generally have **very positive views of the UK's academic system**, particularly praising its quality and the challenging nature of its research environment, facilitated by top universities. The academic environment is highly regarded, with several interviewees mentioning a desire to return to the UK. Initiatives like Chevening scholarships and the global talent visa were seen as valuable tools for attracting international talent. As some interviewees said:

"UK is constantly challenging the status quo of how things are in the way research is done. And then UK has some of the top universities in the world and who would not want to be a part of that?"

The UK's **arts and cultural institutions and attractions** also scored very highly (8.79). In interviews, London was highlighted for its cultural attractions, though other parts of the UK were also appreciated for their appeal. For example:

"The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions: there is Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, the National Gallery, the Wallace Collection… I really like the intersection between art and law and the UK is one of like the leaders in this market. Yes, London has a lot of cultural opportunities, it's cosmopolitan, you are there with people from like, all kinds of culture. And the rest of the UK too actually, I think it's nice, you know, to go to the countryside in the UK. I have friends from Yorkshire here. So it's like a very nice way to see Yorkshire."

The statements on the UK being a force for good (7.87), and the UK contributing its fair share in aid to poorer countries (7.44) scored slightly lower. During the interviews, the interviewees had more mixed opinions on UK government actions and policies. While some agreed that the UK is a force for good generally, they also criticise its involvement (or lack of it) in global issues. There was a recognition of the diversity within British society, but also acknowledgment of issues such as political polarisation and historical colonial legacies. A few interviewees also mentioned the disconnect between current political decisions and what they believe is the more general public sentiment. For example:

"I think UK education is one of the leading and one of the most advanced in the world, especially Oxford and Cambridge. And I think the reputation is not questionable. Well, for me, I prefer UK. And I think overall in international relations as well, I think they still have a good positive attitude in what's going on in the world. And I think what we read from the news, which can be false, but I think UK is less discriminative, in terms of like religion or the skin color. So I'm a bit afraid if I need to go to the US as a Muslim and having black hair. So I would be more confident going to the UK. And I remember at one point the immigration asked me where I would go in the UK, and I said, I'm studying at Cambridge and he saluted me. So that experience from someone you don't know I mean, they show respect even to people from Asia!"

"Help developing countries? You can pretty much Google something and say a public article from like, a month ago that says oh, the British government did this and this or something. But even though the Brits were like by far the best at how they left their previous colonised places, they still kind of profited. I mean, they like did it quite gracefully, but it's still a bad act. … So I don't wholeheartedly believe that they're doing their fair share. But as I said, this is not about the people. People are completely disconnected from the systems the government thing."

In addition, there were some notable differences in these views, depending on the participants' global region, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: World today views by global region

Global regions	The UK is a force for good in the world	The UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries	The UK has world leading universities and academic research	People from the UK are open and welcoming	The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions
Americas	7.78	7.06	9.54	7.74	9.42
East Asia	7.52	7.3	8.94	7.72	8.6
EU Europe	7.15	6.06	8.87	7.56	8.81
Middle East and North Africa	7.4	6.9	9.21	8.2	8.66
South Asia	8.13	7.82	9.17	8.39	8.84
Sub-Saharan Africa	8.4	8.12	9.26	8.02	8.63
Wider Europe	7.4	6.71	8.99	7.78	8.69
Other regions	7.97	7.06	9.48	7.85	9.33

