



Universities Scotland's Response to Connecting Scotland – how Scottish organisations engage internationally

Universities Scotland (US) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's Inquiry.

Universities Scotland represents Scotland's 19 diverse higher education institutions all of which are highly international in their operations to the benefit of the institution, their staff and student communities their regions and Scotland as a whole.

Q. What international activities are happening now in your sector and/or organisation? Please describe how and why these activities take place. Are other sectors or organisations involved? What do these activities contribute or achieve?

The scale of international activity in higher education is so vast it is not possible to provide detailed examples for our 19 members here. Instead, we have encouraged institutions to make individual responses to this inquiry and will provide an overview of the breadth of activity we are currently engaged in as a sector as well as the reason for those activities as asked by the Committee:

International student recruitment:

- Over 28,500 international students and another 17,000 from Europe are currently studying in Scotland's 19 higher education institution from over 180 countries and regions across Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, and Australia.
- The volume of international students and graduates educated in Scotland provides a vast global network of alumni which help to build Scotland's "soft power".¹
- The Connected Scotland partners have identified Brazil, China, Malaysia and Colombia as priority markets for student recruitment activity on the basis of an analysis of key markets for Scottish higher education performed by British Council and Scottish Enterprise in 2013, which shows that significant demographics of tertiary-aged people are likely to be mobile in their pursuit of higher education².
- As well as an undeniably important income stream for institutions (£377 million in fees before off-campus expenditure) having a significant community of international students enriches the learning and social experience bringing different perspectives, mingling of cultures providing a global outlook for all learners.

¹ Universities Scotland (2013) *Richer for It* p14.

² <http://connectedscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Global-Priority-Market-Analysis-FINAL-VERSION-1.pdf>

- With more world class universities per head of population, with the exception of Switzerland, and international student satisfaction ratings higher than the global average, Scotland has a highly attractive “product” in its universities.

Transnational education (TNE) and overseas campuses

- Several institutions including Heriot-Watt University (Dubai and Malaysia), Queen Margaret University Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University (New York) and the Glasgow School of Art (Singapore) have overseas satellite campuses with several others delivering significant levels of provision via a partner organisation including Edinburgh Napier in Hong Kong for over 20 years.
- The delivery of in-country TNE is currently worth £13.7 million.
- The provision of TNE satisfies the demand that growing economies have for world-class higher education and builds opportunities for mobility, developing joint programmes and research partnership links to name a few.
- China is currently home to the greatest number of Scottish HEIs delivering programmes in-country, followed by India. Malaysia, Singapore, the USA, and Hong Kong also have a high number of Scottish HEIs delivering programs.
- Shifts in technology has allowed the sector to deliver programmes globally through online learning mostly for postgraduate qualifications and through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) making free higher education available to millions of students across the globe.

Student and staff exchange

- Scotland’s universities believe in the value of student exchange and both lead and participate in an array of exchange schemes and scholarship funds in order to create opportunities for Scottish-domiciled students to experience life and study in another country but also to welcome students from across the world.
- Impossible to quantify, some of the largest student exchange schemes open to all universities are The Scottish Government’s Saltire Scholarship Scheme and the Outward Mobility Fund and Erasmus/Erasmus+ within Europe.

Research partnerships

- Research performance is compared and assessed globally and 77 per cent of the research undertaken by Scotland’s universities was found to be world-leading or internationally excellent in the 2014 REF.³
- Scotland’s world-class research universities have always been highly successful at competing for, and winning funds from international sources, which came to £123.5m in 2013/14.
- Sources like Europe’s Framework Programme 7 (FP7), the predecessor to Horizon 2020 which ran from 2007-2013 are incredibly important to Scottish institutions, which is why we ask for the Scottish Parliament’s support in opposing proposed cuts to the Horizon 2020 grant.⁴
- The pursuit of new knowledge is fundamental to the purpose of universities. We collaborate internationally in research partnerships because each institution wants to work with the best minds wherever they are across the world. There are no national boundaries within the research ecosystem.

