



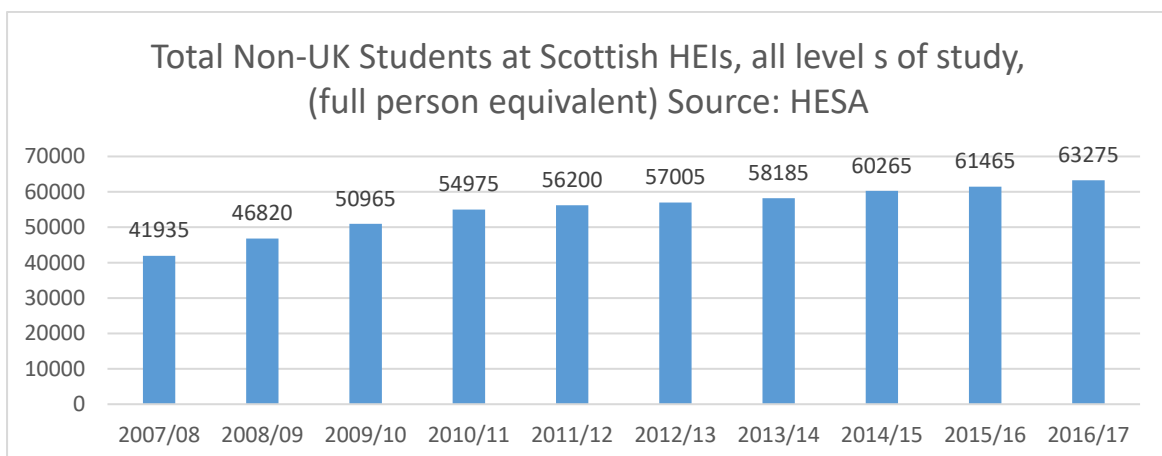
## Universities Scotland submission to the APPG for International Students Inquiry: A sustainable future for international students in the UK?

Universities Scotland is a membership organisation representing Scotland’s 19 higher education institutions.<sup>1</sup> We support the evidence provided to the Group by Universities UK and have set out below additional observations on international students in Scotland and their effects on our member institutions and on Scotland’s economy, culture and society.

### Context

The contribution of international students within Scottish universities and to Scottish communities is significant. High-quality research and learning and teaching are linked to the internationalisation of institutions. In classrooms, international students provide diverse perspectives and create enduring networks and relationships. Meanwhile, the fees paid by international students are an essential part of the financial sustainability of institutions and courses. More broadly, international students have a substantial positive economic impact on Scotland and foster ‘soft power’ relationships. Whilst studying, international students contribute to community development and support employment and the sustainability of services in the areas in which campuses are located.

Scotland’s universities attract a significant number of international students at all levels of study. However, it should be noted that the overall growth in numbers masks a significant drop in some markets. Recent years have also seen a clear advance in the market overall made by competitor sectors in English speaking nations.



<sup>1</sup> The term ‘universities’ is used throughout this submission to refer to the HE sector in Scotland comprising 19 world-class and highly diverse higher education institutions

The proportion of international students in the student body increases with the level of study and the importance of internationalisation to all levels of study is noted further in our evidence below.

**Students at Scottish HEIs 2015-16 (full person equivalent). Source: HESA**

	Non-EU	EU excluding UK	UK	%age non UK
Other Undergraduate	1,795	1,535	17,215	16%
First Degree	12,605	18,165	126,635	20%
PG (taught)	13,870	6,200	23,650	46%
PG (research)	4,385	2,915	5,600	56%
Total	32,655	28,815	173,100	

Public opinion polling consistently indicates that the public in Scotland (and the UK as a whole) view international students positively. August 2018 polling<sup>2</sup> conducted by ComRes for Universities UK, revealed that amongst adults polled in Scotland:

- 83% think that international students should stay and work in the UK after graduation, using their skills here and contributing to the economy rather than immediately returning home;
- 67% think that the UK should continue to compete for international students to improve and increase its market share; and
- 60% believe that students from overseas should be allowed to stay in the UK for two years or more.

**In the classroom**

*What are the educational opportunities and challenges of welcoming international students into our schools, colleges and universities?*

International student demand for, and participation in, higher education in Scotland supports the overall sustainability of institutions and contributes to the sustainability of a wider range of courses. Meanwhile, diversity in classrooms provides home students with a broader experience and better learning outcomes.

