



Universities UK
International

Annual Report

2021/22



Dear colleagues,

Universities UK International (UUKi) exists to ensure our universities reach their full potential around the world. International engagement and collaboration contribute immeasurably to the global success of the UK higher education sector.

It seems the age of perpetual crisis is here to stay – with us all needing to find the balance between reacting to immediate crises and working towards long term visions.

At UUKi, we are one year into delivering on our strategic aims, as part of our refreshed strategy through to 2023.

These aims are:

- Grow and diversify onshore recruitment of international students
- Support the development of sustainable, scalable transnational education
- Enhance the scale and impact of international research collaboration
- Increase the proportion of students with international experience, especially those from low participation backgrounds
- Support UK universities to develop the capabilities, understanding and resilience to meet new challenges.

There have been some wonderful highlights we have shared together, including the UK hitting the target in the International Education Strategy to recruit 600,000 international students a year by 2030, several years early. Another highlight has been the way in which the sector has come together in response to war in Ukraine, with more than 70 UK to Ukraine university twinning partnerships in place in less than three months.

I am very proud of what we have achieved over the past year, under the leadership of Vivienne Stern, but it is only possible because of the strength of the links we have developed throughout the UK university sector, from Vice-Chancellors to outward mobility co-ordinators, from research managers to International Directors. As I step into the Director role, I want to be clear that UUKi succeeds when we can act on the insight you, our members, provide to us, in order for us to influence the conditions in which your universities work. That's what makes us unique.

Many thanks for your support, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming year.

Jamie Arrowsmith
Director, Universities UK International



2021/22

Stats and facts

100%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi

COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY

with their institution

98%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi

WORKS EFFECTIVELY

to positively influence UK policy on HE and international issues

98%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi

WORKS EFFECTIVELY

to promote the UK sector overseas

95%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi

SUPPORTS THEIR INSTITUTION

by informing them of new opportunities, challenges and policy developments

94%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi

CREATES A NETWORK OF COLLEAGUES

for sharing good practice

92%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi represents the

INTERESTS OF THEIR INSTITUTION

effectively

92%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi supports their institution to develop the

UNDERSTANDING AND RESILIENCE

to meet new and emerging challenges

90%

of our members agree or strongly agree that UUKi does an excellent job in

SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES' INTERNATIONAL AIMS

Out of those who engaged with the below activities

 **100%**

of our members found our

CRISIS RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

valuable or very valuable

 **100%**

of our members found our

ADVICE, ANALYSIS AND INTELLIGENCE

including research reports, delegations and publications valuable or very valuable

 **92%**

of our members found our

EVENTS

(such as our International Higher Education Forum or transnational education conference) valuable or very valuable

 **91%**

of our members found our

CAMPAIGNS

(such as #WeAreTogether and #StickToScience) valuable or very valuable

“UUKi do an incredible job acting as the mouthpiece for the sector, lobbying, advocating and evidencing the value and impact of international partnership both at home and abroad. UUKi have enormous convening power and can quickly mobilise the sector to respond to real-time challenges with insightful and impactful solutions. The sector needs UUKi more than ever before.”

Rachel Sandison, Vice-Principal (External Relations), University of Glasgow

All stats on pages 3 and 4 refer to the 86 respondents to UUKi’s annual stakeholder survey conducted in June 2022





Awards

We are delighted that our organisation, campaigns and events have been successful in winning and being shortlisted for four awards, including:



WINNER
**PRWEEK UK
GLOBAL AWARDS**
We Are Together campaign –
Campaign of the Year: Issues
and Crisis in 2022



FINALIST
**PIEONEER
AWARDS 2022**
Stick to Science campaign



FINALIST
**PIEONEER
AWARDS 2022**
Association of the year



SILVER AWARD
ICE AWARDS
Pro-Vice-Chancellor Forum
2021 – Best Leadership Event



 **Delegations**

We supported over **20 inbound and outbound delegations** and ministerial engagements covering the International Education Strategy's priority regions.