As Table 5 shows, *The UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries* had the biggest variation in ratings amongst the global regions, with EU Europe's average rating being the lowest at 6.06, compared to Sub Saharan Africa, which averaged the highest rating at 8.12. This was reflected across all statements, with EU Europe averaging the lowest ratings across all statements at 7.69, and Sub-Saharan Africa the highest, averaging 8.48. A possible explanation for the consistently lower scores from respondents in the EU Europe category could be the changing relationship between the UK and the EU since the vote to leave the EU in 2016. Conversely, the consistently more positive ratings from respondents from the Sub-Saharan African category could be due to the fact Sub-Saharan African countries are beneficiaries of significant amounts of UK Aid and engagement, which may make UK activities more visible to citizens from these countries and more predisposed to have a positive view of the country.
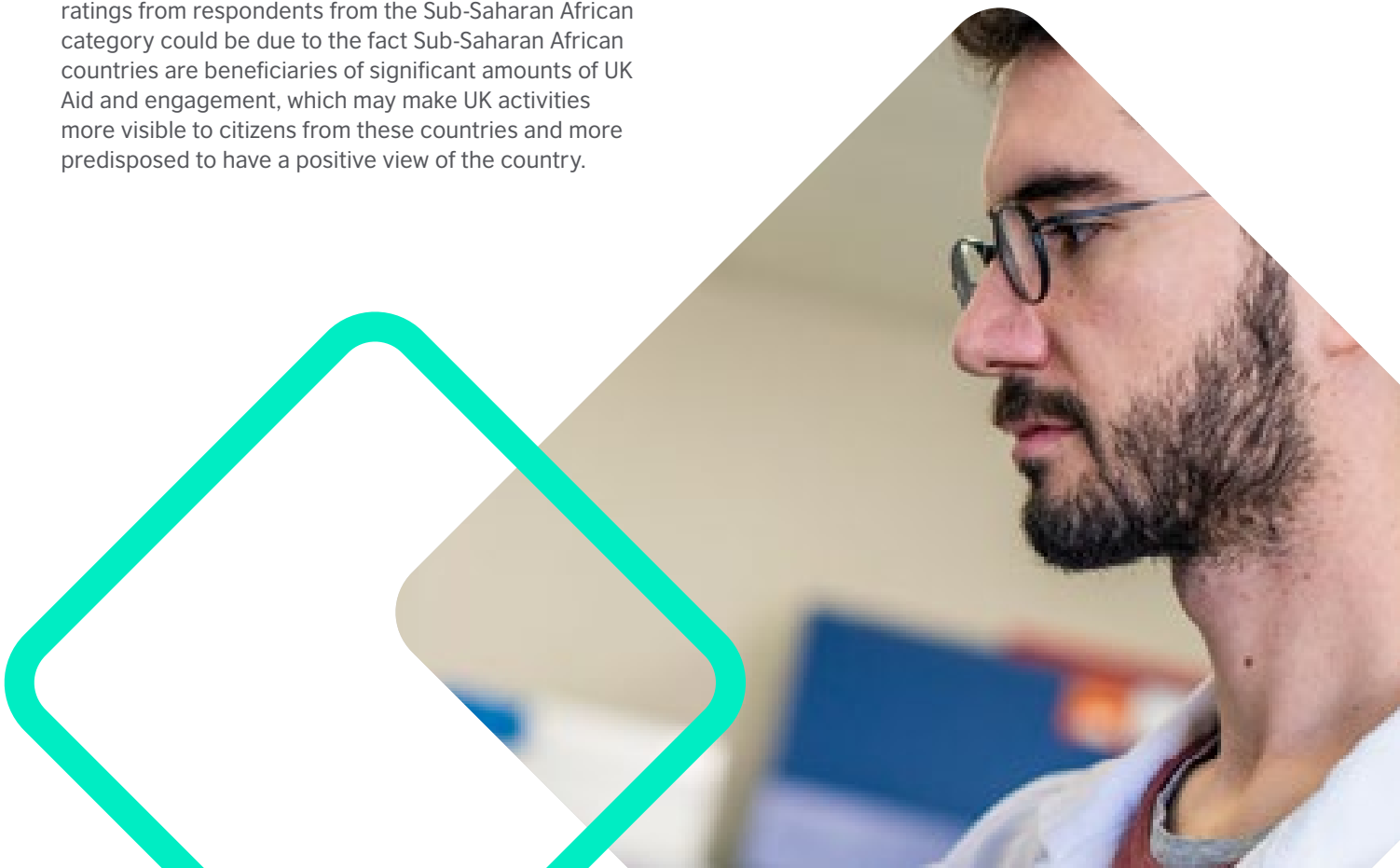
Additional analysis

Time factor

During discussions between the British Council and ACER, one area of interest that was mentioned was the impact of time, and in particular the year in which respondents conducted studies in the UK, on respondents' views of the UK and their experience. Further analysis showed that there were some differences in the responses when analysed by time period, defined as before 2000, between 2000 and 2020, and after the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020 onwards). Figure 12 on the following page illustrates this change.

As Figure 12 shows, the views of UK education experience are less favourable for those who studied in later years (albeit still very high at 8.64 on a scale of 0-10) than those who studied before 2000, or before the COVID-19 pandemic. There may be several explanations for this, such as the impact the pandemic on study experience, or impact of Brexit or the cost of living crisis, or it could attributed to more positive recollections leading to more positive ratings for those who studied long time ago. It would be interesting to follow this up in later surveys and interviews.

