

Speech: Liam Fox Speech at BETT education training and technology show

I'm delighted to be at the BETT show for the first time. As I'm sure you're aware, this is the world's largest edtech showcase, boasting nearly 40,000 visitors, some 12,000 of them coming from overseas to see all that the UK has to offer in this industry.

I would like to start by offering my thanks to all of you, not only for the limitless contribution that your industry makes to improving the lives of young people across the globe, but also for the huge service that you do for the United Kingdom

Thanks to your efforts, the UK is a world leader in education technology. Your contribution is not only economic, but also a priceless boost for Britain's soft-power, and the way our country is perceived around the world. The products displayed at this showcase today will shape the world leaders of tomorrow.

My Department for International Trade (DIT) was created to make Britain a global hub of trade, the natural place of business for companies from every continent and every industry.

Our first priority in this is to assist, in any way we can, those industries such as yours where Britain is already a leading player, helping you to maximise opportunities and expand your overseas operations.

In 2011, the UK exported over £17.5 billion of education products, making the industry more valuable to the UK economy than insurance services or information technology.

I've travelled extensively in my first few months as Secretary of State, and one thing that has been crystal clear is that there is almost limitless demand for UK expertise overseas. The key for us to match demand with supply

The importance of edtech to the UK economy cannot be overstated, and it is the Department for International Trade's ambition to see your industry play an increasingly central role in our export economy.

We intend to use the influence and expertise of Her Majesty's Government, and the Department for International Trade to assist and promote UK edtech around the world.

We want to:

- help your businesses to identify export opportunities through the great.gov.uk online platform
- provide guidance to those companies who are exporting for the first time, or want to significantly expand their overseas operations
- to act, where it is necessary, as the official front for government-to-

government activity

- to lead, where appropriate, on the establishment of industry consortia to take advantage of the largest strategic opportunities

One of my aims today is to impart to you the sheer number of opportunities that exist, across the world, for dynamic and innovative edtech businesses.

For example, colleagues from my department have recently visited Malaysia for a ministerial conference with the 10 ASEAN nations.

As most of you will be aware, this country already enjoys strong links with the Malaysian education sector, but there is significant scope to do more: Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand all expressed a strong interest in forging new links with the UK education sector.

Yours is an industry that already boasts significant success stories. I have just visited GL Assessment's stand; their company is a fantastic example of how a truly innovative British product is changing global attitudes to pupil assessment.

- GL have recently invested in a programme with the Chinese government to trial their assessment tool with 25,000 students across 10 Chinese provinces
- If the trial is successful, the programme has the potential to reach over 16 million students across China; a true testament to the sheer scale of edtech opportunities that exist across the world, and the global appetite for British education products

We are truly starting from a position of strength; the UK education technology sector already enjoys an international reputation for innovation:

- our world-class educational establishments and training centres are producing the quality graduates that a successful edtech sector requires
- Britain is a global hub of edtech trade and collaboration. Its focal point is this event, the BETT conference, which attracts thousands of global partners to the UK every year
- last, but by no means least, is the sheer quality of you, our leading edtech companies. Not only are you innovating new education solutions, but you have the capability to deliver them globally, and the ambition to scale up and expand your operations overseas. You are a credit to your industry, and to this country

Lastly, I would like to encourage you all to engage with the [great.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk) website and online resource.

For the first time, the government is working actively to put exporters such as yourselves in touch with overseas customers and opportunities, and offering help and support every step of the way.

As well as this, your details will be added to a globally-available directory of British education technology suppliers, allowing potential clients from across the world to contact you directly.

Lastly, you will be given help and advice on exporting to specific regions, and DIT will arrange key players from this sector to accompany us on overseas trips to regions where we have identified specific export opportunities.

What could be better?

I wish you an excellent and successful show, and look forward to working closely with the edtech industry as we secure Britain's influence and prosperity for generations to come.