



Universities UK
International



Image: Ryunosuke Kikuno (Unsplash)

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



Dear colleagues,

UUKi exists to ensure our universities thrive internationally in education, research, and the exchange of staff and students. This international engagement and collaboration contributes immeasurably to the global success of the UK higher education sector.

The past year has been another challenging one, as we continue to work to lead the sector through and beyond both the UK's exit from the EU and the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year, we have also revisited our strategic aims, as part of a refresh of our strategy through to 2023.

Our key aims are:

- To grow and diversify onshore recruitment of international students
- To support the development of sustainable, scalable transnational education
- To enhance the scale and impact of international research collaboration
- To increase the proportion of students with international experience, especially those from low participation backgrounds
- To support UK universities to develop the capabilities, understanding and resilience to meet new challenges

Thinking back to this year's International Higher Education Forum, and the heated debate around whether everything or nothing has changed, our challenge ahead remains to continue to convene the sector and enable our members to reset and rethink their international strategies for a new era in higher education.

I am very proud of what we have achieved over the past year, but that success is only made possible by the strength of the links we have developed throughout the UK university sector, from Vice-Chancellors to outward mobility co-ordinators, from Pro-Vice Chancellors (International) and International Directors to research managers. We succeed when we can act on the insight you provide to influence the conditions in which they 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.

Vivienne Stern

Director, Universities UK International



100%

of UUKi members agree or strongly agree that UUKi works effectively to influence policy on higher education and international issues*

*Look out for key statistics in pull outs like these throughout the report which come from our Annual Stakeholder Survey with respondents from 74 universities.

“As a voice for the sector UUKi is unparalleled. Lobbying, promoting and creating platforms for meaningful engagement with partners, and with one another, are key facets of UUKi’s strengths.”

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

LEADING THROUGH CRISIS

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, UUKi has been leading sector-wide initiatives and lobbying to help higher education institutions overcome ongoing challenges related to the pandemic.

Key outcomes included:

- We obtained and maintained key immigration concessions from the Home Office, which allowed international students flexibility throughout the year, including the ability to study online and to be eligible for the Graduate route.
- We provided advice and guidance to members on how to support international student travel to the UK in 2020-21, including supporting self-isolation of students travelling to the UK, and the arrangement and coordination of charter flights.

96%

of UUKi members agree or strongly agree that UUKi supports their institution through access to intelligence, analysis and shared experience



“UUKi is doing an outstanding job, and I couldn’t have asked for more in the last year. UUKi has been able to innovate and change approach during Covid to maintain momentum and ensure active engagement and participation by members, and I have greatly appreciated all the efforts of the UUKi team in supporting the sector.”

Saskia Hansen,
*Pro-Vice Chancellor (International),
Aston University*

Image: Chris Montgomery (Unsplash)



- We provided, and continue to provide, insights, guidance and briefings for members on the latest issues, including our Covid-19 FAQs, best practice guidance on how to support international students experiencing hardship, and regular updates at all member networks.
- We developed and led the *#WeAreTogether* campaign, which reassured students to continue with their plans to study with a UK university during Covid-19. We are delighted that the campaign won ‘**Marketing Campaign of the Year**’ at the **PIEoneer Awards** in September 2021.



OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU

During the 2020/21 academic year, UUKi continued to work to lead a way forward for the UK higher education sector post-Brexit.

Highlights included:

- We supported universities to plan for various Brexit scenarios including a potential 'no deal'. More than 2,400 attendees joined a UUKi webinar series discussing details of the deal, once reached.
- We played a pivotal role in helping to secure both association to Horizon Europe as part of the EU UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and additional funding to support this participation.

“Well informed and intelligent support, listening and responding to the whole sector, across the devolved nations and the different types of institutions.”

Dr Aulay Mackenzie,
*Pro-Vice Chancellor (International),
Wrexham Glyndwr University*





- We used our wide European networks to advocate for the UK's inclusion in Horizon and Erasmus, and to ensure that European counterparts understood the consequences of Brexit and how they could continue to work with UK partners.
- We led activity to ensure there was a national replacement for Erasmus+, after association was not agreed during the TCA negotiations. That activity resulted in the launch of the Turing Scheme.

99%

of UUKi members agree or strongly agree that UUKi creates a network of colleagues for sharing good practice

ENABLING INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES

UUKi continued to deliver on its strategic objectives, which were refreshed in the 2020/21 academic year.

Key achievements included:

- We are continuing to support and influence the implementation of the UK's International Education Strategy through representing the sector at the Minister-led Education Sector Advisory Group and working with other members to identify barriers to recruitment in priority markets.
- We published *'Why aren't we second? Part 1'*, to better understand in which of the world's top 21 sending countries and territories the UK is underperforming. The report identified three categories of markets in which the UK should maintain, regain or develop its market position. This report was instrumental in influencing the newly announced priority markets in the International Education Strategy.
- We regularly convened the sector at our networks, events and other forums. Our International Higher Education Forum (IHEF) was bigger than ever in the 2020/21 academic year and was awarded 3rd place for **'International Event of the Year'** and was nominated for **'Best Leadership Event of the Year'** at the **International Corporate Events (ICE) Awards**.