Figure 12: Views of UK experience by time period
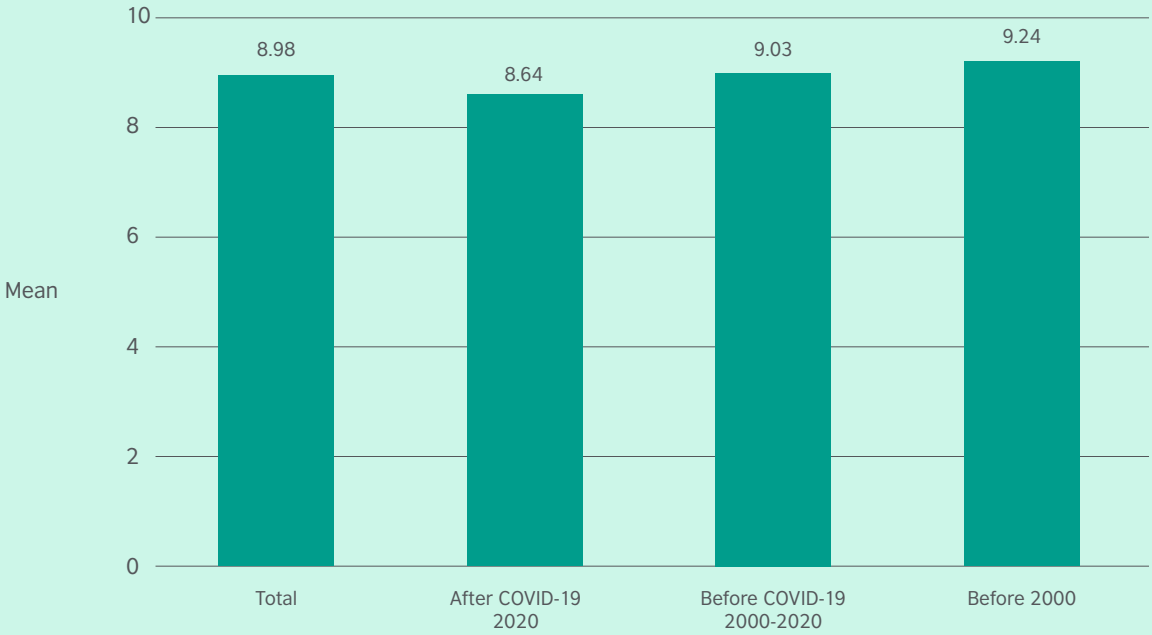
Diversity, equity, and inclusion analysis

In line with ACER UK and the British Council's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), all survey data was analysed by gender and disability status. Analyses were completed for each question, and show that in the majority of cases, there were no differences in responses when compared by gender or by respondent's disability status. In total, there were three questions in the Career section of the survey where some differences were noticed, and these questions are presented below.

In the survey, respondents were asked *what they consider to be their most important activity.* More **females** than males reported the following as their most important activities:

- Caring for someone (1% more)
- Engaging in further study, training and research (3% more)
- Being self-employed (2% more)
- Taking time out to travel (2% more)
- Looking for work (1% more)
- Unpaid work (1% more)

In contrast, 2% more **males** reported paid work for an employer, and 6% more reported running their own business, as their most important activity.

Similarly, some differences were noted in those respondents that declared having a **disability** versus those who did not:

- Caring for someone (4% more)
- Engaging in further study, training and research (1% more)
- Being self-employed (4% more)
- Looking for work (7% more)

In contrast, 11% more of those who declared **not having a disability** declared paid work as their most important activity.

Another question where there were noted differences in respondents' answers based on their gender or disability status, was the *time taken to find work after completing their UK education experience.* While 10% more males than females reported finding work immediately after finishing the education, the difference was less than 4% within the first year.

For those respondents with a declared disability, there was only a slight difference: less than 2% more of respondents who declared no disability found a job immediately, whilst within the year there were more employed respondents with a disability (2.4% more) than without.

Finally, there were some small differences in *reasons why respondents decided to take up their work or activity.*

The tables below show the distribution of responses within each group and the overall distribution.

Table 6: Reason for taking up their work by gender

Reason	Female	Male	Prefer not to say	Total
It fitted into my career plan	44.6%	52.4%	45.5%	49.5%
I did not receive any other job offers	5.1%	4.3%	9.1%	4.6%
An opportunity to progress in the industry of interest	21.2%	21.1%	27.3%	21.2%
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	2.6%	1.1%	0.0%	1.7%
To gain and broaden my experience for the job I want	9.8%	6.5%	18.2%	7.8%
It allowed me to work in the right location	4.0%	2.7%	0.0%	3.2%
It was well-paid	2.1%	2.1%	0.0%	2.1%
In order to earn a living	6.3%	5.7%	0.0%	5.9%
In order to pay off debts	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%
To work in my family business	1.8%	2.0%	0.0%	1.9%
I prefer not to say	1.9%	1.7%	0.0%	1.8%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 6 shows that work *fitting into their career plan* was more often chosen by males as their reason for taking up work or activity (8.2% more), whilst females were 3.3% more likely to choose *gaining and broadening their experience* as a reason.

Table 7: Reason for Taking Up Their Work by Disability Status

Reason	Yes	No	Prefer not to say	Total
It fitted into my career plan	36.4%	49.8%	39.1%	49.5%
I did not receive any other job offers	12.1%	4.5%	4.3%	4.8%
An opportunity to progress in the industry of interest	9.1%	21.8%	17.4%	21.2%
To see if I would like the type of work it involved	6.1%	1.5%	8.7%	2.3%
To gain and broaden my experience for the job I want	9.1%	7.8%	4.3%	7.8%
It allowed me to work in the right location	9.1%	2.9%	4.3%	3.1%
It was well-paid	3%	2%	4.3%	2.1%
In order to earn a living	15.2%	5.7%	8.7%	5.4%
In order to pay off debts	0%	0.5%	0%	0.4%
To work in my family business	0%	1.7%	4.3%	1.8%
I prefer not to say	0%	1.7%	4.3%	1.6%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 7 shows that *work fitting into their career plan* was more often chosen by respondents who declared no disability as their reason for taking up work or activity (13.4% more), and as an *opportunity to progress in the industry they are interested in* (12.7% more). In contrast, respondents with a declared disability were more likely to choose *not receiving any other job offers* (7.6% more), wanting to *see if they like the work* (4.6% more), *work being in the right location* (6.2% more), and in order to earn a living (9.5% more).

