



**Universities UK
International**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20





Dear colleagues,

UUKi exists to ensure our universities thrive internationally in education, research, and the exchange of staff and students.

This year has been a truly unique one, and our dominant priorities have been leading the sector through the UK's exit from the EU and the COVID-19 pandemic, while continuing to advance towards our strategic aims 2017-2020:

1. Attract a growing number of international students to the UK
2. Increase international research collaboration
3. Double outbound student mobility from the UK
4. Increase the number of students studying for UK qualifications overseas

This wasn't the year we had imagined, but our purpose remained consistent – to ensure the UK's universities are supported, informed and represented with the aim to maximise their international success. In many ways, our work across the sector has ensured we have been more together than ever before.

I am very proud of what we have achieved, 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. I am also delighted that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all come together to further strengthen these links.

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

Vivienne Stern

Director, Universities UK International

WHAT DO OUR STAKEHOLDERS THINK?

FROM OUR ANNUAL SURVEY WITH RESPONDENTS FROM 85 UK UNIVERSITIES

96% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI DOES AN EXCELLENT JOB IN SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES' INTERNATIONAL AIMS

94% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI WORKS EFFECTIVELY TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE UK POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

94% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY WITH MY INSTITUTION

93% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI IS ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY OF PEERS TO EXCHANGE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

92% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI SUPPORTS MY INSTITUTION THROUGH ACCESS TO INTELLIGENCE, ANALYSIS AND SHARED EXPERIENCE

91% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI SUPPORTS MY INSTITUTION BY INFORMING US OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

89% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI WORKS EFFECTIVELY TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE POLICY IN, AND IN RELATION TO EUROPE, AND UUKI SUPPORTS UNIVERSITIES THROUGH THE BREXIT PROCESS

89% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI WORKS EFFECTIVELY TO PROMOTE THE UK SECTOR OVERSEAS (WORKING WITH PARTNERS INCLUDING THE BRITISH COUNCIL)

80% AGREE/
STRONGLY
AGREE

UUKI HELPED MY INSTITUTION RESPOND TO COVID-19 THROUGH POLICY INFLUENCE AND INSIGHT



“
[UUKi] enables universities to deliver well beyond what they would be able to do on their own
”

– **Richard Wells**, Vice Principal for Internationalisation, University of Aberdeen

SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS THROUGH COVID-19



IN NUMBERS

30K

OUR COVID-19 INTERNATIONAL FAQs PAGE, WHICH ADDRESSES OUR MEMBERS' CONCERNS, HAS BEEN ACCESSED ALMOST 30,000 TIMES

2M

WORKING WITH COLLEAGUES ACROSS THE SECTOR, WE LAUNCHED THE #WEARETOGETHER CAMPAIGN, AIMED AT HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT VOICE TO REASSURE INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS AND OFFER HOLDERS TO CONTINUE WITH THEIR PLANS TO STUDY IN THE UK. THE CAMPAIGN HAS SEEN MORE THAN 2 MILLION VIDEO VIEWS

HIGHLIGHTS

UUKi responded quickly to assist the sector as the Covid-19 pandemic emerged. Through our co-ordination of a cross-sector working group and working closely with the UK government and other key partners, UUKi has:

1. Secured substantial policy change

Including key immigration concessions such as:

- Ensuring Tier 4 students can continue to study on distance or blended programmes.
- Ensuring those commencing their studies outside of the UK will be eligible for the Graduate route when introduced.
- Securing the extension of the Graduate route to three years for PhD students.

2. Launched the WeAreTogether campaign

- The campaign has reached over 6m people with over 2m video views to date since its launch in June, and continues at pace. Over 90 universities have been using the hashtag on social media.



- Vivienne Stern has spoken at several live online events with applicants and offer holders, directly reaching an audience of more than 250,000.

- The campaign has helped 67% of surveyed prospective international students feel more confident to continue with their plans to study in the UK after engaging with the #WeAreTogether campaign.

3. Provided advice, guidance and a space for the sector to collaborate

- We assembled a cross-sector working group which includes government departments, sector bodies and university representatives. This was instrumental in achieving crucial policy wins including a number of visa concessions for international students.
- We published, and regularly updated, a set of FAQs and an insights page to keep members informed on updates on UK policy, prospective student sentiment and key published resources.
- We set up a task and finish group to produce guidance for institutions on how to approach supporting arrivals from outside the UK required to enter self-isolation. We shared insights on the process for chartering aircraft and connected the sector with relevant stakeholders.

UUKi is acting as a cohesive force, helping to shape a sector wide response to the multiple crises we face, and representing the entire sector to external audiences. It is by some measure the most important agency assisting me in my area of work, and genuinely [adds value] to the sector

– **Neville Wylie**, Deputy Principal (Internationalisation) University of Stirling

Thank you for your continued support of Solent and our students. It's [#WeAreTogether] an enormously positive campaign for the sector – well done to you and your colleagues.

