

# UK universities boosted by 'landmark' agreement with India to recognise qualifications

- UK and India sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) officially recognising each other's higher education qualifications
- Agreement likely to attract more international university students to UK – each estimated by industry to be worth more than £100,000 to the economy
- Deal is one of three signed today implementing aspects of UK-India Enhanced Trade Partnership agreed by the Prime Minister last year

The UK and India have today (Thursday 21 July) signed an agreement to recognise each other's higher education qualifications in a move welcomed by British universities.

The Memorandum of Understanding, part of the UK-India Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) agreed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year, means A-levels and their equivalents, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees will now be recognised in India. It will allow Indian students who graduate from British universities to apply for postgraduate qualifications, or embark on government careers that require university qualifications, when they return home.

The UK and India are already important destinations for each other's students – in 2020/2021 the UK welcomed 84,555 Indian students to the UK and India is a popular destination for UK students to study abroad as part of the Turing Scheme international education programme.

The agreement will make UK universities even more appealing to Indian applicants and is likely to provide an economic boost, as the benefit to the UK of welcoming non-EU students is estimated by industry to be around £109,000 per person.

It will also increase the potential for UK nationals to travel to India to study, allowing them more choice and broadening their academic and educational horizons, as well as opening the door for institutions to create courses that can be delivered in both countries.

## **International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:**

UK universities already have a fantastic reputation around the globe.

Now, we are delighted to deliver on our promise to unblock barriers to trade between our two nations and make UK higher education even easier to access and more appealing to Indian students.

## **Secretary of State for Education James Cleverly said:**

UK universities are rightly the envy of the world and international education is one of our finest exports.

This agreement builds on our UK-India partnership and removes barriers so even more of the best and brightest students from India can study here, boosting our economy and enriching our campuses and communities.

It creates more opportunities for UK students to study in India, and paves the way for our world-beating universities to deliver more degree programmes in one of the fastest-growing and most dynamic nations on earth.

The deal is one of three signed today implementing the ETP, which sets out a series of commitments to unlock new opportunities for British businesses exporting to India and vice versa.

Trade between the UK and India is already worth over £24bn, and our investment relationship supports over half a million jobs. Since 2017 the UK Government has secured new access to India's market which businesses estimate will unlock approximately £92m of additional UK exports every year in spirits, oats, pork products, and more. India is projected to become the world's third largest economy by 2050.

The two sides also signed MoUs implementing ETP commitments to create a taskforce to provide opportunities for Indian nurses and nursing associates seeking to train and work in the NHS, and to renew a commitment for mutual recognition of the Seafarers' Certificate of Competency.

## **Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive, Universities UK International (UUKi), said:**

This is a landmark, historic agreement which has been many years in the making. Qualifications students receive will be recognised on both sides, making it easier for students to progress in education and move into jobs.

The recognition of UK Masters' is a particularly important development. It means that Indian graduates of the UK's outstanding universities will receive formal recognition of their outstanding achievements and full access to jobs in the public sector in India.

## **Barbara Wickham OBE, Director India, British Council, said:**

The agreement of the mutual recognition of academic qualifications is a significant moment of celebration in the India-UK education

relationship and will benefit thousands of young people and talented students in both countries.

The agreement will support even greater collaboration between our higher education sectors, nurture globally ready graduates through an increasingly internationalised education, and further enable joint education, research and innovation initiatives to explore solutions for shared global challenges.

We are also delighted the agreement has been finalised during our ongoing India/UK Together Season of Culture – our landmark programme that marks India's 75th anniversary and celebrates the deep connections between India and the UK.

## Notes to editors

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Modi announced the [2030 Roadmap for India-UK future relations](#) in May 2021. That included launching the Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP), which included our intent to negotiate a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.
- The Memoranda of Understanding are available on gov.uk:
- Sources:
  - ONS UK Total Trade quarterly statistics, Q4 2021
  - IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2022
  - Higher Education Policy Unit (HEPI), The costs and benefits of international higher education students to the UK economy, 9 September 2021
  - Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2020/21 – Where students come from and go to study

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## Annual progress report on OSCE gender action plan: UK response, July 2022

Thank you, Secretary General, for presenting the Annual Progress Report today. As you mention, gender equality and fighting all forms of violence against women and girls are crucial to the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and stability and I express with horror the detrimental impact that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had on women and girls, as was highlighted in last week's [Moscow Mechanism findings](#).

