



Universities UK
International

Annual Report 2025-26



94%
value the insights and
support we provide to
their institution

A thank you from our director

At Universities UK International (UUKi), we help universities succeed internationally. While our members are diverse in their missions and global footprints, they share a commitment to advancing international education and research in ways that create opportunities, tackle global challenges, and deliver benefits for students, communities and economies both in the UK and around the world. Our role is to support these ambitions through sector leadership, insight, and advocacy - working closely with government, international partners, and sector stakeholders to create the conditions in which our universities can prosper.

While the past year has brought opportunities, it has also been extremely challenging for many across our membership. The publication of the UK Government's refreshed [International Education Strategy](#) set out a clear vision for the contribution universities make to the UK's global success.

Reflecting many of the priorities outlined in our [Opportunity, growth and partnership: a blueprint for change](#), the strategy recognises the strong links between education and research, the value of international experiences for UK students, the importance of responsible international student recruitment, and the sustainable growth of transnational education (TNE). Our appointment as a core member of the government's Education Sector Action Group (ESAG) reflects the strength of our engagement with policymakers and our role in ensuring the sector's voice is represented in key discussions about the future of international education.

The announcement that the UK will rejoin Erasmus+ marks another significant milestone. The UK's return to the programme will help strengthen education and research ties with European partners, broaden access to international experiences, and create new opportunities for students and staff. We look forward to continuing to support our members with preparing to engage as fully as possible.

However, universities have continued to face considerable pressures. Policy changes, financial constraints, and growing global competition have created a uniquely challenging operating environment; our role in convening, connecting, and supporting the sector has never been more important. Throughout the year, we have focused on providing members with the intelligence, networks and practical support needed to navigate change, while continuing to work with policymakers and sector partners to ensure university leaders' perspectives are heard at the highest levels.

As we reflect on the past year, among the many challenges there is much to be proud of. I am immensely grateful to the UUKi team for all their work, and to our members for the expertise, evidence, and insights they contribute so generously. The strength of UK higher education lies in its willingness to collaborate, and it is through that collective effort that we continue to progress.

Looking ahead, I am sure the international landscape will continue to evolve, and there will inevitably be many issues we need to respond to collectively. We will remain focused on the issues that matter most to our members, and I look forward to continuing our work with you all in the coming year.

Jamie Arrowsmith
Director, UUKi



When I think of UUKi...



I think ‘of a group of colleagues who are passionate and dedicated in trying to support the sectors’ ambitions to be world-leading in their international activities.’

Dr Mark Norrish
Pro-Vice-Chancellor for International and Partnerships
Anglia Ruskin University

I think ‘of a highly driven, knowledgeable team, committed to strengthening the sector’s global footprint and expanding the quality and breadth of its international engagement.’

A member of UUKi’s PVC Network

I think of ‘the body that best understands our sector and its challenges and opportunities in [the] international context.’

Prof Ian Mabbett
Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research Culture
Swansea University

I think of ‘bringing universities together to achieve more collectively than we could individually.’

Dr Caroline Baylon
Pro-Vice-Chancellor International
University of Reading

I think of a ‘professional team of sector experts who provide insightful data and bring the sector together to share challenges and best practice.’

Lucy Thomas
Global Engagement Director
Royal Holloway, University of London

I think of a ‘professional team with [their] finger on the pulse.’

Sam Jones
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)
University of Winchester





Views from our members

94% value the insights and support we provide to their institution.

UUKi 'works well with [its] members. Jamie and his team are always willing to support and assist. Thank you!'

Prof Steven McGuire
Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International)
University of East Anglia

88% agree or strongly agree that we bring institutions together to share good practices.

'One of the things UUKi does well is 'convening the group for honest and open discussion.'

Prof Antonius Raghubansie
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)
Keele University

All member satisfaction statistics throughout this report are taken from our 2025-26 Annual Stakeholder Survey.

88% agree or strongly agree that we support universities' international aims.

UUKi 'listens well to its members but also provides essential policy advice and information so that HEIs [higher education institutions] can make informed strategic decisions.'

A member of UUKi's PVC Network

88% agree or strongly agree that we focus on the issues that matter most to the sector.

'The team are incredibly responsive to the sector's needs and are well connected into UK Government and relevant departments. This has been critically important because of the significant changes to policies that directly impact our international ambitions.'