– **Karen Stanton**, Vice-Chancellor, Solent University

PREPARING FOR BREXIT, THE TRANSITION PERIOD AND BEYOND



IN NUMBERS

96%

96% OF OUR STAKEHOLDERS FOUND OUR BREXIT RESOURCES, INCLUDING BRIEFINGS, NO-DEAL CONTINGENCY PLANNING TOOLS, STUDENT FAQs, WEBINARS AND BREXIT ROADSHOWS VALUABLE OR VERY VALUABLE

140

UUKI SIGNED JOINT STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE UK'S FULL ASSOCIATION TO HORIZON 2020 AND ERASMUS+ WITH OVER 140 HE, RESEARCH AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

1435

OUR BREXIT WEBINAR SERIES WAS VIEWED 1435 TIMES, BY 729 ATTENDEES FROM 108 MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

HIGHLIGHTS

UUKi continued to help our members develop strong strategies in the face of Brexit uncertainty.

We:

1. Led sector-wide activities to help higher education institutions prepare for a possible no-deal exit on 31 October, and continue to provide trusted information and guidance around the future UK-EU relationship

- We secured a Business Readiness Fund (BRF) grant from BEIS with Universities Wales, Universities Scotland, and GuildHE. With funding, we delivered a UK roadshow in each of the devolved nations with BEIS, Department for Education (DfE) and UKRI experts to answer questions from HEIs on no-deal planning.
- We produced a university-wide checklist outlining steps university departments should take to prepare for a no-deal Brexit. Feedback indicated that in some institutions this work enabled structured cross-departmental work on Brexit preparation for the first time.



- We produced guidance on both transnational education regulation and immigration in the EU post-Brexit.
- We provided, and continue to provide insights, guidance and briefings for members on the UK-EU relationship, including FAQs for EA, EEA and EFTA students, a 'beyond the transition' briefing, and a webinar on the UK's new points-based immigration system.

2. Lobbied government and achieved key policy announcements

- We relaunched the #SupportStudyAbroad campaign, highlighting the broad benefits of the Erasmus+ programme and the risks of losing association, and called on government to fund study abroad opportunities should continued access to Erasmus+ not be possible. In parallel, we influenced the design and development of a national replacement scheme, should association to Erasmus not be possible, by convening a series of roundtables with DfE and member universities.

#SUPPORTSTUDYABROAD



- The DfE confirmed that students on Erasmus+ placements in England, funded under the UK's no-deal government guarantee, would continue to be eligible for the higher rate of student finance support and existing tuition fee arrangements.
- We secured confirmation that HMG will fund domestic alternatives to Horizon Europe if association is delayed or abandoned. This was announced in the R&D Roadmap in July 2020, which confirmed that funding will be made available for a UK 'Discovery Fund' to replace mono-beneficiary forms of funding and to fund UK participation in Horizon Europe on a third country basis.

3. Convened those with similar interests, in the UK and EU, around UK-EU collaboration post-Brexit:

- UUKi led on a joint statement of commitment to collaboration post-Brexit on 31 January 2020 with 40 domestic and European higher education and research organisations.
- With Wellcome Trust, UUKi developed a statement of compromise for the hurdles in the Horizon Europe association negotiations. This statement was signed by over 100 individuals and organisations based in the UK and EU, including many NRCs, Carlos Moedas, and two Nobel Prize winners.

Michel Barnier, Head of Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom at a press conference on the negotiations:

“I got a letter a few days ago on university cooperation, research, Erasmus. These are areas where we need to work in a smart way, because it’s in our common interest for the future, like with other third countries, we have worked with the UK so they can work with us on Horizon, or indeed Erasmus”

EU and UK research and higher education organisations plan a strong future relationship post Brexit

30 January 2020

International

International education



On the day that the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, higher education and research organisations from across the UK and Europe have reaffirmed their commitment to working together, and are calling on our respective governments to make this a priority as discussions about the future relationship get underway.

“The UUKi team provides invaluable business intelligence, brokers international collaboration and is a powerful lobbying voice.”

– **Scott Fleming**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Bishop Grosseteste University

“[UUKi] does a very good job of leading campaigns, collating and disseminating information.”

– **Brad MacKay**, Vice Principal (International Strategy and External Relations), University of St Andrews

TOWARDS OUR STRATEGIC AIMS, BEYOND BREXIT AND COVID-19

HIGHLIGHTS

Although it may often have felt like it, not everything this year was about Brexit and Covid-19. We had great successes outside of these areas, including towards our strategic aims:

1. Attract a growing number of international students to the UK

- After consistent lobbying from UUKi and partners, the sector saw the introduction of a two-year graduate work visa, making the UK’s post-study work offer competitive, and generating an immediate uptick in student interest in key markets. The impact of the announcement was amplified by our media campaign during a delegation to India, a market which is especially sensitive to post-study work opportunities. The campaign reached approximately 690 million people and corresponded with a spike in searches for UK courses in our target states two days before the announcement (IDP, 2019).
- In line with Action 5 of the government’s International Education Strategy, we launched a new area of work focusing on supporting international graduate employability, and put recommendations to government, sector bodies and institutions. This included a conference and a new report, produced with the support of AGCAS, UKCISA and Coventry University.