Today, I will focus on three areas in your Report – the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality; the importance of fully implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda – including in conflict mediation, and peace and negotiations processes – and the devastating and disproportionate impact that Russia's illegal war against

Ukraine is having on the safety, security and well-being of Ukrainian women and girls.

Firstly, as highlighted in the foreword of your report, the continued backsliding we've seen on gender equality during the COVID-19 pandemic remains a cause for great concern. We have seen an exacerbation of pre-existing gender inequalities; women experiencing greater economic setbacks and disproportionately shouldering caregiving responsibilities; and an appalling rise in domestic violence across the region. In particular, we've observed a shocking deterioration in the safety and human rights situation for women and girls in Afghanistan, amplified by the pandemic.

It is the responsibility of us all to address this, and to build back better and more inclusively from the pandemic. The UK commends the continuation of the important work of the OSCE in expanding the capacity of shelters for victims of violence and supporting them in maintaining their fundamental services in the longer term.

Secondly – the OSCE has a key role to play in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We appreciate the ongoing work of the Executive Structures to support participating States in its implementation.

We appreciate the work to ensure that a gender perspective is included in all aspects of peace processes and conflict resolution, including in mediation. We emphasise the full, equal and meaningful participation, leadership and representation of women in all aspects of peace processes and at all levels of decision-making, and will continue to champion this through the development of our new [National Action Plan on WPS](#) to commence in early 2023. We commend the newly launched [OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders](#), which includes Peacebuilders and Mediators. I'd also like to draw attention to the OSCE's toolkit for "[Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes](#)". This is a valuable resource for conflict mediation in all OSCE conflicts, and we continue to encourage full use of this tool.

Thirdly – the Secretary General's foreword highlighted the horrifying impact that Russia's war against Ukraine has had on women and girls in Ukraine. This includes an increased risk of trafficking, abuse and sexual violence, as was documented in last week's Moscow Mechanism report. I commend the huge bravery of Ukrainian women responding to the needs of their communities, documenting war crimes, advocating for women's needs and working to build a sustainable future. Again, we call on the Russian Federation to end this unprovoked and illegal war.

I'd like to thank all those who have contributed to advancing gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the OSCE. We also thank Poland for their focus as Chair on gender equality this year, as well as Sweden for their efforts in 2021. It is essential that gender is fully integrated into the organisation's work and any mediation process.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

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## Government contract uses the latest technology for search and rescue

The MCA, an executive agency of the Department for Transport, has today signed a circa £1.6 billion contract with UK company Bristow Helicopters Ltd following an extensive 18-month procurement process.

Minister for Maritime and Aviation, Robert Courts MP, announced today that the contract for the UK Second-Generation Search and Rescue Aviation programme – known as UKSAR2G – would be awarded to Bristow Helicopters Ltd to deliver both rotary and fixed wing services for the next ten years.

Bristow Helicopters Ltd has provided the UK search and rescue helicopter service for the MCA since 2013, with the aerial reconnaissance aircraft provided by 2Excel Aviation since 2019. These aircraft fly not only for HM Coastguard but also on behalf of other Government Departments.

The new contract will see the UK search and rescue region benefit from both innovation and advances in technology to save more lives, even more quickly. It will combine the existing two separate aviation contracts for both fixed wing aircraft and rotary aircraft. It will also include the use of uncrewed aircraft (drones). This will provide better value for money for the taxpayer and allow for more innovation throughout the life of the contract.

As part of the new contract, Bristow Helicopters Ltd will continue to operate from their current ten helicopter bases and launch two new seasonal bases in Fort William and Carlisle, to serve areas around two of the busiest locations for summer tourism.