Prof Jennifer Watling
Pro-Vice-Chancellor International
Manchester Metropolitan University

98% agree or strongly agree that we inform them about new opportunities and challenges.

UUKi 'keeps the sector informed of current thinking in government(s) and provides advance warning of changes to come.'

A member of UUKi's PVC Network

87% agree or strongly agree that we represent the interests of their institution.

UUKi 'represents the requirements and interests of the sector to the UK Government expertly, professionally and consistently.'

Prof Amelia Hadfield
Associate Vice-President of External Engagement
University of Surrey

85% agree or strongly agree that we influence UK Government policy in international higher education.

UUKi 'is a respected and supported policy membership organisation with a critical ambassadorial role between the government and the HE [higher education] sector, helping to lobby and navigate policy changes to better strengthen and develop the mission of providing quality HE provision in the UK and around the world.'

Louise Blair
Director of Partnerships
University of Essex

96% agree or strongly agree that we provide access to analysis, insights and shared experience.

UUKi produces 'excellent reports and insight into key areas (e.g. TNE) allowing institutions to quickly understand where they stand in relation to the rest of the sector.'

Prof Michael Scott
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)
University of Warwick

96% agree or strongly agree that we communicate clearly and in a timely way.

UUKi provides 'rapid and valuable updates on policy changes and threats to our business.'

Prof David Brooksbrank
Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Business, Global and Civic Engagement
Cardiff Metropolitan University

87% agree or strongly agree that we promote the UK HE sector overseas.

'A highly respected voice with partners overseas, working closely with British Council and STN [Science and Technology Network].'

A member of UUKi's PVC Network



To enable sustainable international student recruitment

In a year of considerable policy change, our work has focused on shaping the implementation of reforms outlined in the Immigration White Paper, increasing transparency and data sharing between government and the sector, and strengthening the system to prevent further policy and regulatory measures on international students. We also influenced the development of the **International Education Strategy 2026**, ensuring that there is a clear signal that international students continue to be welcome in the UK, a commitment to the Graduate route, and to promoting a sustainable and responsible approach to recruitment.

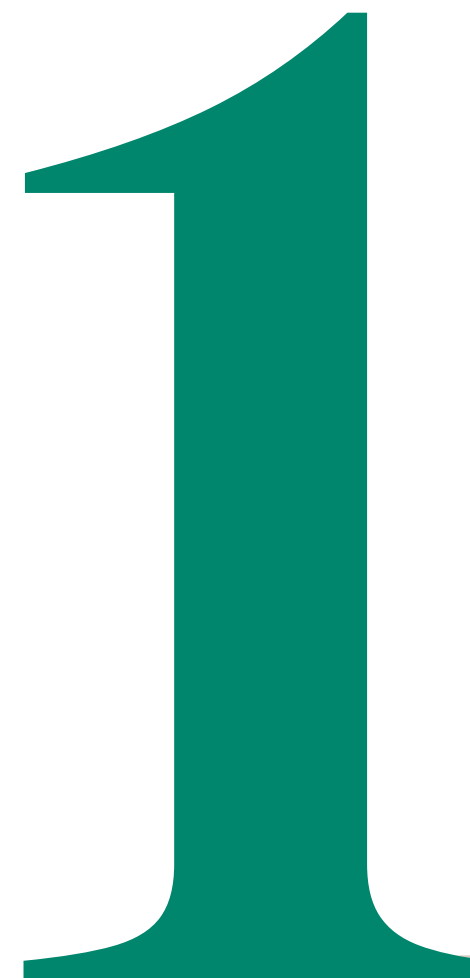
This year, we have:

- **Been appointed the UK higher education sector lead on the ESAG.** We established a sector-wide Recruitment Reference Group and are consulting closely with key TNE and outward student mobility partners and members to ensure holistic sector representation. See page 10 for further detail.
- **Helped to secure a delay to the implementation of the international student levy.** We published our **response to the technical consultation outlining our assessment of the levy's impact**, and proposed exemptions and mitigations.