150% | 100%

FOLLOWING THE GRADUATE ROUTE ANNOUNCEMENT, INTEREST IN STUDYING IN THE UK SAW SIGNIFICANT INCREASES, PARTICULARLY IN INDIA (150%) AND NIGERIA (100%) [IDP CONNECT]

5.2%

NON-UK APPLICATIONS THROUGH UCAS WERE UP 5.2% IN 2019 COMPARED TO 2018, DRIVEN BY NON-EU GROWTH [UCAS]

Action 5, International Education Strategy: global potential, global growth

The UK government will work [with] UUKi and the sector to identify and share good practice in how universities effectively support international students into employment and further study, both here in the UK and when they return to their home nation. We will also work with the sector to enhance the evidence base on international graduate outcomes and to monitor the UK’s comparative position with respect to international student recruitment and the international student experience.

“[UUKi effects] policy changes which promote the UK as an international destination of choice.”

– **Clare Mackie**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Birmingham City University

2. Increase international research collaboration

- We achieved a five fold increase in the uptake of our Newton Fund partner matching service (compared to 2018/19), with over 200 partnerships successfully brokered between UK academics and overseas researchers across 10 calls.
- We were successful in doubling Mitacs' (Canada) commitment to fund places to enable UK students to study abroad through the Mitacs Globalink Research Internship scheme in 2021, with an increased amount of funding available (\$320,000 CAD) to UK universities.
- We launched a new Global Challenges Research Fund bulletin which, together with our Newton Fund bulletin, keeps over 4,545 subscribers up to date on the latest GCRF and Newton Fund calls. UUKi's opportunities for collaboration grid received a record number of visits – over 8,000 – a two point five fold increase compared with 2018/19.

86%

86% OF OUR STAKEHOLDERS FOUND THE SUPPORT PROVIDED AROUND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH TO BE VALUABLE OR VERY VALUABLE



3. Double outbound student mobility from the UK

- We now have 114 total university and organisational partners for the Go International: Stand Out campaign, committing to increasing the number of international opportunities available for UK students.



- We launched the final year of the Go International: Stand Out campaign with employer support, including statements of support from the Institute of Student Employers and the Confederation of British Industry. We secured 13 new university, corporate and international partnerships for the campaign, including new scholarships, discounts and online modules, bringing the total number of campaign partners to 99 universities and 15 corporate and international partners.
- We secured £155,000 in external funding to support three newly launched research projects focused on social inclusion and engagement in mobility, the impact of short-term mobility programmes, and internationalisation at home.

92%

92% OF OUR STAKEHOLDERS FOUND UUKI'S WORK ON OUTWARD STUDENT MOBILITY VALUABLE OR VERY VALUABLE

4. Increase the number of students studying for UK qualifications overseas

- We published The Scale of UK HE TNE, identifying that 142 UK universities report TNE students in 226 countries and territories worldwide, more than ever before, and that TNE is growing faster in Scotland and Wales than the rest of the UK. Alongside this, we launched a new interactive website for TNE practitioners and strategists.



- We influenced the implementation of actions 19, 20 and 21 of the International Education Strategy, shaping the review of the assessment of the economic value of TNE to the UK economy. We also collaborated with government to develop knowledge of conditions to undertake TNE in emerging TNE markets, including Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, South East Europe and India through reciprocal delegation visits, webinars and round-tables.
- 17 university representatives from four EU countries – Cyprus, Greece, Poland and Spain – attended our first European partner-matching event co-hosted with the British Council, with 171 one-to-one meetings taking place with UK representatives over four hours.
- Following a jointly run UUKi/GuildHE/QAA consultation on Future Approaches to the External Quality Enhancement of UK Higher Education Transnational Education, we commissioned QAA to develop a UK-wide system to enhance the quality of TNE, that includes in-country activity and is economically sustainable. This system will ensure the positioning of UK universities as partners of choice globally, with a focus on continuous improvement.

93%

93% OF STAKEHOLDERS FOUND OUR TNE WORKSHOPS, EVENTS AND E-GROUP UPDATES VALUABLE OR VERY VALUABLE

Action 21, International Education Strategy: global potential, global growth

DIT will work with Universities UK international and the British Council to inform the UK sector of global opportunities for TNE through exhibitions, webinars and engagement sessions. We will support TNE activity by producing country-specific guides that support targeted partnership development and by actively facilitating partner matching between UK providers and potential international collaborators. These guides, which will be produced for 2020, will focus on countries of particular interest and opportunity for the sector.

UUKi adds value to what the sector does in a way we just couldn't achieve in other ways. It brings the sector together and enables joined up action, and most important, the network activities provide a safe space for open discussion about tricky issues

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

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