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, this longitudinal study by the British Council in collaboration with ACER aimed to comprehensively capture data on international graduates of UK education, with the ultimate goal of establishing a valuable longitudinal dataset. This research report represents the first year of the survey, with plans for annual surveys over a number of years.

Comprising both quantitative and qualitative components, the study employed an online questionnaire and interviews to explore various aspects of international graduates' experiences, focussing on UK education, career trajectories, engagement with the Alumni UK platform, and perceptions of the world today, particularly the UK's standing within it.

Key findings revealed overwhelmingly positive views of the overall UK education experience. The data collected from interviewees who studied in the UK show several common themes and perspectives. The UK's reputation for excellence in education is a major draw for international students. Many reported that a degree from a UK institution is seen as prestigious and valuable in their country, which they believe can enhance their career prospects both domestically and internationally.

Many interviewees noted their appreciation of the high quality of education offered in the UK. They valued the academic rigour and the expertise and dedication of teaching staff. Interviewees appreciated the supportive academic environment in the UK, including access to academic advisors and various student support programmes in addition to a diverse range of extracurricular activities. It is therefore important to continue to support programmes that enable a fulfilling and successful study experience.

In terms of career, respondents largely aligned their current activities with their career plans, with paid work for an employer being the most common activity. The majority quickly found employment post-graduation, reflecting the perceived value of a UK education in the job market. Many respondents benefitted from getting some work experience in the UK during their studies.

In addition, many highlighted the multicultural environment as a significant advantage of studying in the UK. They enjoyed the opportunity to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, appreciating how it enriched their learning experience and broadened their perspectives. Whilst many highlighted this as a positive effect, some still experienced exclusion, indicating that more can be done to ensure full inclusivity.

Despite the positive aspects, interviewees also acknowledged certain challenges associated with studying in the UK, such as adapting to a new education system, adjusting to cultural differences, and managing the cost of living. The high cost of university fees was mentioned by several interviewees as a particularly challenging barrier for international students. Furthermore, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was cited by some interviewees as having negatively affected their experience of living and studying in the UK.

Engagement with the Alumni UK platform, while appreciated, indicated room for improvement to enhance user engagement and cater to diverse preferences. Suggestions included making the platform more interactive and user-friendly, particularly through the development of a mobile app. Furthermore, there were suggestions on diversifying offerings to suit different professions at different stages of interviewees' careers.

Perceptions of the UK within the world were generally positive, with respondents viewing the country favourably in various aspects, particularly its academic prowess and cultural institutions. However, opinions on the UK's contributions to aiding development in poorer countries varied across global regions, suggesting possible nuanced perspectives influenced by regional contexts and experiences.

In terms of recommendations, it is important to continue researching and implementing innovative approaches to enhance platform users' experiences and promote further development. By understanding the evolving needs and desires of users, the Alumni UK platform can become a useful tool to maintain a long-term connection with the UK for the international alumni community.

For the Alumni UK platform, the following suggestions are offered for consideration to make the online platform more engaging:

• Gamification and incentives: implementing

gamification elements such as earning points for activities like reading articles or attending events and offering incentives such as entry into draws for prizes or opportunities such as internships based on points accumulated.

- Regular events and specialised groups: hosting weekly or monthly events, both digital and face-to-face, to encourage regular participation, and creating specialised groups based on professional interests or fields of study to cater to diverse preferences and enhance engagement.

- Awareness and advertising: increasing awareness of the platform through targeted advertising, especially in regions where engagement may be lower, and highlighting the benefits of the platform, such as networking opportunities and access to valuable resources, to attract more users.

- Reducing information overload: being mindful of the volume of emails and notifications sent to users to prevent information overload, which may deter engagement.

- Tailored content: providing content and latest research tailored to the specific needs and interests of users, including different professions and industries.

Finally, there are some practical recommendations for future studies. During this research, it was noted that involving country teams during the data collection could help encourage more participants, since the country teams are able to raise awareness of surveys and interviews, as well as reach those who are more interested in direct contact. In addition, using local languages for disseminating information about the study can further increase engagement.