- **Helped secure staggered implementation of the Basic Compliance Assessment (BCA) metrics and clearer transitional measures** including extension of discretionary assessment to include red-amber-green (RAG) statuses as well as sanctions.
- **Convened a member visit from the Minister for Migration and Citizenship and a roundtable with member vice-chancellors**, highlighting the sector's work in support of visa compliance and support needed from the Home Office and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).
- **Established a cross-government working group** on student visa risk and data sharing, bringing together Universities UK (UUK) members, the Department for Education (DfE), and the Home Office to explore potential enhancements to risk and data sharing following the changes to BCA thresholds.
- **Worked with government to embed the Agent Quality Framework (AQF) into UKVI sponsor guidance**, to help maintain the highest standards of agent management.
- **Secured publication of the Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) report** on their inspection of administrative reviews. This resulted in commitments to improved data transparency, quality assurance and Customer Service Standard (CSS) for administrative review decisions.

- **Coordinated, on behalf of the sector, a workshop with UKVI** on inputs to caseworker training materials to improve understanding and support more consistent decision-making.
- **Prevented further restrictions to student dependant visas through proactive engagement to manage Master of Research (MRes) growth**, which has been instrumental in securing a more targeted approach from the Home Office to concerns over the scale and pace of growth in MRes courses, rather than introducing a blanket ban.
- **Delivered our fourth International Student Recruitment Conference** at Woburn House, welcoming 68 delegates and speakers from 49 member universities - including six Scottish institutions, two Welsh and one Northern Irish.

80%
agree or strongly agree that we provide insight and support on the growth and diversification of onshore international student recruitment



In focus:

International Education Strategy

In January, the government launched its new *International Education Strategy*, setting out its plans for UK international education and how it will support the sector to access global opportunities. We welcome the renewed commitment to fostering the global reach, reputation and impact of our universities, and were pleased to see many of the priorities we set out in our 2024 *Blueprint for change* reflected in the strategy.

The strategy sets a vision for the contribution universities make to the UK's international success. It rightly recognises the vital connection between education and research, while highlighting the value of international experiences for UK students, the growth of TNE, and the importance of a sustainable approach to international student recruitment.

We're playing a dual role in supporting the delivery of the strategy: firstly, as a core member, we represent the UK higher education sector on ESAG, the body that provides strategic oversight of the International Education Strategy. We act as the lead voice for universities, bringing sector perspectives to government, identifying opportunities and challenges, contributing to policy development, and helping coordinate action across the education sector.

Secondly, we're responsible for leading the development, coordination, monitoring and reporting of the higher education Sector Action Plan. This involves working closely with our partners and colleagues across the sector to:

- translate the strategy's ambitions into practical support for the higher education sector
- support sustainable international student recruitment
- strengthen the UK's international education partnerships and global reputation
- grow education exports, including TNE
- track progress and report outcomes back to ESAG and government

This work will continue over the next year as the Sector Action Plans are delivered.



To enhance the scale and impact of international research and innovation (R&I) collaboration

Over the past year, we have prioritised strengthening the evidence base for the UK's participation in Horizon Europe, while positioning the UK higher education sector as a valued and trusted partner in shaping the development of the next framework programme, Framework Programme 10 (FP10). We engaged proactively on research security and foreign interference, ensuring that the sector remains at the forefront of emerging developments (see page 24 for further detail). We also engaged proactively with the next phase of the International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF) to highlight key challenges and maximise opportunities for our members.

This year, we have:

- Helped increase the UK's participation in Horizon Europe by working closely with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the UK Academies and the EU Delegation to the UK. Key contributions included speaking at three UKRI regional events, delivering Horizon Europe and associated country sessions at UUK's annual Research and Innovation Conference and UUKi's International Higher Education Forum (IHEF) 2026, and delivering a UK–Poland research collaboration webinar attended by more than 300 participants, aimed at strengthening Horizon Europe partnerships.
- Worked closely with key UK and Brussels stakeholders to demonstrate the value that like-minded trusted countries such as the UK can bring to FP10. See page 14 for further detail.
- Published our *Realising our potential: UK participation in Horizon Europe report*, drawing on over a decade of data on UK engagement in the framework programmes, from the start of Horizon 2020 in 2014 to the UK's first year of association to Horizon Europe in 2024. See page 21 for further detail.

- Highlighted the value that trusted, like-minded associated countries such as the UK can bring to the EU by contributing to broader EU policy discussion through a submission to the European Research Area (ERA) Act consultation.
- Worked with multiple Science and Technology Network (STN) teams and UKRI overseas offices to coordinate activities including the UK–India Research and Innovation Corridor that culminated in a joint research collaboration webinar in July that brought together over 100 researchers.
- Shaped the development of the *UK International Education Strategy 2026*, including securing greater recognition of the central role of global research and innovation.