 **Member engagement**

We have met with over **50 member institutions** individually to find out about their key priorities and challenges which will inform our work going forward.

 **Events**

We held **21 higher education themed events** attracting:

6266	39	255
DELEGATES	SPONSORS	SPEAKERS





Campaigns

Stick to Science

- We launched the [#SticktoScience](#) pan-European campaign with colleagues in Switzerland to highlight the importance of the UK and Switzerland's swift association to Horizon Europe
- It has reached over 4.2 million people on social media and been covered in a large number of international news outlets
- Almost 6,000 people have signed their support for the campaign

Twin For Hope

- We launched the [#TwinForHope](#) campaign to showcase how twinning partnerships between UK and Ukrainian universities are making a positive difference, from rebuilding campuses and sharing academic resources to welcoming Ukrainian staff and students to the UK to allow teaching and learning to continue.
- It reached over 4.5 million people on launch day (8 September) with member universities sharing examples of how their partnership with a Ukrainian university is providing urgent, practical support.

Insight

- Our [International student recruitment data](#) webpage has been viewed over 20,000 times this year and ranks as the third most visited page on our website.
- We published the latest version of our annual [International Facts and Figures](#) in a new interactive format, viewed over 3,000 times since publication in June 2022.
- We shared new analysis on the [contribution of international students to the UK economy](#)
- We published research into the [UK's international student recruitment performance](#) and made recommendations to UK Government and the sector on how to improve upon this – with a deep dive into eight recruitment countries.
- We [published insight](#) into how international leaders at universities consider the link between internationalisation and the climate crisis
- We published 13 blogs this year – including a run-down of the latest on the [UK's association to Horizon Europe](#), guidance on [risk in internationalisation](#) and insight on how we can achieve sustainable growth in [international student recruitment](#).



#TwinForHope campaign: UK-Ukraine university twinning

303 views • Sep 8, 2022

7 DISLIKE SHARE DOWNLOAD CLIP

Our strategic aims

Over the course of the past year, we have worked with our members and wider stakeholders to deliver on our strategic aims. Below is a summary of some of the outcomes and highlights of our collective work:

Grow and diversify onshore recruitment of international students

- Higher Education Student Statistics [data](#) for the academic year 2020/21 showed that the UK achieved the UK government's International Education Strategy target of 600,000 onshore international student enrolments, a decade ahead of schedule. Of the international students in the UK in 2020/21, 452,225 were recorded as non-EU students, while 152,905 came from within the European Union.
- We contributed to the development of a UK Quality Framework for Education Agents which launched earlier this year and comprises a new Code of Ethical Practice and, [a Good Practice Guide for Providers](#) working with recruitment agents, as well as a refreshed suite of agent training delivered in conjunction with the British Council. We are working with BUIA and the British Council to implement the framework.
- We have worked closely with BEIS, DfE and the Home Office throughout the Ukraine crisis to inform the UK Government response. This included the development of safe and legal immigration routes for Ukrainian citizens entering the UK where they relate to students and staff associated with UK universities and their families, guidance on the application of sanctions to UK HEIs, and support for student hardship. In April 2022, the UK government confirmed an [additional £4 million](#) of hardship funding to help English higher education providers support students affected by the war in Ukraine.
- We have worked with British Council to support the launch of the refreshed Study UK campaign, including course search and scholarship search tools on their website.