Moving forward, continuing with the study longitudinally will provide more insight into any changes of attitudes within the alumni community towards the UK, and gather more feedback on the use of the platform.
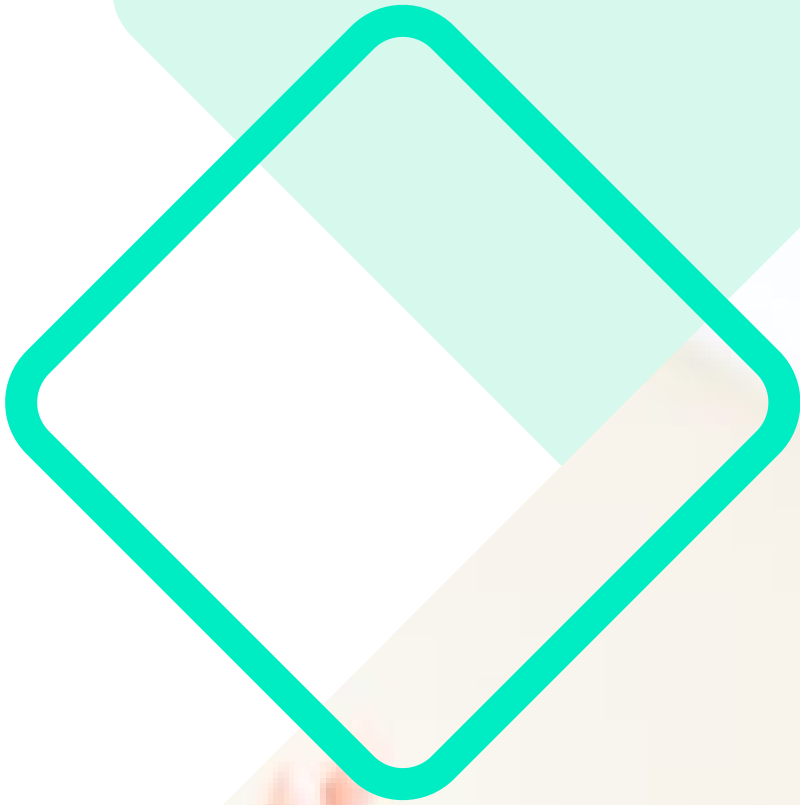
1 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey questions

Section	Q#	Survey Question	Item Type	Item Responses	Qualitative questions
About you	1	Please enter your email address that you use to log on to the Alumni UK platform	short free text		
	2	In which country/territory where you born?	drop down list choose one option	List all 172 plus 'other - please specify' option	Summarise their answers in case they would like to comment on opportunities/ circumstances and ask if there is anything to add (or any changes for Q5)
	3	In which country/territory did you attend high school?	drop down list choose one option	List all 172 plus 'other - please specify' option	
	4	Where are you currently living?	drop down list choose one option	List all 172 plus 'other - please specify' option	
	5	Do you have caring responsibilities?	List choose one option	**a.** Yes, I have dependent children **b.** Yes, I have caring responsibilities for another relative or friend **c.** Yes, I have dependent children and additional caring responsibilities **d.** No, I do not have any caring responsibilities **e.** Prefer not to say	To note
UK education experience	6	To what extent do you feel your UK education experience has further developed the following skills and knowledge? Self-confidence Critical thinking Communication skills Leadership Digital skills Collaboration/teamwork Project planning Intercultural skills (the ability to operate effectively with people from different backgrounds/cultures) Global Citizenship (knowledge and understanding of global issues and the wider world and your place in it)	Scale 0-10 Rate all statements	0 = not at all, 10 = to a great extent	Review their answer before the interview, ask about any extreme responses Link their responses to q21 too - question to understand more about how skills developed in the UK education link to their current career path and employability
	6a	Are there any additional skills which you would like to mention which were improved during your UK education experience?	Short free text optional		If they have listed any additional skills, ask for more information

7	How would you rate the social aspects of your UK education experience (including opportunities to meet new people, build networks, engage in extracurricular activities)?	Scale 0-10	0 (very bad) – 10 (very good)	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you give us some examples
8	How would you rate the relevance of your UK education experience for the world of work?	Scale 0-10	0 (very bad) – 10 (very good)	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you provide more information
9	How would you rate the inclusivity of your UK education experience? (Inclusivity encompasses the extent to which you felt included and that your individual needs were catered for (teaching, accommodation, life on campus etc.))	Scale 0-10	0 (very bad) – 10 (very good)	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you provide more information
10	How would you rate your overall experience of a UK education?	Scale 0-10	0 (very bad) – 10 (very good)	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you provide more information
11	As a result of your UK study experience, how favourably or unfavourably do you view the UK?	Rating on 0-10 scale	0 (extremely unfavourably) – 10 (extremely favourably)	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you provide more information
12	In the last 12 months have you recommended a UK study experience to anyone?	List choose one option	**a.** Yes, several times **b.** Yes, once or twice **c.** No, I have had no opportunity to do so **d.** No, I would not recommend it **e.** I prefer not to say/I do not know	If **d** - follow up
13	In the last 12 months have you recommended the UK to anyone as a place to visit?	List choose one option	**a.** Yes, several times **b.** Yes, once or twice **c.** No, I have had no opportunity to do so **d.** No, I would not recommend it **e.** I prefer not to say/I do not know	
14	In the last 12 months have you contacted or met with anyone that you first encountered during your UK education experience?	List choose one option	**a.** Yes **b.** No **c.** I do not know **d.** I prefer not to say	To note
15	How do you stay in touch with the networks that you made during your UK study experience?	List choose all options that apply They can choose any options or just option f	**a.** Phone or messenger service (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber, phone) **b.** Social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook) **c.** Written letters or cards **d.** Email **e.** I do not stay in touch with anyone (was originally option f) **f.** Other - please specify (was originally option e)	To note