Contribution to the financial sustainability of institutions and courses

International student fees make a significant contribution to the sustainability of Scottish HEIs, in a financial environment where public funding of teaching and research does not meet its full economic costs.

In 2016, Audit Scotland<sup>3</sup> reviewed the financial health of the Scottish higher education sector and reported that the attraction of international students is increasingly important for the sustainability of the sector. Fees paid by international students therefore also support a high-quality experience for Scottish-domiciled students and students from the rest of the UK.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/New-poll-public-support-for-international-students.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2016/nr\\_160707\\_higher\\_education.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2016/nr_160707_higher_education.pdf)

Audit Scotland found<sup>4</sup> that:

- The largest percentage increase in any category of university income between 2005/06 and 2014/15 was in non-EU tuition fees, which increased from £140 million to £438 million, a real-terms increase of 154%. This increase did not impact all institutions equally, and the 'Ancient' universities<sup>5</sup> saw the largest increase in income from non-EU tuition fees at 190% in real terms, almost four times that of the Modern ('post-92') institutions, at 56% in real terms.
- The higher education sector in Scotland is under increasing financial pressure, and current funding from the Scottish Government, or through the UK dual support system for research, does not meet the full economic costs of publicly funded teaching, research and knowledge exchange. In 2014/15 Scottish Government funding only covered 94.2%<sup>6</sup> of the full economic cost of providing publicly-funded teaching and the dual support system supported only 85% of the full economic cost of research. Given subsequent real terms cuts in Scottish Funding Council grants to the sector, Universities Scotland estimates that institutions in Scotland only receive 90% of the costs of publicly funded teaching.

International student fees are therefore critical to the financial sustainability of universities in Scotland, allowing them to invest for the future to the benefit of all. In 2014/15, the sector spent £397 million on capital projects to support an excellent student experience and research excellence. The 2016 Audit Scotland report found that institutions' reliance on public funding for such investments is diminishing. The maintenance and development of university estates and infrastructure has a significant impact on a university's ability to recruit the best and the brightest students and staff, impacting teaching standards and research conducted. The latest technology and renovated estates attract students and staff but also business investment, ensuring that institutions remain competitive within the United Kingdom and internationally.

For some universities, in some courses at the taught postgraduate level, international students represent >60% of all students, and international students making up 30-50% of enrolments is not uncommon in some courses at some HEIs in Scotland. Universities' ability to attract students from outside of the UK is therefore an important element in the sustainability of specific courses, and therefore the opportunities available to Scottish-domiciled students and the strategic skills capacity of the economy more broadly.

Demand from international students can provide Scottish HEIs with a competitive edge as some courses, particularly from small, specialist institutions, are rare or not offered anywhere else in the world. These expanded offerings provide home students with a greater range of courses that would otherwise not be on offer. This has been confirmed by a 2013 report from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)<sup>7</sup>, which found that *'international students also stimulate demand for courses where domestic demand alone can be insufficient to sustain them, thus ensuring that a wider range of courses are available for all students and some strategically important courses remain viable.'* BEIS particularly cited that in postgraduate taught programmes at the UK

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> The universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Governance/TRAC\\_2014-15.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Governance/TRAC_2014-15.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/340600/bis-13-1081-international-education-global-growth-and-prosperity-revised.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340600/bis-13-1081-international-education-global-growth-and-prosperity-revised.pdf)

level international students made up 84% of new entrants in electronic and electrical engineering, 76% in production and manufacturing engineering and 67% in computer science in 2011/12.

### Enhancing the student experience

The presence of international students on Scottish campuses contributes significantly to the experience of all students.

Under Scotland's HE quality enhancement approach, the sector has conducted work on graduate attributes for the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>8</sup>. One of eight key attributes is 'global citizenship'. Alongside study abroad opportunities, a diverse campus supports the development of such skills and attributes by all students, UK, EU and non-EU. This resonates with a review by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy,<sup>9</sup> which noted that diversity on campus provides students with an international outlook and networks for personal and professional development.

Home students also value the contribution international students make to their classrooms. In July 2015 the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) commissioned YouthSight to survey<sup>10</sup> undergraduate students in the UK about the experience of studying alongside a diverse population of international students. 95% of undergraduate students in higher education institutions in Scotland reported that they study alongside international students. This survey also found that 76% of undergraduate students from the UK either strongly agreed or agreed that studying alongside international students while in higher education was useful preparation for working in a global environment.