**“Superb service-oriented approach.
Has finger on pulse of key issues.”**

Professor Simon Pollard, Pro-Vice Chancellor (International),
Cranfield University





Support the development of sustainable, scalable transnational education

- Our [analysis](#) showed that UK TNE growth was boosted during the pandemic: 510,832 students studying programmes delivered by 162 UK providers in over 200 countries and territories worldwide in 2020-21, nearly 60,000 more than the year before. Over 11,000 new students were reported in distance learning programmes and over 22,000 new students in programmes delivered collaboratively around the globe.
- Analysis of the Scale of [Scottish](#) and [Welsh](#) TNE showed growth in the devolved nations.
- We were at the forefront of improvement in measuring transnational education, publishing a ground-breaking [case study of transnational graduate outcomes in the United Arab Emirates](#) that showed high degrees of graduate satisfaction with the quality of education and its focus on employability. Our work continues to influence the implementation of quality and standards' regulation in England, with moratoria granted to the implementation of quality conditions of registration and ongoing dialogue with the regulator.
- We supported the launch of the [UK University Overseas Campus Network \(UKUOCN\)](#) in November 2021. The Network now comprises 18 UK universities with 28 campuses in 18 countries. They collectively host over 60,000 students and 5,000 staff.
- Our TNE e-Group reached 846 subscribers in over 100 UUK member institutions, updates had an open rate above sector average (36.1%)
- We contributed to high level higher education delegations focusing on transnational delegations [to Nigeria and India](#), and hosted ministerial-level overseas delegations from Egypt, Malta, Nigeria, and India.
- We signed memoranda of understanding with the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) and The Committee of Vice-chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU), the apex organisations of universities in China and Nigeria, to advance co-operation in transnational initiatives.

“UUKi is excellent at representing the sector and defending its interests and those of its students in a time of severe international challenges.”

Professor John Strachan, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Bath Spa University

Enhance the scale and impact of international research collaboration

- As uncertainty over UK association to Horizon Europe has grown, in February 2022, we played an instrumental role in the launch of a new pan-European campaign, [#StickToScience](#), calling on the EU and national governments to depoliticise scientific collaboration. Working alongside UK and Swiss research and innovation sector bodies, the advocacy has significantly raised the level of public attention on science collaboration. The campaign statement has been signed by nearly 6,000 members of the global scientific community, including 13 Nobel laureates.

- In response to the continued delay in confirming UK association to Horizon Europe, we proactively fed into the [Government's alternatives planning](#) activity to ensure that the concerns and priorities of universities and their researchers are reflected in the design of alternative funding mechanisms, should they be needed. This has included the submission of a comprehensive position paper in December 2021 and the establishment of a new UUKi task and finish group, which senior BEIS and UKRI officials have used as a sounding board. In addition to policy development, we have continued to organise successful virtual events to keep the UK and EU research community informed about the state of play with UK involvement Horizon Europe. In collaboration with the UK Science and Innovation Network, we have organised [five webinars](#) in 2021/22 with over 2,000 total attendees.

- In April, UUKi published a [landmark new report](#) highlighting the stagnation in international postgraduate research (PGR) student recruitment and drawing attention to the uncertain operating environment confronting universities. The report made a number of recommendations to address these uncertainties, recognising that international PGR students are crucial for the university research base and the future UK R&I talent pipeline. This was the first dedicated analysis of international PGR figures that we have produced, and we plan to conduct further work in this area next year.
- Our partner countries for international research collaboration in 2021/22 were identified as Canada and Singapore. We hosted virtual research collaboration events whose purpose was to inform both UK and Canada/Singapore based researchers and professional services staff of the current UK-Canada/Singapore strategic priorities and collaboration opportunities, celebrate success by showcasing existing collaborations, and provide an opportunity for virtual networking. The events attracted high level speakers from the UK including funders (UKRI, Research England) and the partner countries (Canadian Research Coordinating Committee, Mitacs Canada, Universities Canada, National Research Foundation Singapore). Both events attracted a high level of participation with over approximately 200 and 250 attendees each.
- In 2022 we successfully concluded our first (three year) phase of a partnership with Mitacs Canada which enables UK based undergraduates to undertake the Global Research Internships in Canada. In the summer of 2022 over 200 students from 15 UK universities have undertaken the opportunity in Canada.