Career	16	Which of these activities do you consider to be your most important activity? **a1** Paid work for an employer **b2** Self-employment/freelancing **c3** Running my own business **d4** Developing a creative, artistic or professional portfolio **e5** Voluntary/unpaid work for an employer **f6** Engaged in a course of study, training or research **g7** Taking time out to travel – this does not include short-term holidays **h8** Caring for someone (unpaid) **i9** Retired **j10** Unemployed and looking for work **k11** Doing something else	MCQ If answer a, b, c, then direct to q.17 then continue onwards If answer d, e, g, h, l, j, k then go to q21. If answer 'f' (engaged in a course of study, training or research) then direct to q.16a then go to q.21		
	16a	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *My current study fits with my future plans* *I am building on what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current studies*	Scale 0-10	0 (strongly disagree) – 10 (strongly agree)	Review their answer before the interview, ask about any extreme responses
	17	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: *My current work fits with my future plans* *I am utilising what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current work*	Scale 0-10 Rate all statements	0 (strongly disagree) – 10 (strongly agree)	Review their answer before the interview, ask about any extreme responses
	17a	*How long after completing your UK education experience did it take you to find work?*	Choose one	**a.** Immediately **b.** Within 3 months **c.** More than 3 months, but less than 6 months **d.** More than 6 months, but less than 12 months **e.** Between 12 months and 18 months **f.** More than 18 months	To note
	17b	Did you need your UK qualification to get your current job?	Choose one	**a.** Yes: both the level and subject of qualification was a formal requirement **b.** Yes: the level of qualification was a formal requirement **c.** Yes: the subject of the qualification was a formal requirement **d.** Yes: while the qualification was not a formal requirement it did give me an advantage **e.** No: the qualification was not required **f.** I do not know	To note It is important to understand more about employability - around this question we could ask: what do you think gave you an advantage in securing the job you currently have? [was it UK qualification, wider UK/international experience, the particular course you studied?, the ranking or prestige of your university?, something else?....]

17c	What was the main reason that you decided to take up your work or activity?	Choose one	a. It fitted into my career plan/it was exactly the type of work I wanted	To note
			b. I did not receive any other job offers	
			c. It was an opportunity to progress in the industry I am interested in	
			d. To see if I would like the type of work it involved	
			e. To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want	
			f. It allowed me to work in the right location	
			g. It was well-paid	
			h. In order to earn a living	
			i. In order to pay off debts	
			j. To work in my family business	
			k. I prefer not to say	

18	Which business sector best describes your main area of work?	List choose one option	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	To note
			Mining and quarrying	
			Manufacturing	
			Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	
			Water supply; sewerage, waste management etc.	
			Construction	
			Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	
			Transportation and storage	
			Accommodation and food service activities	
			Information and communication	
			Financial and insurance activities	
			Real estate activities	
			Professional, scientific and technical activities	
			Administrative and support service activities	
			Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	
			Education	
			Human health and social work activities	
			Arts, entertainment and recreation	
			Activities of households as employers (i.e. maid, cook, butler, groundskeeper in a private household etc.)	
			Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (i.e. UN, OECD, EU etc.)	
			Other (please specify)	

	19	Which of the following best describes your job level?	List choose one option	**a.** Junior role/entry level **b.** Individual contributor/middle management **c.** Senior management **d.** Director level **e.** CEO level **f.** I prefer not to say	To note
	20	Does your current job involve trading or collaborating with organisations and/or individuals in the UK?	List choose one option	**a.** Yes **b.** No **c.** I do not know **d.** I prefer not to say	If **a** – follow up
	21	To what extent do you feel these skills and knowledge are important for your career? *Self-confidence* *Critical thinking* *Communication skills* *Leadership* *Digital skills* *Collaboration/teamwork* *Project planning* *Intercultural skills (the ability to operate effectively with people from different backgrounds/cultures)* *Global Citizenship (knowledge and understanding of global issues and the wider world and your place in it)*	Scale 0-10 Rate all statements	0 is not at all important, and 10 is very important	To note It is important to understand more about employability - please also look at q6 (skills developed in UK experience) What is the effect of these skills in their career? When did they appreciate/realise that they had these skills?
	22	Whilst in the UK did you gain work experience?	List If a, go to q22a If b and c, go to 23	**a.** Yes **b.** No **c.** I prefer not to say	If **a** - follow up
	22a	How did you gain your work experience?	List choose all options that apply	**a.** Via an internship/placement as part of my course **b.** I volunteered whilst studying **c.** I worked part time whilst studying **d.** I stayed in the UK after graduation and was employed	Ask for more detail
	23	What are the main tools or resources you use to search for new job opportunities or plan the next stage in your career?	free short text		Follow up if anything was unclear in their responses
Platform	24	How did you first hear about the Alumni UK platform?	List choose one option	**a.** Through targeted email from the British Council **b.** Through my local British Council office **c.** Through my university **d.** Through a colleague or a friend **e.** Web search **f.** I do not know **g.** Other – please specify	to note