83%
agree or strongly agree that we provide insight and support on enhancing the scale and impact of international research collaboration and partnerships



In focus: Positioning the UK as a trusted partner in shaping FP10

This year we worked closely with key UK and Brussels stakeholders to demonstrate the value that like-minded trusted countries such as the UK can bring to FP10, building on *Our vision for Framework Programme 10* published in September 2024.

To support this, we delivered a delegation to Brussels, which included meetings with the EU's Deputy Director General Research and Development, Members of the EU Parliament (MEP) team, UK Mission to EU, European Universities Association (EUA), Swiss and Norwegian Delegations to EU, and KoWi German Brussels office.

We also partnered with the EUA to co-deliver an EU Parliament session on '**Harnessing international collaboration in research and innovation for competitiveness**', working closely with the UK Mission to EU. The session was hosted by Eszter Lakos MEP, with keynotes from Christian Ehler MEP and René Repasi MEP (FP10 rapporteurs).

Our sector's voice is being heard in Brussels. However, as FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund continue to take shape, both the relationship between these programmes and the implications for associated countries remain unclear. During this critical period of negotiations, we will continue to engage proactively with the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States to help maximise the attractiveness of association for the UK.

In focus: Our strategic partnerships

This year, we've offered a range of opportunities to our members and the sector through our strategic partnerships.

We've continued to support and grow research partnerships with French universities and grown capacity within UK institutions to maximise our participation in Horizon Europe. We've created global mobility opportunities for UK academics and facilitated overseas opportunities for undergraduate students to Canada through the Globalink Research Internship (GRI) scheme. We've also supported DfE with their work on foreign interference, being able to bring together the sector to collect feedback on interventions that would make a real difference (see page 24 for further detail).

We've designed and delivered funded programmes on behalf of a range of partners, both in the UK and overseas. This includes DSIT, DfE and Mitacs Canada. The Mitacs GRI programme secured £1.1 million funding for members and supported 187 undergraduate students at UK universities to participate in a 12-week fully funded research internship at a Canadian institution.

As an ISPF delivery partner, we've supported 11 UK higher education institutional projects to strengthen their partnerships with French counterparts while preparing to submit Horizon Europe bids through our UK-France Science, Innovation and Technology Researcher Mobility Scheme. We've made a further 20 awards under the second call of the UK-France Science, Innovation and Technology Pump-Priming Scheme funded via DSIT's Tactical Fund. We also continued to receive ISPF funding for the UK-Korea International Research Partnership in Engineering Biology and secured funding for the UK-Republic of Korea Collaboration in Engineering Biology and AI for Gene and Cell Therapy. Through our ISPF and Tactical Fund work, our members had access to over £1.2 million in 2025-26.

'The [UK-France Science, Innovation and Technology Researcher Mobility] scheme has been highly valuable in enabling meaningful collaboration between UK-France at an early stage of my independent research career. It provided the flexibility and resources to initiate new partnerships, explore complementary expertise, and generate preliminary data that is now feeding into larger joint proposals. The streamlined application and reporting process made it accessible and efficient, especially for early career researchers balancing multiple commitments. One of the most positive aspects is the emphasis on mobility and exchange, which fosters genuine relationship building and knowledge sharing. This not only strengthens research outcomes but also provides career development opportunities for postdocs and students involved.'

'The scheme has been highly valuable in enabling early-stage international collaboration that would have been difficult to establish through standard project funding alone. In particular, support for researcher mobility, pilot research activity, and joint scientific events provided an effective mechanism for building relationships, aligning research priorities, and generating tangible collaborative outputs between the UK and South Korea. The flexibility of the scheme was a particular strength, as it allowed the partnership to respond to emerging opportunities and refine activities as the collaboration developed.'



Photo credit: European Parliament

To grow impactful transnational education supported by effective domestic regulation

UK TNE has reached a significant milestone. With student numbers studying for UK qualifications overseas now exceeding the number of international students studying in the UK, TNE has become one of the most important dimensions of the UK's global higher education offer. The sector has responded to this sustained international demand for TNE by developing a diverse range of partnership models, branch campuses and distance learning provision.