³ REF figs.

⁴ Add very concise details here about proposed cuts to H2020 & the US position.

Attraction of inward investment

- Universities act as a magnet for inward investment into Scotland contributing to the ongoing prosperity of Scotland's economy. University research and innovation and the creation of pools of highly skilled graduates are two key factors sought after by prospective investors. Universities' role within a 'cluster' of business and academia around a certain industry can serve as a powerful attraction factor.
- This is largely a by-product of other university activities but it is one universities have been keen to exploit working with Scottish Development International (SDI) and others. Companies such as Daktari, Toshiba Medical, Samsung and GlaxoSmithKline are just a few of those investing in Scotland in recent years citing universities as a determining factor.

International development

- Universities see themselves as part of an international community and feel their responsibilities to that community very strongly.
- Programmes in support of international development span the teaching, research and knowledge exchange roles of our universities. The University of Aberdeen is home to the Centre for Sustainable International Development. Specific examples from across the sector include: Stirling University's researchers applying their expertise in aquaculture to developing countries in Africa and Asia; Dundee University's Child Health International Partnership Programme which fosters the education and training of overseas paediatricians offering opportunities not available in the host institution; Edinburgh University's work to support Malawian healthcare education institutions to transform the curricula; or, Strathclyde's support for the MUKTI Project in India which provides free prosthetic and orthotic services and is organised, funds-raised and run by staff and students from the university's biomedical engineering department.

Other international activities

- Internationalisation is a key strategy for all Scottish universities and the different strands of activity contribute to each member's global engagement and provide opportunities for learning, exchange and knowledge transfer. Examples includes:
 - Country specific Institutes like Confucius Institutes across Scotland – Edinburgh, Strathclyde, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Heriot-Watt University
 - Subject specific centres like Strathclyde's *SCILT* - Scotland's National Centre for Languages, which promotes and supports the delivery of high quality language learning within a climate which celebrates all languages or Edinburgh's *Bilingual Matters* – a public engagement programme showing the benefits of bilingualism
 - Fulbright - Since 2013 the University of Strathclyde and the University of Dundee have jointly delivered the 'Scotland Summer Institute' bringing US students to the UK for a 3-6 week academic and cultural programme
 - knowledge exchange activities like QMU's new Food Development and Innovation Centre which is helping Scottish SMEs to make the most of export opportunities.

International export

- The cumulative impact of universities' international activity can be measured at £1.3 billion worth of exports in 2012/13.

Connected Scotland⁵

- Within Universities Scotland, our international activity working on behalf of the HE sector, is now focused around Connected Scotland which was formally launched last year as a collaborative venture involving eight partners including the British Council Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Scotland's enterprise agencies, the Scottish Government and the Royal Society of Scotland.
- The aim is to position Scotland's universities as world leaders in higher education and to ensure they become an international partner of choice in teaching, research and knowledge exchange. The venture was undertaken because of the potential to achieve more by pooling our expertise and connections and working together than is possible by working individually.
- Connected Scotland led a successful scoping mission to Indonesia in 2013 to raise awareness of both countries, but particularly the Scottish sector and its strengths in research, teaching and learning with the view to fostering long-term academic partnerships. From an initial survey six months after the visit we know that the number of members that now have links with Indonesia have increased since the visit.

Q. Do you think your sector and/ or organisation is effective in participating in international activities? If not, what would help you to make improvements? What prevents you from making improvements now?

Scotland's higher education institutions are highly effective in their international activities as demonstrated in a range of metrics and performance indicators.