25	Through being part of the Alumni UK network, over the last 12 months I have done the following:	List choose all options that apply or just option f If chosen 'I have not done any of the above', go to q.27	**a.** Accessed Alumni UK professional development opportunities **b.** Attended Alumni UK virtual events **c.** Attended Alumni UK physical events in the country where I currently live **d.** Connected with new people that I didn't previously know **e.** Connected with people I already knew through my UK education experience **f.** I have not done any of the above	If a-e follow up on what their experience was, and to understand the motivation behind their response If f - follow up - If they engaged with the platform how did they find the pathway to access/ login to the platform? If they did not engage, then explore why not For those who engage AND those who don't, would they be more likely to engage on their phone, or via a computer? Would an app impact on engagement levels?
26	And which of these activities have you found most useful?	List choose one	**a.** Accessed Alumni UK professional development opportunities **b.** Attended Alumni UK virtual events **c.** Attended Alumni UK physical events in the country where I currently live **d.** Connected with new people that I didn't previously know **e.** Connected with people I already knew through my UK education experience	To note
27	To what extent has participation in the Alumni UK programme helped you in the following areas: *Development of professional networks* *Professional learning and skills development* *Career progression*	rating on 0-10 scale	0 (not very helpful) – 10 (very helpful)	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you provide more information

	28	Which of the following services appeal most to you as a member of Alumni UK?	Select up to 3 options or only option k	**a.** Jobs Board **b.** Microgrants for social action projects **c.** Guest authors (including alumni and others) contributing to the platform content **d.** Careers coaching, mentoring **e.** Buddy scheme for prospective students (alumni volunteer to have a conversation with a new student about to embark on studying in the UK) **f.** MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) **g.** English language quizzes or exchange **h.** Arts content **i.** Content from other areas of British Council activity **j.** Courses to support early career researchers **k.** I prefer not to say	To note
	29	Have you recommended the Alumni UK platform to other international UK graduates that you know?	List choose one option	**a.** Yes, several times **b.** Yes, once or twice **c.** No, I have had no opportunity to do so **d.** No, I would not recommend it **e.** I prefer not to say	If **d** - follow up even if a-c why have they/why would they recommend it?
World today	30	As a result of your participation in the Alumni UK programme, how favourably or unfavourably do you view the UK?	Rating on 0-10 scale	0 (extremely unfavourably) – 10 (extremely favourably)	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you provide more information
	31	Thinking about the UK, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: *People from the UK are open and welcoming* *The UK is a force for good in the world* *The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions (e.g. classical/popular music, digital arts, theatre, literature, visual arts, film, museums and galleries)* *The UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries* *The UK has world leading universities and academic research*	Scale 0-10 Rate all statements	Scale where 0 is strongly disagree, and 10 is strongly agree	Important to follow up: You said XX, can you provide more information
Incentives	32	Thank you for the time taken to respond to this survey. As a sign of our gratitude we would like to give you the opportunity to enter into a prize draw. All terms and conditions and details of the draw have been provided in the covering email to this survey. Please select all prize draws which you would like to be entered into.	Select up to 3 options. If they select option 3, go to 32a	**a.** Travel to participate in a face-to-face alumni event in the UK **b.** 12-month subscription to British Council digital library **c.** Access to a professional development course	
	32a	Please select only one professional development course you would like to participate in?	Choose one	• Effective proposals writing and presenting with impact • Leadership skills for women	
Additional Qs		Do you have any feedback on the survey: anything unclear, missing, or any general comments			Additional information

Appendix 2 – Data preparation

Preparing data file for analyses

The British Council Alumni survey was administered using the online LimeSurvey platform. It was launched live on 14th December 2023 and closed on 22nd January 2024. The closing date for the survey was originally planned for 15th January. However, to boost survey responses, the survey remained open for an additional week and was officially closed on 22nd January 2024.

The overall number of survey responses including the 113 Chinese cohort totalled 2728.

Before survey responses were analysed, a number of data treatment steps were carried out. They involved:

Identification of in-scope respondents from the main survey (2615 responses)

Overall, 3138 responses were collected in the initial exported data from Lime Survey. A total of 523 responses were excluded. Of the 523 excluded responses, 481 were identified as either duplicate or triplicate cases where respondents started, saved and returned to complete the survey or did not complete the survey at all. Eight responses with a date stamp prior to the live launch of the survey were identified as test cases and excluded. 34 respondents who indicated that they were born in the United Kingdom for question 2 were also excluded.

Merging of 17 additional demographic fields

A database containing additional demographic fields for all UK alumni was provided by the British Council. This database was used to match survey respondents on the primary email addresses provided. Additional demographic fields were extracted for 2563 survey respondents. Not all 17 demographic fields contained data and there were 46 matched survey respondents who had no data for the 17 extracted demographic fields. All originally extracted demographic fields were retained as they appeared in the UK alumni database. For the gender and disability variables, blank cases for these variables were recoded to missing for ease of data analysis.