Throughout the year, we've remained a leading source of expertise, insight and advocacy for the sector, helping universities navigate a rapidly evolving policy and operating environment. Through our research, convening activities, international engagement and policy work, we've supported institutions to identify opportunities, manage risks and build sustainable, high-quality TNE partnerships.

We have continued to work closely with governments, regulators and sector partners across the UK and internationally, ensuring that the interests of UK universities are represented and that UK TNE remains recognised as a trusted and impactful model for international higher education collaboration.

This year, we have:

- **Launched the UUKi TNE Network**, creating a dedicated community for TNE professionals. Building on the success of existing sector groups, the network has grown to more than 1,000 members, providing a platform for knowledge exchange, peer learning and collaboration across the TNE community.
- **Delivered our Transnational Education Conference**, hosted by the University of London at Senate House. Our largest TNE conference to date brought together 184 delegates and speakers from 78 member universities (including three from Scotland, four from Wales and one from Northern Ireland), with policymakers and international partners to explore emerging trends, opportunities and challenges.
- **Published our 10th anniversary *Scale of UK TNE report***. See page 20 for further detail.
- **Commissioned a refresh of QAA's UK TNE Quality Scheme**, supporting the development of a sector-led framework to strengthen the quality, reputation and international recognition of UK TNE. This work represents an important step towards providing greater assurance and visibility of the high standards that underpin UK TNE partnerships globally.

- **Concluded the work of the UUKi TNE Monitoring and Evaluation Group** following the successful outcome of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Aggregate Offshore Record (AOR) review. The group helped secure a proportionate approach to TNE data collection and supported sector preparedness for changes to offshore data reporting from 2026–27.
- **Participated in outbound delegations and strategic engagements** in Egypt, Nigeria, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Uzbekistan and the Netherlands, helping universities strengthen existing partnerships, identify new opportunities for collaboration and deepen engagement in key priority markets.
- **Delivered a programme of targeted webinars and market intelligence activities** focused on opportunities and developments in Europe, China, Myanmar and Mauritius, providing institutions with expert insights into evolving policy environments, partnership opportunities and market trends.
- **Supported government and British Council in coordinating a delegation of higher education leaders to Los Angeles** as part of Greater Together LA, the largest-ever UK trade and cultural delegation to the US.

83%
agree or strongly agree that we provide insight and support for sustainable growth in TNE



In focus: Our networks and events

Networks

Convening the sector remains central to our work, enabling us not only to share the latest developments and insights, but also to facilitate peer learning and remain closely connected to the priorities and experiences of our members. Throughout the year, we brought together university leaders and higher education professionals through a range of thematic and strategic networks, creating opportunities to exchange expertise and ideas.

More than 700 representatives from over 130 universities participated in network meetings, delegations and other network activities during the year. Among them, members and subscribers from 89 universities across all four UK nations engaged with our PVC Network, which brings together those leading international strategy within their institutions. Alongside its regular quarterly meetings in 2025–26, the network convened additional sessions focused on the International Education Strategy and TNE operations in the Middle East.



740
representatives

131
member and subscriber
institutions participated in our
2025–26 network meetings

96%
value UUKi's PVC Network
meetings and mailers

**One of the things UUKi does well
is 'convening the sector through
the PVCi meetings.'**

Joanne Purves
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships and Global
Engagement), University of Salford

Conferences and events

Our conference and events programme continued to grow significantly throughout 2025–26, providing a respected platform for high-level strategic dialogue between senior representatives from government, universities and key sector organisations. We remained committed to supporting institutions across the UK's devolved nations, welcoming strong participation from Scottish and Welsh universities. Over the year, 33 delegates from Scottish institutions and 25 from Welsh institutions attended our events.

Across the programme, we welcomed 1,922 delegates, collaborated with 41 partner and sponsor organisations, and hosted 178 speakers, reflecting the breadth of engagement across the international higher education sector.

Several of our events also continued to evolve. The Transnational Education Conference expanded to a one-and-a-half-day format, with an exclusive members-only afternoon on the first day before opening to the wider sector on day two. This year's Global Mobility Conference was an important and well-timed event, following the UK's re-association to Erasmus+. Speakers included the Head of International Cooperation Unit European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, and the Directors of the Dutch and German National Agencies for Erasmus+ as well as senior officials from the DfE who were able to provide their high-level insight into maximising UK participation in 2027, and the future Erasmus+ programme.