International students are also particularly well-placed to assist other university students with language development, and many HEIs run or encourage informal language learning opportunities as a way for international and home students to improve their language skills in a mutually beneficial setting.<sup>11</sup> For example, at the University of Edinburgh, the Students' Association has administered the Tandem programme, which promotes the learning of languages through an exchange service, effectively pairing two students who can help each other learn or improve their language skills in a relaxed atmosphere. Tandem hosts weekly Language Cafés for home and international students, while Speed Lingua evenings are held throughout the year as a social way to bring students together to find the right language match for them.<sup>12</sup>

### **In our communities**

*What are the challenges and opportunities of integrating international students and their dependants into local communities? Do international students differ from other migrant or visitor communities in this regard?*

International students engage both in universities' broad interaction with local communities and can bring particular benefits.

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/graduates-for-the-21st-century-integrating-the-enhancementthemes-leaflet.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Global Growth and Prosperity: An Accompanying Analytical Review (2013)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/HEApaper7.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> International Students' Transitions into Scottish Higher Education: A Scoping Survey. Irene Bell. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. P. 14

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/global/languages/tandem/>

In *Richer for it*, we set out the positive social and cultural impact that international students have on Scotland<sup>13</sup>. University offers a unique context where international students can offer communities insight into international cultures and can contribute to the development of language skills in the community. Those students meanwhile benefit from that interaction, adding to their learning of life in Scotland and building broader enduring relationships.

For example:

- for the last 6 years the University of Stirling has hosted a Japan Week, an exciting programme of events dedicated to Japanese culture<sup>14</sup> that are open to the university and wider community;
- in a model being adopted by other local authorities across Scotland, volunteer Chinese students at the University of Edinburgh spend one session per week in an East Lothian primary school where they support the class teacher in introducing Chinese cultural activities and language. Mandarin is now being introduced into two secondary schools in the county;
- *Go Connect* is a hospitality scheme helping international students connect with local people with all benefitting from the interaction<sup>15</sup>.

At a practical level, particularly in smaller communities, the volume of students is a driving factor in the demand for, and sustainability of, many local services, including student halls and transportation. For instance, students' use of local bus services may contribute significantly to the sustainability of routes.

### **For our regions and nations**

*What are the challenges and opportunities of achieving a greater balance of international students in regions across the UK?*

*What are the costs and benefits of international students participating in the regional and national labour market and how could we ensure they have a sustainable role in supporting and building local or skilled industry post-study?*

The attraction of global talent to Scotland is instrumental in developing inward investment and spurring economic growth and capacity. With an aging population and challenges in stimulating stronger rates of economic growth, Scotland has a particularly strong interest in attracting young talent into the economy.

### The demographic challenge

Whilst Scotland's demographic challenge is shared by other parts of the UK, it is a particularly marked, strategic concern.

Projection by the National Records of Scotland show the number of Scots of pensionable age and over per 1,000 people is expected to increase from 311 in 2015 to 397 in 2039.<sup>16</sup> While current

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Richer-For-It-US-270813SMALL.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> an exciting programme of events dedicated to Japanese culture

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/student-advisory-service/social-connections/go-connect>

<sup>16</sup> Scotland's Population, 2015 Infographic Report, National Records of Scotland  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Age/AgePopMig>

projections also suggest that the population of Scotland will rise to 5.7 million by 2039, the number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 53% between 2014 and 2039.<sup>17</sup> With an aging population, the Scottish Government has already identified that immigration is essential for the maintenance of services and the future financial health of the country, noting that *“any move which limits migration, whether from within or beyond the EU, has the potential to seriously harm Scotland’s economy”*<sup>18</sup>.

Understanding that continuing immigration is key to Scotland’s future, international students exist as the ideal subset of available migrants. Between mid-2013 and mid-2014, the peak age for migration into Scotland was 23.<sup>19</sup> Encouraging immigration from young, highly educated individuals maximises their economic benefit to the country through expected earnings. Their graduate qualifications are easily recognisable and highly valued by businesses within the UK, and graduates have higher levels of employment, lower levels of economic inactivity, and higher levels of earning on average compared to non-graduates.<sup>20</sup>

### Retaining talent in the labour market

Recognising Scotland’s demographic challenge, and the significant contribution that university talent can bring to our economy, there is cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament for the introduction of a new Post Study Work (PSW) visa<sup>21</sup>. There is precedent for this within the UK. Scotland ran a slightly different immigration policy for international graduates between 2004 and 2008 under the Fresh Talent initiative.