Increase the proportion of students with international experience, especially those from low participation backgrounds

- In December 2021, we were invited by Capita to sit on their Turing Advisory Board. Board membership provides a key channel for our influencing and lobbying work and an important way for the higher education sector to influence the scheme.
- We supported the sector with implementation of the first year of the [Turing Scheme](#) including ensuring that universities and students were not disadvantaged by an error in year one grant rate calculations.
- We supported members with the year two application process, facilitating engagement with Capita and ensuring that all UUK members who had intended to submit a grant application were able to do so this year. In total, 131 UK universities have been successful their grant applications this year.
- We worked with UK Embassies and Consulates to provide support with visa issues affecting those looking to study and work abroad.

Support UK universities to develop the capabilities, understanding and resilience to meet new challenges

- During the 2021/22 academic year, we have been coordinating the response to humanitarian crises such as those that unfolded in Afghanistan in 2021 and Ukraine in 2022, as well as continuing to lead the sector out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Key outcomes in these areas are below:

Afghanistan

- We worked with UK Government and provided support and guidance to members seeking support and evacuation for students from the country.
- We supported the Department for Education (DfE) in developing the Warm Welcome Scholarships scheme, convening sector roundtables and providing insight and data. The scheme was launched in May 2022 and provides up to 300 scholarships for Afghan nationals to study in UK higher education institutions.

Ukraine

- With Cormack Consultancy Group (CCG), we helped establish the [UK-Ukraine University Twinning Initiative](#), which has the support of the Office of the President of Ukraine. Over 75 twinning agreements are in place between UK and Ukrainian universities – providing urgent, practical support for now and beyond the war.

- We engaged with the Home Office to shape the parameters of the Ukraine extension scheme which enabled students and their families to take refuge in the UK after their study or visit visa expired.
- We liaised with DfE which helped secure access to student loans and home fee status for Ukrainian nationals on any of the three humanitarian visa routes, and helped secure £400 million of additional hardship funding for current students.
- We established a cross-sector group with representatives from the Home Office, DfE, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Welsh government, higher education sector and refugee agencies, along with senior university leaders, to identify appropriate actions and lead agencies /individuals. The group comprised around 70 members. One output is a new support mechanism to be coordinated by Refugee Education UK for displaced students in the UK, which will offer a searchable directory of university scholarships and course information, as well as in-person wraparound support.
- We coordinated support from university members to remotely deliver Ukrainian university entrance examinations this summer.
- [We launched the #TwinForHope campaign](#) in September 2022, to showcase the positive impact of the twinning initiative.

Covid -19

- We worked with UK Government on developing and communicating international student arrivals policy measures including Covid vaccinations and managed quarantine facilities.
- We supported members with the ending of Covid-related student visa concessions, and secured mitigations such as the extension of the 90-day vignette and clarifications on late arrivals to protect student recruitment.
- We worked with the Department for Transport, Chinese Embassy and China charter organisers on securing approvals for charter flights from China to the UK for the start of the academic year.
- We worked with Home Office to inform the development of a new, permanent blended learning policy to replace the Covid concession on blended learning.

Climate

- We published [insight](#) into how international strategies are changing in light of the crisis.
- We continued our engagement with the Climate Action Network for International Educators (CANIE), attending their Leaders' Forum during COP26 and advising on the development of their CANIE Accord, published in May.
- We held a webinar on internationalisation and climate change which included senior representatives from EAIE and NAFSA.

Security and risk

- We published a joint statement with counterparts in Australia, Canada, Germany, USA, and New Zealand on our commitment to safe, secure, and sustainable internationalisation.
- We published a [blog](#) and delivered two webinars on the new National Security and Investment Act and on embedding UUK's security guidelines.

“I feel very well informed because of UUKi and would find it hard to access so much support and shared practice if I had to find it all on my own.”

Nina Davies, Director of International Engagement, Royal Veterinary College

With thanks to our funders

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Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales

hefcw



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