All helicopter bases will continue to be operational 24 hours a day. The Fort William and Carlisle will operate 12 hours a day from April to September. The transition out from the current contracts will start 30 September 2024 and run through to 31 December 2026, to ensure a continuation of search and rescue aviation services across the whole of the UK. There will be three fixed-wing bases at Doncaster, Prestwick and Newquay.

The MCA has undertaken extensive sophisticated modelling to project future demand on our services. This makes sure the MCA can tailor future services to meet the demand required and to provide enhancements to the service using new systems and technology. Bristow will operate:

- 18 Helicopters including existing Leonardo AW189s and Sikorsky S92As augmented with the introduction of Leonardo AW139 helicopters.
- six King Air fixed-wing planes, including the B350, B350ER and the B200; and
- one mobile deployable Schiebel S-100 drone system.

Drones became part of HM Coastguard's aviation fleet in March 2022 and are currently deployed supporting search and rescue activity in the English Channel. Bristow Helicopters Ltd will therefore continue to build upon this to enhance situational awareness for emergency responders as part of UKSAR2G. Drones have the capability to transmit real-time data including live imagery from the scene to Coastguard operations rooms as well as other responders. As HM Coastguard celebrates its 200-year anniversary, innovations like this will help evolve search and rescue for the next decade and beyond.

A high degree of innovation has also been proposed by Bristow Helicopters Ltd in the form of a new state-of-the-art search and rescue helicopter simulation training facility at Solent Airport next to the Coastguard Training Facility which will house a synthetic rescue hoist and helicopter suspended over a large training pool. Other innovation includes the use of sustainable aviation fuels, reducing our carbon footprint in the delivery of these services.

Today's announcement represents a major investment by the government in providing a national search and rescue aviation service using a tailored solution, making sure the most appropriate aircraft are at the most suitable locations to meet the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's commitment to the public. These services will continue to support the work of other Government Departments in detecting and deterring illegal activity at sea and supporting other Government work where needed.

Damien Oliver, Senior Responsible Owner for UKSAR2G said:

We know there are people alive today because an HM Coastguard helicopter came to their rescue. When looking at the next decade of service and rescue services, the thought of the future people whose lives may well also be saved as a result of this contract was a huge incentive to make sure this will build on that success and improve it still further. I am also delighted that we can continue to support the work of our partners across Government in all the work that they do.

This is the excellent result from an 18-month procurement to deliver a new highly capable and innovative search and rescue aviation service. The new service will build on the success of the current arrangements that have been in place since 2015.

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**OSCE Special Representative on Gender:**

## UK response, July 2022

Thank you, Mr Chair. I would like to thank the Special Representative on Gender for her remarks and welcome her warmly to this Council. We strongly endorse your messages on enhancing gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and underline their centrality to the future of our economies, societies, communities and the security of our region.

You are right to emphasise that the overwhelming threat that we face now is Russian aggression against Ukraine, and we welcome the report's focus on monitoring the situation of Ukrainian women refugees. 8 million people have left Ukraine since the conflict started, and as of 13 July, UNHCR recorded over 5.8 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe. The present situation constitutes the fastest-growing refugee crisis since the Second World War. That the current crisis is remarkable by the standards of over 75 years of events, war and terrorism puts President's Putin's actions into alarming context. Remember – this is a war of choice.

As we heard from Special Representative Richey earlier this week, the vast majority of refugees are women and children, and they are at heightened risk of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking. We echo Special Representative Palihovici's call for training for police and border guards on human trafficking and gender-based violence, and will continue to share UK best practice and materials with local law enforcement partners. We have prioritised our humanitarian response to support the most at-risk populations, including women and girls, and we support the Special Representative's recommendation for all humanitarian actors to engage expertise to navigate gender-based violence and other protection issues.

We are deeply concerned by the persisting protection gaps for people with disabilities, children with special needs and minority groups – especially Roma women, as flagged in the report. We also highlight the additional challenges faced by older people. We must advocate for the most marginalised and at-risk people in our society, particularly under these cruellest of circumstances.