Furthermore, our flagship IHEF event became our largest forum to date, bringing together 412 delegates from 33 countries for two days of discussion, collaboration and networking. Highlights from the agenda included a ministerial address from Baroness Jacqui Smith of Malvern, Minister for Skills, Department for Education; Department for Work and Pensions and a keynote address from Pedro Serrano, Ambassador of the European Union, EU Delegation.

'A fantastic event that stayed with me long after it ended. The insightful discussions and exchange of ideas were incredibly valuable, and I am looking forward to continuing those conversations with the new contacts and connections I made throughout the forum.'

IHEF delegate

'The venue and organisation were outstanding, but what really stood out was the quality of the conversations and networking. It was a great opportunity to reconnect with long-standing colleagues and friends while also building new relationships across the sector. IHEF is one of the best international education conferences I attend: large enough to attract influential voices and diverse perspectives, but still manageable, engaging and genuinely collaborative rather than overwhelming.'

IHEF delegate

1,922 attendees

178 expert speakers

141 universities attended
our 2025–26 events

96%
value our conferences and events

In focus:

Key research, reports and publications

The scale of UK higher education transnational education 2023-24

This year saw the publication of the 10th anniversary edition of our *Scale of UK TNE report* series. The report uses data collected from universities by HESA to provide insights on the evolution of UK TNE through the past decade. It delivers a comprehensive overview of how and where students are pursuing UK qualifications around the world.

The report showcases the breadth of the UK's TNE offer to global partners, while also being a useful strategic planning tool for international teams across the sector. Accompanied by interactive data visualisations and a promotional campaign, the report also includes dedicated analysis of provision delivered by Scottish and Welsh universities.

Key findings:

- **173 UK universities delivered TNE to 653,570 students across 231 countries and territories in the 2023-24 academic year.**
- **TNE student numbers have grown by 70% over the past decade, and there are now 36 UK universities with TNE student populations greater than 5,000.**
- **The majority of UK TNE students are located in Asia, with China (89,425), Sri Lanka (62,935) and Malaysia (43,155) hosting the largest populations.**

Realising our potential: UK participation in Horizon Europe

This report provides novel data analysis and insights from our members to evidence the UK's participation in Horizon Europe from 2014 to 2024. It also reflects on where changes may be needed and showcases the impact of work within the framework programmes to address industrial and global challenges.

We have seen a strong start to the UK's engagement in the current Horizon Europe, but there is more to be done. Recovery is uneven across pillars, with strong recovery in curiosity-driven research in Pillar I, while there is slower growth for collaborative research in Pillar II and innovation in Pillar III.

We concluded the report with a set of policy recommendations to government and universities, focused on providing long-term certainty over UK participation in Horizon Europe, strengthening support for engagement across all pillars of the programme, and maximising the benefits of association.

98%

value our production of analysis and insights

Key findings:

- **Association to Horizon Europe in 2024 has reversed a long-term downward trend in participation.**
- **Horizon Europe has a vital role in member universities' international engagement strategies.**
- **The framework programmes provide unique opportunities for collaboration with European and global partners to develop cutting-edge science and bring world-leading talent to the UK.**



To increase the proportion of students with international experience, especially those from low-participation backgrounds

Building on the recommendations from our *Blueprint for change*, we have continued to advocate for sustainable funding for global mobility and UK association to Erasmus+. Our research was cited in the *UK and EU agreement to join the Erasmus+ programme for 2027*, and our contribution was recognised by both the EU Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Pedro Serrano, and Baroness Jacqui Smith of Malvern, Minister for Skills, Department for Education at IHEF.

This year, we have:

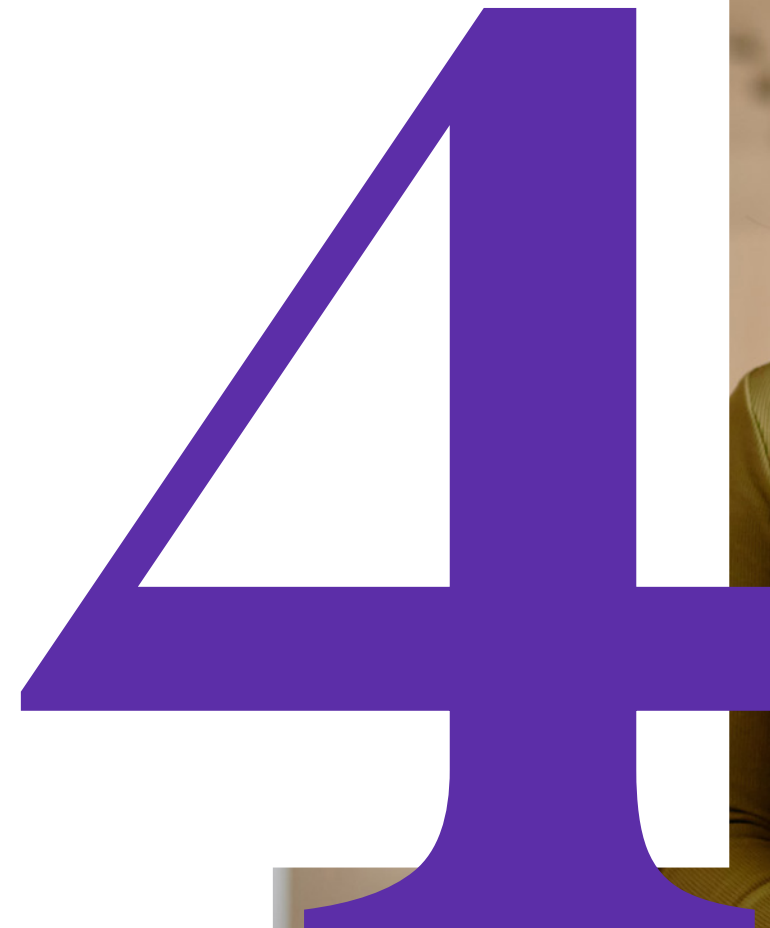
- Secured the inclusion of outward student mobility in the *UK International Education Strategy*, highlighting the value of global mobility in empowering young people.
- Influenced government consideration of re-joining Erasmus+ by providing evidence on the benefits of UK participation and sector readiness. We published a *joint statement with the European University Association* and a *response to the announcement that the UK would associate for the final year of the current Erasmus+ programme*.

- Helped shape priorities and recommendations for the Erasmus+ successor programme. We engaged extensively with UK and European stakeholders, published a *position paper on the Erasmus+ successor programme*, and provided insight and evidence for both the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) consultation and DfE.
- Mobilised the sector to successfully apply for the Erasmus Charter of Higher Education (ECHE), working closely with the EU Delegation to the UK, the European Commission and DfE. We published a *frequently asked questions page on Erasmus+*, delivered a series of webinars, provided individual support, and collaborated with both higher education and further education partners. The high number of completed ECHE applications was welcomed by both the UK and EU governments.
- Established a Mobility Advisory Group to provide strategic direction to our advocacy and influencing work and facilitate direct member engagement with officials.

- Ensured members' positions on Erasmus+, the Youth Experience Scheme and EU fee status were reflected in the *UK-EU Youth Experience Scheme report* recommendations by contributing to the UK Trade and Business Commission inquiry.
- Delivered our third Global Mobility Conference at Woburn House, welcoming 108 delegates and speakers from 66 member universities (including four from Scotland, and six from Wales), with speakers from the European Commission, DfE and EU National Agencies.
- Produced evidence to government on the value of the Turing Scheme and advocated for its continuation in 2027. While the government has confirmed that 2026 will be the scheme's final year, the insights we developed will inform the approach to diversity and inclusion in Erasmus+.
- Facilitated peer support for members navigating the Turing Scheme 2026–27 appeals process.

71%

agree or strongly agree that we provide insight and support for increasing proportions of outward student mobility and international experience



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

The global environment continues to develop in complexity, presenting new challenges for universities to ensure their global engagement remains open, secure and sustainable. We work closely with other sector bodies, government departments and national technical authorities to empower universities to mitigate risks and remain open and collaborative.