Merging of respondents from Chinese cohort survey (113 cases)

Upon receipt of the comma-separated values (CSV) file containing the Chinese response cohort, to facilitate seamless merging, all field formats (item widths and item types) were re-set to conform to the main survey file, all responses containing Chinese characters were translated using Google Translate and replaced with English translations, all questions that were not administered to the Chinese cohort were set to missing, all Q2 responses were renamed from "People's Republic of China" to "China (Peoples Republic)" to conform to the original survey response category, Q22a_1 to Q22a_4 were extracted and organised in their own columns to conform to the main survey response file, new IDs were allocated starting from 3152 (the next number from the main file). Once these data treatments were implemented, the Chinese cohort response file was merged into the main survey response file.

General data treatments

Categorical questions: variable labels and value labels were assigned to all categorical questions. As all questions were compulsory, there were no missing data for the main survey file. In the case of the Chinese cohort, a missing code was added for all blanks as these questions were not compulsory.

Likert scale questions: all responses were coded to numeric format for ease of analyses. No missing code was required as all respondents provided a rating.

Multiple response questions: where a survey question permitted more than one response, data was coded as "yes" where the respondent selected a response category, all non-selected response categories (blanks) were recoded to "not selected".

Creation of additional fields for analyses

Engagement: The British Council provided a file containing the monthly login frequency of UK alumni between July 2023 and January 2024. Of the 2615 respondents, 2609 were matched to the monthly login frequency file.

The login counts across July 2023 and January 2024 were summed for each respondent each respondent and an engagement category were set as follows:

Login counts greater than 2 were assigned an engagement category of "high engagement"

Login counts less than 2 were assigned an engagement category of "low engagement"

For respondents who were not matched or had Login counts of 0 were assigned an engagement category of "no engagement".

No engagement data is available for the Chinese cohort as primary email addresses were not collected and therefore no matches could be made. These were set to the missing code.

Priority Countries: The British Council identified 15 priority countries of interest. This field was created based on the respondent's country/territory of birth (question 2). For all other countries/territories not included in this list, a missing code was assigned to data analysis purposes.

Brazil
Mexico
China (Peoples Republic)
Indonesia
Malaysia
Vietnam
India
Pakistan
Egypt
Saudi Arabia
United Arab Emirates
Nigeria
Turkey
France
Germany

Global Regions: The British Council categorises its work across the globe into seven regions (plus the UK). In its analysis of survey data for this report, ACER created a 'region' field based on the respondent's country/territory of birth (question 2). Countries are listed by their corresponding region in the following table. Unfortunately, a total of 86 respondents were not categorised into global regions in the analysis for this report, but were categorised as 'Other', these include respondents from Mongolia, Panama, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Somalia, St Lucia, Sudan, Ukraine.

Americas	East Asia	EU Europe	Middle East and North Africa	South Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Wider Europe
Brazil	China (Peoples Republic)	Greece	Egypt	Pakistan	Nigeria	Turkey
Mexico	Malaysia	Germany	Iraq	India	Ghana	Armenia
United States	Indonesia	France	United Arab Emirates	Bangladesh	Kenya	Kazakhstan
Canada	Philippines	Netherlands	Bahrain	Sri Lanka	South Africa	Uzbekistan
Peru	Vietnam	Italy	Saudi Arabia	Nepal	Mauritius	Azerbaijan
Argentina	Thailand	Cyprus	Lebanon	Iran	Uganda	Albania
Venezuela	Singapore	Hungary	Kuwait	Afghanistan	Ethiopia	Norway
El Salvador	Japan	Belgium	Jordan		Malawi	Russia
Honduras	Hong Kong (SAR)	Spain	Qatar		Botswana	Switzerland
Chile	Taiwan (China)	Portugal	Morocco		Tanzania	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ecuador	Australia	Sweden	Oman		Djibouti	Tajikistan
Guatemala	Myanmar	Austria	Palestine		Mozambique	
Guyana	South Korea	Bulgaria	Algeria		Sierra Leone	
Trinidad and Tobago	New Zealand	Ireland	Libya		Zambia	
Bahamas	Cambodia	Poland	Tunisia		Cameroon	
Bolivia	Macau (SAR)	Romania	Syria		Congo Democratic Rep	
Costa Rica	Papua New Guinea	Czech Republic			Gambia	
Dominican Republic		Denmark			Lesotho	
Jamaica		Finland			Maldives	
Uruguay					Seychelles	
Colombia					South Sudan	
					Zimbabwe	

There were 65 respondents who selected other and indicated "Colombia" as the country/territory of birth (question 2), these were recoded as such to minimise the number of missing data for the creation of the Global Regions and Priority Countries fields.

About the same number of respondents selected other and indicated "Colombia" as country/territory of high school attendance (question 3) and country/territory of residence (question 4), these were also recoded for data accuracy.

> **The UK's reputation for excellence in education is a major draw for international students.**

> **"The UK has some of the top universities in the world and who would not want to be a part of that?" – interviewee.**