Special Representative Palihovici's report also highlighted the excellent work being done to help Ukrainian refugees in Hungary, Austria, Poland and Moldova. We commend these and other neighbouring countries for stepping up, and have provided £40 million to international agencies to assist their efforts. The UK will continue to support our partners shouldering the largest burdens from the fallout of Russia's war, and we continue to welcome Ukrainian refugees under our own Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family schemes.

Our message to Ukrainian people forced to flee the Kremlin's war is clear and simple: the UK and our partners will support you until the victory of your armed forces enables you to return home – however long it takes. Thank you, Mr Chair.

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## Breaking the links between politics, business and illicit activity in the Western Balkans

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom has tasked me with strengthening the UK's relationship with the six countries of the Western Balkans – through more trade and investment, increased energy security, cultural co-operation, security and defence, and fighting organised crime together.

I am a frequent guest in the countries of the region, and have just returned from Tirana, Skopje and Podgorica, where I have heard one message loud and clear from people of all walks of life: young people are leaving, driven out by lack of opportunities, feeling they cannot succeed if they don't have political connections and frustrated by entrenched corruption. They ask us to help build a better society and to hold their leaders to account for it.

Institutions, civil society, journalists and criminal justice officials are working to build prosperous, safe democracies. Most of the real effort will be on the ground, across the Western Balkans – effort by honest prosecutors, intrepid journalists, dedicated police, visionary leaders. In Albania, with justice reform, the Special Anti-Corruption Agency (SPAK) and the National Bureau for Investigation (NBI), we have a tailwind for change.

The UK is with you in this endeavour. Progress is being made. Some people who previously felt they were immune are now in prison. But others still operate as if they have impunity for wrongdoing, as if the rule of law does not apply equally to everyone.

And so we are stepping up our efforts to disrupt links between politics, business and illicit activity, both around the world and in the Western Balkans. We have designated 27 individuals involved in serious corruption around the world under our Global Anti-Corruption sanctions regime since its launch. A new Register of Overseas Entities, requiring those behind foreign companies which own UK property to reveal their identities, will be created under the Economic Crime Act. And we have established a new 'Kleptocracy Cell' based in the National Crime Agency, to target sanctions evasion and corrupt Russian assets hidden in the UK.

This week, we took disruptive action against several Albanian individuals with well publicised and documented ties to criminality and corruption. This is the first wave of a set of actions intended to encourage accountability and end impunity. The UK has a range of tools available to disrupt individuals with ties to criminality and corruption, including immigration and economic disruption. The details of these actions may not always be public.

The support that some public figures receive from criminals in exchange for their corruption smothers the voice of the Albanian people. As the OSCE's report on international monitoring of last year's parliamentary elections shows, vote-buying and misuse of public funds continue to be a major problem in Albanian politics. So long as politicians are able to work with criminals to buy, blackmail and intimidate voters, Albanian democracy will remain fragile and incomplete. Further change and electoral reform are needed now.

Organised crime and corruption in Albania – and the wider region – also mean that vast amounts of state funds, collected from ordinary tax-payers, never reach the schools, hospitals and roads that Albanians need to build a healthy, prosperous society.

For all of you in Albania and the region striving for reform, I also have a message: we will back you in your judicial reforms, which have helped to weed out corrupt officials and led to the prosecution of powerful figures. We will support you in reforming your elections and in all your efforts for transparency, accountability and democracy. We will help boost civic engagement in holding government to account.

We hail those brave investigative journalists who have exposed corruption and links between politics, business and crime – often in the face of violence and intimidation from criminals. They must continue to do so with the full protection of governments and law enforcement agencies and with the support of those who cherish freedom.

We are with you on your journey to build the state that your people deserve.

The United Kingdom's message to those who are involved in crime or corruption is this: promoting crime or corruption – whether in the Western Balkans or elsewhere – will not go without consequences and you will not be welcome in the UK. Those individuals who do so damage their society and their state. Whether through sanctions, immigration action or policies of non-engagement, the UK will act to root out corruption and organised crime.

Together we will make sure that no one is above the law.

[Sir Stuart Peach](#) is the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Western Balkans.