

News story: Plans to boost international student numbers and income

A new ambition to increase the number of international students studying in the UK by more than 30% – helping boost the income generated by education exports to £35 billion – has been announced today (16 March).

Education Secretary Damian Hinds and International Trade Secretary Liam Fox have published a brand new International Education Strategy to cement Britain's leading role in the global market as it prepares to leave the EU and maximise the benefits to both the UK and students from around the world.

The UK currently hosts around 460,000 international higher education students and the education sector generates approximately [£20 billion per year](#) through education exports and transnational activity, which includes income from international students, English language training, education providers setting up sites overseas, and education technology solutions being sold worldwide.

The strategy sets out an ambition to grow the total number of international students during the year to 600,000 and generate £35 billion through education exports by 2030 – a rise of 75%. The plans focus on not only retaining existing markets such as Europe, but raising the profile of the education sector in global markets such as Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

The UK's education system is world-leading and its reputation is the envy of many countries around the globe.

As we prepare to leave the EU it is more important than ever to reach out to our global partners and maximise the potential of our best assets – that includes our education offer and the international students this attracts.

There is no limit to our potential and this strategy will help cement our status as a world-leader in education, while creating real benefits for the country and students across the globe.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:

There is clear demand across the globe for the UK's world-class education offer. From English Language Training in Latin America to Higher Education partnerships in Vietnam, Trade Minister Graham Stuart and I have encountered a remarkable amount of enthusiasm for

British education goods and services across the globe.

Our education exports are ripe for growth, and my international economic department stands ready to engage and support UK providers from across the education sector to grow their global activity as we implement this new International Education Strategy.

The strategy includes a number of measures to help the sector maximise the potential of UK education exports abroad, including:

- Appointing a new International Education Champion to boost overseas activity by developing strong partnerships and tackling challenges across the world;
- Encouraging sector groups to bid into the £5 million GREAT Challenge Fund to promote the entire UK education offer internationally;
- Extending the period of post-study leave for international student visas, considering how the visa process could be improved for applicants and supporting student employment;
- Improving data on education exports to enhance and drive performance while also mapping out where the best opportunities lie globally; and
- Closer working across government departments on international education policy and opportunities.

There is no limit on the number of international students that can study in the UK, and to ensure the UK continues to attract and welcome them, the post-study leave period will be extended to six months for undergraduate and masters students attending institutions with degree awarding powers, and a year for all doctoral students. The strategy also looks at ways of supporting international students into employment.

The value of education related exports and transnational education (TNE) activity has grown steadily since 2010. Total education exports and TNE activity was estimated to be almost £20 billion in 2016 (in current prices), marking an increase of 26% since 2010.

In August 2018, the Department for International Trade launched the government's wider Export Strategy, which sets out how the government will support businesses of all sizes to make the most of the opportunities presented by markets around the world.

Professor Dame Janet Beer, President of Universities UK, said:

I strongly welcome the publication of this strategy as a signal of a change in direction. I particularly welcome the ambitious target to grow the number of international students to 600,000 by 2030 which sends a strong message of welcome.

International students contribute a huge amount to the UK, not only economically but also by enriching the international education environment in our universities for all students. Whilst their presence in the UK is worth an estimated £26 billion in direct and

knock on effects, sustaining over 200,000 jobs in all parts of the UK, they bring much wider benefit to our academic and civic communities.

Lesley Davies, OBE, Chair UK Skills Partnership, said:

It is heartening to see the ambition the government sets out in its International Strategy for the UK skills sector and the recognition of our track record of success in delivering high quality technical and vocational education and training solutions to international partners and businesses. The UK Skills Partnership is delighted to see that both the Department for International Trade (DIT) and the Department for Education (DfE) have worked together on this strategy. We welcome the commitment made by government to play a more active role in supporting the UK's skill's sector international business and we stand ready to deliver on this important agenda.