



**APPG for International Students:**

**Inquiry on 'A Sustainable Future for International Students in the UK'**

UEA's Note of Support: Presented to UKIBC by Dr Daniel J. Rycroft

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UEA welcomes all opportunities to deepen the understanding between Higher Education Institutions in Britain and their international partners and markets. Those in India, for example, are increasingly important given the compatibility between the UK and India, in terms of shared values and interests, and the significance of these to future partnership development and sustainability.

As outlined below, UEA contends that opportunities may be created for enhanced dialogue between academia, civil society (including business) and government: with a view to improving the experiences and skills of internationally mobile students, as well as the faculties and universities who are responsible for these students. Through **inter-sectoral understanding**, a commitment is required from all parties to make these opportunities more sustainable. As international educators our primary role is to act as agents of positive change through knowledge creation, information sharing and mutual understanding. Our collaborative international work binds people, nations and states closer together. It is our responsibility therefore to create and deliver curricula that pertain to sustainable and ethical futures, and that integrate international experiences with a view to fostering transnational communities of learning and practice.

This responsibility aims to ensure that both incoming (international) and outwardly mobile students experience academically rigorous, challenging and relevant educational experiences abroad. Connected international universities also assume responsibilities in defining and measuring global competencies in students, with a view to assessing their professional readiness and nurturing relevant experiences and contacts. Universities require therefore a **comprehensive approach to internationalisation**, through student-friendly mobility policies and through new levels of understanding, whereby the entire campus is internationally aware and engaged: from curriculum design to professional development, and from faculty networks to student services, such as careers and employability.

In the context of Britain's present-day policies, which restrict the movement of incoming international students, a different narrative and a new vision needs to be created. International students make very significant and positive impacts on the UK's economy: over £368 million is expended in the East of England alone (including £85 million in Norwich). They also bring with them different voices, cultures, values, experiences and perspectives that enrich the UK's classrooms and campuses. These – in and of themselves – are worthy of celebration and promotion.

The situation calls for a **structured dialogue** between higher education providers, policy makers and industry, with a view to developing a heightened awareness of the prospects of internationalisation, both within and via academia. These issues and challenges must be addressed collaboratively and

effectively, if the potential of India-UK cooperation, for example, is to be realised in a timely, sustainable and productive manner. We contend that unilateralism is herein counter-productive, whether in the form of exclusionary policies, manipulative or asymmetric power imbalances, or restrictions to free movement and to international cooperation.

Given the work of UEA International and UEA's India Dialogue, and many other associated organisations, we are now in a good position to address these issues collectively. They can be addressed not only as the prerequisite for a successful and durable bilateral partnership between India and the UK, but also as integral to a **rapidly changing landscape of international relations** and of shared 'global' priorities, which both India and the UK have considerable responsibility to engage and/or preserve over time. This responsibility may be earmarked as one facet of what might be termed 'international' democracy.

**International democracy**, if it is to function effectively, signals the moral and practical imperative for the international community and its leading nation-states (such as India and the UK) to demonstrate at international and social levels – for example via their commitment to the democratic principles of the rules-based international order – the longer term value of facilitating economic, academic, technological, scientific and political cooperation. *To make such values and systems effective, regular opportunities to re-evaluate, deepen, or share them are required. Indeed, efforts should be made to inscribe the making of such opportunities integral to bilateral knowledge exchange agreements.* As such, they may be employed on a more regular basis, thereby creating the conditions for further, and more profitable, application. With this in mind, the issue of international student mobility becomes paramount.

In addressing the issue of the sustainability – of international students' participation in this evolving landscape – opportunities may arise for higher education institutions to demonstrate their integral position within a growing **forum of global partnerships**, whose facilitators are attempting to realise the UN's sustainable development goals: for example concerning SDG 4 on global, lifelong and sustainable education; SDG 10 on the reduction of inequality; and SDG 16 on the making of strong (higher education) institutions that are capable of building peace and of enhancing the practical value as well as the academic, social and economic effects of good governance.

These sustainability angles have the potential to involve the UK and India as global higher education partners on a previously unanticipated scale. If their potential is to be realised, the mobility of international students needs to be radically rethought, most notably in terms of current governmental attitudes: for example (i) by making UK-to-India student mobility a new priority, and (ii) by including statistics pertaining to international student numbers (considered overall) in metrics that advance the **intergovernmental fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals**.

The participation of international students, in international programmes emphasising the value of citizen-to-citizen contact, empathy, understanding and solidarity, becomes a human and an economic, as well as intergovernmental, imperative. Over time, the human and increasingly professionalised connectedness, which defines the India-UK relationship and its global relevance and forcefulness, helps to orient numerous societies, businesses, universities, organisations and governments alike towards new and shared horizons. In such kinds of 'commonwealths' of knowledge, of learning, of training, of teaching and of debating, international students have the potential to become the representatives of a new internationalist and cosmopolitan democracy, equipped with relevant professional expertise and aspirations (as well as intercultural competencies) to develop new enterprises and feedback loops **within multiple economic and academic sectors**.

Their active participation in the social lives, knowledge systems and economic assets of each nation-state renders legible and meaningful the true meaning of democracy: the ability of civil society and governments alike to co-create the conditions for and of genuine participation, mutual engagement and understanding. In an era of global sustainability, wherein nation-states in all continents are committed and inspired to rethink, or even to prioritise, the primary role of academic and economic centres in the making of citizenship (as well as in the free movement of ideas, goods, capital and people), we contend that the states of India and the UK, in their equal and shared commitment to domestic and international democracy, have a **responsibility to uphold internationalist principles** and, in many other ways, to practice what they preach. Policies for a Global Britain, which address and favour the needs and interests of both outwardly and inwardly mobile international students, could become the prerequisite for enhancing and sustaining this practice.

#### Annex: UEA's response to India's new Higher Education policy

The policy attempts to connect three-tiers of citizenship: local, national and global. Education is central to the **creation of citizenship** and speaks very well to UEA's ethos and its efforts to incorporate global issues into its teaching and international programming. UEA is working hard to engender global communities because it understands that HE institutions need to maintain relevance in the market and the knowledge economy, and to organise collectively on an international level.

The concept of values in India's educational policies have universal as well as national significance. Universal values include truth, inclusivity and non-violence, and universities need to act as a mechanism towards peace building and social cohesion while also linking to parameters associated with sustainable development. UEA's India Dialogue is doing just that, and India's new Higher Education policy can also do that.

The new Higher Education policy should continue to reflect the significance of **national and international values**: India should engage its academics in a broad-based consultation on national and human values (especially focusing on the Humanities in India, as per one of UEA's partnership programmes) so that a considered understanding of India's educational heritage becomes communicable. The importance and thought given over to national values is unique to India's educational policy, as western universities and HE systems tend to focus on universal principles of learning and teaching, rather than national ones. This is because western HEIs want to portray that they have an international outlook, in an effort to shape and inspire global citizens. It goes without saying that universal values are important, but we are at a time in history when the UK needs to re-define a national narrative via internationalism, or Global Britain. Internationalism is something that India's national education policy already has in mind, and therefore the India-UK connection should focus on it and build on it.

Ideally, policy makers in both India and the UK will be able at once to appreciate and critique their national HE policies and philosophies, in such a way that those international elements that are developed through cooperation and collaboration add significant value to the various research, teaching and policy landscapes. It will be very important for HEIs and HE authorities to develop agreements and frameworks that will facilitate international partnerships. India's national education policy has a clearly defined value system of social integration, social cohesion, rights of women, etc.; and now it needs to fill the **gap between policy and implementation**.