### **For research, trade and soft power**

*What role do international students play in increasing global research capabilities, trade links and soft power for the UK and what strategies could be implemented to support this further?*

### Research is increasingly an international endeavour

Scotland’s universities are truly global organisations with their students and staff drawn from across the world. International mobility of students and staff is therefore a fundamental element of the research community. Undergraduate students are the first stage of the development of this community, flowing into the postgraduate student community which, as a facet of contemporary research careers, is typified by international mobility.

The Royal Society has noted<sup>22</sup> that:

*International mobility has shaped the UK research landscape. Researchers travel from the UK to work in the EU and the rest of the world, and foreign researchers, including those from the EU, come to work in the UK.*

Further, the Society notes the value of international mobility of staff as:

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<sup>17</sup> Projected Population of Scotland (2014-Based)

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Age/AgePopMig>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00512073.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> The Registrar General’s Annual Review of Demographic Trends

<sup>20</sup> High demand for graduates reflects the value of their skills. CBI

[http://www.cbi.org.uk/index.cfm/\\_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=DB1A9FE5-5459-4AA2-8B44798DD5B15E77](http://www.cbi.org.uk/index.cfm/_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=DB1A9FE5-5459-4AA2-8B44798DD5B15E77)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/campaigns/post-study-work-for-international-students/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/uk-research-and-european-union/role-of-eu-researcher-collaboration-and-mobility/snapshot-of-the-UK-research-workforce/>

- supporting collaboration;
- developing careers;
- building international networks; and
- building the UK's soft power.

Meanwhile international mobility and collaboration is crucial if UK institutions are to:

- attract and retain the best talent;
- gain access to research funding and state of the art equipment;
- attract major awards on a global stage; and
- pool resources and tackle global challenges through economies of scale.

The internationalisation of research and teaching is gathering pace and is linked to stronger impacts. Almost all of the growth in UK research outputs over the last 30 years has been from international partnerships and this is also seen in the USA, Germany and France amongst others<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, as the volume of international collaboration has increased, these outputs have increasingly enhanced the UK's relative international performance in comparative citation analyses.

Research<sup>24</sup> by Elsevier for BEIS on the international comparative performance of the research base notes that, *“Over the past few decades, collaboration has become the cornerstone of innovation and excellence. It is an inherent and mutually beneficial part of the world of research, crossing borders, disciplines, and communities”*.

The research finds that:

- 51.3% of all UK articles in 2014 resulted from international collaboration – this is associated with increased field-weighted citation impact<sup>25</sup>;
- the UK's share of international co-authorship increased annually from 2010 with corresponding reductions in the shares of the other types of authorship – single authored; collaborations within the same institution (institutional); and collaborations with different UK institutions (national);
- internationally co-authored articles are, generally, associated with a higher field-weighted citation impact than those co-authored institutionally or nationally. The field-weighted citation impact of the UK's internationally co-authored articles was 47% higher than that of the UK's nationally co-authored articles, and 59% higher than the field-weighted citation impact of institutionally co-authored articles; and
- countries that are geographically close and similar in culture and history are more likely also to collaborate in research.

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<sup>23</sup> See The Implications of International Research Collaboration for UK Universities, Adams and Gurney, 2016 page 2

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.elsevier.com/research-intelligence/resource-library/international-comparative-performance-of-the-uk-research-base-2016>

<sup>25</sup> the ratio of the total citations actually received by the denominator's output, and the total citations that would be expected based on the average of the subject field

In summary, placing obstacles in the path of internationalisation and the movement of researchers is to place obstacles in the path of universities' success.

#### International students: a key driver of 'soft power'

For over 600 years, Scottish universities have shaped many of the world's best and brightest minds. Today the graduates of Scottish institutions can be found in key roles in countries across the world.

The ComRes 2015 global ranking of soft power puts the UK second only to the US on the education sub-indices.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the UK's high quality higher education continues to draw many future world leaders, for example a 2015 study from the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI)<sup>27</sup> revealed that over 55 of the world's then political leaders had studied in the UK. Scottish institutions contribute strongly to these outcomes with international students from 180 countries demonstrating the impressive reach of Scottish higher education around the world. As well as contributing to enhancing the UK's relationships around the globe, the community of alumni from Scottish institutions also contribute to specific initiatives such as the GlobalScot network.

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<sup>26</sup> [http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Report\\_Final-published.pdf](http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Report_Final-published.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2015/10/01/now-thats-call-soft-power-55-world-leaders-educated-uk/>