This year, we have:

- **Influenced the creation and shaping of a new Research Security Fund.** We highlighted the need for additional funding to support universities' capability and capacity to protect their research and continue to work closely with government to ensure this funding and their evolving Research Security Strategy deliver for our members.
- **Contributed to international dialogue on knowledge and research security** hosted by government with the Netherlands and Nordic and Baltic states. Our Director, Jamie Arrowsmith, spoke at the European Commission's **Flagship Conference on Research Security**, and we connected with colleagues across Europe and beyond at the inaugural **European Network Conference on Research Security**. Our ongoing participation continues to strengthen the protection of UK and European research for mutual benefit.
- **Advanced a collaborative, evidence-informed approach to UK-China relations** across the higher education sector and government, including the submission of evidence to the **Business and Trade Committee's inquiry on China and the UK economy** and joining a Great Britain-China Centre (GBCC) delegation to Beijing, alongside government officials, to support UK-China relations.
- **Co-developed and co-delivered a DfE event on foreign interference in UK higher education**, attended by approximately 80 vice-chancellors and joined by the Ministers of State for Security and Skills, alongside government officials, the National Protective Security Authority and National Cyber Security Centre. This event introduced the new government-led Academic Interference Reporting Route (AIRR), which provides senior university executives with direct access to government support for navigating concerns about foreign interference.

- **Delivered a UUKi-led, DfE-commissioned research project on foreign interference in UK higher education** and measures needed to mitigate risks and increase sector resilience. Over three months in 2026, we consulted over 100 stakeholders through 12 in-person and virtual engagements. Our report included recommendations for universities, the wider sector and government. We emphasised the need to protect autonomy and academic freedom, address systemic challenges and bolster security arrangements. We continue to collaborate with government to deliver coordinated UK-wide security service protections and provision.

93%

agree or strongly agree that we provide insight/support for understanding and managing challenges around knowledge security and risk in internationalisation

5



In focus:

Responding to humanitarian crises

We support UK universities in responding to humanitarian crises that affect students, academics and higher education institutions worldwide. By convening partners, sharing information and facilitating coordinated action, we've helped the sector respond effectively and sustainably to emerging challenges.

Throughout this year, we have worked with DfE, the UK Higher Education Humanitarian Group, and other key partners including Friends of Palestinian Universities (FPU), the Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara), Mosaik and the British Council, to help coordinate a cross-sector response to global conflicts and their impact on higher education.

Key activities included:

- **Coordinating the sector's response to the conflict in the Middle East.** We communicated available policy and operational flexibilities to members and worked with the DfE and sector partners to assess the scale and impact of disruption. This helped inform ongoing discussions about where additional support and flexibility might be required.
- **Supporting universities in their efforts to help ensure students from Gaza could take up their offers to study in the UK.** Working with colleagues across DfE and the Home Office, we played a key role in convening members and coordinating sector intelligence to inform the UK Government's evacuation strategy. More than 100 students were able to begin their studies at UK universities, with a second phase being launched this summer.

- **Supporting the development of the UK–Palestine (UK–PAL) Consortium.** We worked alongside the sector-led UK Higher Education Humanitarian Group, on which we sit as an observer, to help establish UK–PAL. The consortium aims to build long-term, equitable partnerships between UK and Palestinian higher education institutions. We participated in the UK–PAL working group and selection committee, supporting the appointment of the University of Edinburgh as the consortium's first host institution and the selection of its 12 founding members.
- **Contributing to Mosaik's Global Response Platform.** We supported the launch of Mosaik's Global Response Platform (GRP) and joined its Advisory Council. The GRP provides a centralised mechanism through which universities can coordinate support for students affected by crises, with an initial focus on Afghanistan, India, Sudan and Myanmar, as well as for displaced students in Egypt.
- **Continuing to promote the UK–Ukraine Twinning scheme,** following the government's 100-Year Partnership Agreement, including publishing blogs of successful partnerships.

IHEF also included a session exploring the role of UK higher education in providing safety, opportunity and support for students and academics affected by conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Chaired by Professor Tim Jones, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, we showcased perspectives from beneficiaries of support initiatives across Ukraine, Afghanistan and beyond. Participants shared examples of innovative approaches that continue to create places of sanctuary, both physically and virtually, for displaced students and scholars.



The five areas of our activity that members most valued this year are:

1. Holding network meetings and sending regular email updates.
2. Convening the sector to discuss the impact of policy changes and global challenges.
3. Advocating to government on behalf of the sector and influencing policy on international HE issues.
4. Informing members of new opportunities, challenges and policy development.
5. Producing analysis and insights, including research reports and publications.

Our funders and sponsors

Our work is generously supported by universities, our core grant funders, and through partnership and sponsorship from a wide range of commercial partners.

Core grant funders

Our thanks go to our core grant funders, whose ongoing support makes sure that we're able to continue acting as the authoritative voice on internationalisation for universities in all four nations of the UK.



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