There are a number of factors in the funding and policy environment that are outwith the sector's control but which impact (positively or negatively) on our ability to be effective in international activities. This includes:

Ensuring Scotland's 'product' remains internationally competitive

- Higher education faces many of the same challenges as other industries when exporting; our success is based on our renowned for delivering a distinctive 'product' and achieving a standard of excellence not easily matched by others. Higher education operates in a highly competitive global market with prospective international students, multinational companies and global research organisations considering options across the globe when considering where to study or who to partner with.
- Ensuring that universities remain competitively funded on an international level is essential to the maintenance of that excellence. The staff we employ and the estates and other facilities we have in Scotland are what makes us an internationally attractive destination to study or partner with. Institutions would like to be making strategic investments now that would safeguard their international competitiveness long into the future. Public investment is essential to this and the reality is this is under constant pressure. Recurrent grants for higher education research are decreasing in cash terms, grants for teaching have decreased in real terms and the capital budget has fallen by more than 75 per cent since 2009/10.

⁵ www.connectedscotland.org

Immigration policy.

- A change to immigration policy to allow the re-introduction of post-study work arrangements that allowed Scottish universities to make a competitive offer on par with those in Australia, Canada and New Zealand would give Scotland the potential to grow international student numbers at a rate faster than the current plateau.
- This is well documented by the Scottish Parliament and there is cross-party support for the Smith Commission's recommendation for the reintroduction of a post-study work route for Scotland. However it is worth noting again because of the current policy's damaging impact on our institutions. However if this is achieved (whether at a UK or Scottish level) a change would help the sector to improve our growth in international student recruitment.

Potential cuts to Horizon 2020.

- Europe's research and innovation budget is facing £2.7bn of cuts in order to fund a newly created European Fund for Strategic Investments. If this goes ahead this could significantly reduce Scotland's ability to lever in resources from this fund which were worth €636 million to Scotland during the period from 2007-2013.
- The €636 million secured for Scotland under FP7 equates to 10.4 per cent of funding that came to the UK (relative to 8.5 per cent of the UK population) and 1.6 per cent of the EU total over the period (relative to 1 per cent of the EU population).

Outward mobility of Scottish domiciled students

- The number and proportion of Scottish domiciled students taking up opportunities for outward mobility compares very poorly with that of their international peers coming to Scotland. Although an imbalance may persist due to the inherent value of an English-speaking education there are well documented cost, language and other barriers to greater take-up of these opportunities however, this puts Scottish domiciled students at a disadvantage in an increasingly global labour market.
- There is also a widening access dimension to exchange opportunities with anecdotal evidence to suggest that students from disadvantaged backgrounds at university even less likely to take up these opportunities. The Outward Mobility Fund supported by the Scottish Government has a widening access dimension to it which is welcome. However, the instability of the year-to-year nature of the fund makes it difficult for institutions to engage with strategically and is limiting its effectiveness. Commitment to the relatively low level of funding for a minimum of three/five years would allow institutions to invest time, energy and long-term funding into projects that would have a chance of delivering benefit for students.

Q. What should organisations in Scotland do to be effective internationally? Are you aware of any good examples of this from Scotland or another country?

In-country support

- In country support is essential to building up international links and taking advantage of opportunities. The support that Universities Scotland receives from British Council and SDI in this

regard is very helpful and a number of institutions have other means for doing this through shared offices or other in-country facilities.

Long-term investment in international approaches

- There is a need to make long-term investments in collaborative activities in order to be effective internationally. This applies to institutions themselves and to the organisations and agencies that support them.

Collaboration

- There are definite benefits from taking a collaborative approach to the international promotion of higher education. This is an area where the tension between collaboration and competition actually works pretty successfully. Joint missions around a subject area or with a clear focus have proved to be effective. Many of our member institutions find the coordinated marketing of Scotland and its distinctive assets to be helpful in distinguishing Scotland from the rest of the UK. Member institutions know when it is most effective to present themselves as British or Scottish universities.
- However, there can be a challenge for Universities Scotland to ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided to the full diversity of our membership and that individuals in our partner organisations have a good level of understanding of the different strengths of our members.

Awareness of global trends

- In order to be effective internationally it is imperative to be flexible and adaptable. It is essential to keep well informed of global trends and be responsive to the needs of partners in an increasingly competitive space. An awareness of individual country (key market) strategies is also important. Timing is key and sector organisations need to proactively seek out opportunities.

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