 **SHORTLISTED
ICE AWARDS 21**





Image: Redd (Unsplash)

100%

of UUKi members agree or strongly agree that UUKi supports their institution by informing them of new opportunities, challenges and policy developments

- We published new guidance to support universities to better safeguard themselves against security-related risks that can arise from international collaborations.
- We published several reports on transnational education. One of these forms the basis of a sector-wide action plan to develop and communicate a narrative around online delivery, and to collaborate more effectively with other sector organisations to drive innovation in this area.
- We supported outward student mobility. Our Study in India programme enabled 10 UK universities to co-deliver 11 virtual mobility programmes with their Indian partners for 510 students in total (241 UK students), despite the challenges of Covid-19.

A photograph of four diverse university students in a bright, modern hallway. From left to right: a man in a grey flat cap and striped shirt, a woman in a light green top, a man with glasses in a blue shirt, and a woman with curly hair in a white top. They are all smiling and appear to be in conversation. The background shows large windows and architectural details of the building.

“UUKi is at its best when it’s advocating for the UK sector in a balanced and politically astute way, ensuring the sector is well briefed on opportunities and external changes.”

*Ailsa Chambers,
Director of International,
University of Birmingham*

95%

of UUKi members agree or strongly agree that UUKi supports their institution to develop the understanding and resilience to meet new and emerging challenges

#WeAreTogether CAMPAIGN

UUKi is proud to have won 'Marketing Campaign of the Year' at the PIEoneer Awards 2021 for our *#WeAreTogether* international reassurance campaign.

HIGHLIGHTS

- We created the *#WeAreTogether* campaign in response to Covid-19, to provide reassurance and support to prospective EU and international students, who were getting ready to study in the UK during the pandemic.
- The campaign was student led, with current international students giving their honest, open and unfiltered views on their experience of studying at a UK university during the pandemic.
- *#WeAreTogether* delivered more than 100 student testimony videos, achieving more than 22 million video views in total.

"The *#WeAreTogether* campaign allowed EU and international students to showcase how their UK institutions had stepped up to support them in very challenging times. I've no doubt this campaign contributed to ensuring many international students came to study in the UK in 2020, and Andy and his team did an incredible (and impossible!) job."

Mark Garratt,
Chair, CASE Europe,
Universities Marketing Forum



- More than 90 UK universities joined **#WeAreTogether**. Organisations across the sector, such as IDP Connect, UCAS, British Council, QS and Study Portals supported the campaign, amplifying its content to future international students; Ministers, including Michelle Donelan MP, used the hashtag.
- From a survey of more than 2,000 prospective international students, 67% said that **#WeAreTogether** had made them feel more confident to continue their plans to study in the UK.

“The predicted fall in international student numbers to the UK shortly after the pandemic hit was extremely worrying for all higher education institutions. UUKi really stepped up to the challenge, delivering a student-led, sector-owned campaign to mitigate the worst effects and offer reassurance to those students who had concerns.”

Janet Beer,
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Liverpool

92%

of UUKi members agree or strongly agree that UUKi supports their institutions by effectively promoting the UK sector overseas



thank you, librarians!
#WeAreTogether

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

UUKi is thrilled to have been awarded 3rd place for ‘Best International Event’ and to have been nominated for ‘Best Leadership Event’ at the ICE Awards 2021 for our International Higher Education Forum (IHEF).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Our International Higher Education Forum (IHEF) brings together senior leaders in international higher education from across UK universities to debate and discuss the latest challenges facing the sector.
- This year, the event provided a space for our 140+ UK university members to discuss and clarify their international strategies moving forward after Covid-19.

“The range of speakers in leadership positions at institutions from across the world added so much value to IHEF 2021, enabling robust discussion and debate around the biggest challenges in international higher education. Congratulations to the UUKi team on delivering such an impactful events programme.”

Professor Saul Tendler,
*Deputy Vice-Chancellor
and Provost, University of York*



- We had more than 530 attendees (over 100 more than we'd ever had before); we put on the biggest programme we've ever had, with more than 80 speakers across more than 25 sessions.
- Over 300 delegates rated the event 4.5 out of 5. This was both the highest number of delegates that had ever completed feedback, and also the highest rating we'd ever had. We also received excellent anecdotal feedback, including from delegates who had previously not attended one of our events.

96%

of UUKi members found UUKi conferences, such as the International Higher Education Forum (IHEF), valuable or very valuable



Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding
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hefcw



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