

Going Global Partnerships

Tertiary Education session for Education World Forum delegates, hosted by The British Council

Wednesday 21 May 2025

The Abbey room, fourth floor, QEII Centre, London

Tertiary Education as a driver of sustainable, scalable and equitable education systems

Time: 13:10 – 14:30

Venue: Queen Elizabeth II Centre, The Abbey room, fourth floor

Session Brief

For most countries, developing a well-functioning tertiary education system is critical to achieving economic and societal goals. There are many different elements to this including funding systems for teaching and research, quality assurance, continuous professional development for leaders and staff, bodies that drive equitable access and support with digital technologies. There are also often bodies that represent different kinds of institutions (universities, colleges, independent HE providers) within the system and bodies that support them to develop partnerships overseas.

The UK has well-developed tertiary education systems in each of the four nations. This session, curated by the British Council, provides an opportunity to meet representatives from the various sector bodies that make up the system and to understand more about what they do and current priorities and challenges – and possibly to set the foundations for future partnerships.

Participants

Overseas: Senior ministers, government officials with responsibility for tertiary education or interested in the impact that tertiary education has on education systems, and British Council country leads.

UK: Heads/senior representatives of UK tertiary education organisations.

Schedule

Arrivals: 13:00 – 13:10

Agenda		
13:10 – 13:30	Welcome and introductions	Dr Fabrizio Trifiró , Programme Director Education World Forum Maddalaine Ansell , Global Director for Education, British Council
13:30 – 14:20	Interactive session: tertiary education as an enabler towards building sustainable, scalable and equitable education systems	Facilitated by British Council staff
14:20 – 14:30	Summary and departure for Policy Dialogue	Maddalaine Ansell , Global Director for Education, British Council

Institutional representatives

Advance HE	Mr David Townhill Director International Development	david.townhill@advance-he.ac.uk
Association of Colleges (AoC)	Ms Emma Meredith Director of Skills Policy and Global Engagement	emma.meredith@aoc.co.uk
Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)	Ms Fariba Soetan Head of Policy and Research	fariba.soetan@acu.ac.uk
GuildHE	Dana Gamble Policy Manager	dana.gamble@guildhe.ac.uk
Independent Higher Education	Mr Alex Proudfoot Chief Executive	alex@ihe.ac.uk
Jisc	Mr David Patterson Head of international	david.patterson@jisc.ac.uk
Office for Students (OfS)	Ms Gemma Long Head of Quality	gemma.long@officeforstudents.org.uk
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	Ms Shannon Stowers Head of International Policy & Engagement	s.stowers@qaa.ac.uk
The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)	Kim Eccleston Head of Provider and Adviser Experience	k.eccleston@ucas.ac.uk
UK ENIC	Mr Chris Lyons Head of Policy & Engagement	chris.lyons@ecctis.com
Universities UK International (UUKi)	Mr Jamie Arrowsmith Director	Jamie.Arrowsmith@international.ac.uk

Organisational profile

Advance HE

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>

Advance HE is a member-led charity of and for the sector that works with partners across the globe to improve higher education for staff, students and society. Advance HE are experts in higher education, with a particular focus on teaching and learning, governance, leadership development and equality, diversity and inclusion. Advance HE works with its network of global associates and partners, providers and systems around the world, to understand different contexts and challenges in the higher education sector, and to deliver solutions. Its Fellowship programme has recognised over 200,000 staff in 110 countries, and it has member institutions in over 30 countries. Advance HE aims to support the higher education sector worldwide by enhancing teaching quality, faculty development, and institutional excellence. This includes scaling up the Certificate of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, equipping educators with high-quality pedagogical skills.

Case study

Working closely with the Ministry of Education and Science in Kazakhstan and Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, we delivered a series of programmes to assist sector reform. These enabled HE leaders to develop their research and entrepreneurial learning activities in line with the objectives of the State Programme of Industrial and Innovative Development as more academic freedom was granted to universities by the Ministry. In Ukraine we worked closely with the Institute of Higher Education (part of the National Academy of Educational Sciences) and the British Council we designed a multi-faceted Leadership Development Programme for 40 universities delivered over a three-year period to support the national initiative to enhance leadership capacity and support reform. Institutional change projects were undertaken in collaboration with UK institutions.

Association of Colleges (AoC)

<https://www.aoc.co.uk/>

Association of Colleges is the national voice for further education, sixth form, tertiary and specialist colleges in England. We are a not-for-profit membership organisation established in 1996 by colleges, for colleges. Our members make up more than 90% of the sector - educating and training 1.6 million people each year. As a membership body we influence government and local and national policymakers to create the environment for strong and sustainable colleges at the heart of the economy, provide high quality professional support, advice and intelligence to meet the needs of every member and champion and enhance the reputation of colleges, leaders, staff and students.

Case study

AoC engages in a range of international development activity spanning partnership projects, student mobility and research. Examples of AoC and college international case studies are available via the UK Skills Partnership - the overarching body for the UK skills sector:

<https://ukskillspartnership.org.uk/member/association-of-colleges/>

Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)

<https://www.acu.ac.uk/>

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is a global network of more than 400 universities in over 40 countries with a shared commitment to building a better world through higher education. Accredited by the Commonwealth and incorporated by Royal Charter, the ACU has been fostering

international collaboration in higher education since 1913. Acting as the voice for higher education in the Commonwealth, the ACU convenes and connects universities, individuals, and partners, and provides resources, programmes and educational opportunities that strengthen the capacity of universities and individuals. Its aim is to create a strong and connected higher education community that works across borders and boundaries to build a fairer, more sustainable world.

Case study

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) champions sustainable, scalable, and equitable education through initiatives that foster global collaboration. Our Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit supports fair, impactful partnerships between universities across different contexts, ensuring research contributes to local and global sustainable development goals. A further example of our work is through the ACU's Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) international mobility opportunities, through which the ACU connects researchers from Small Island Developing States and coastal Commonwealth countries with UK institutions, building skills, knowledge exchange, and long-term networks. These initiatives show how empowering equitable research and mobility not only strengthens tertiary education systems but also drives inclusive, locally relevant solutions for global challenges.

GuildHE

<https://guildhe.ac.uk/>

GuildHE offers a unique perspective on UK higher education. And we get diversity. Nearly 70 diverse institutions, universities, colleges and specialists, call us home. We champion vocational and technical education, professional programmes and specialist providers. From healthcare and agriculture to business, the creative arts and more, our members' expertise informs our influential voice. As one of the original 3 higher education representative bodies, we're a key government advisor, working directly with government and regulators to shape policy that reflects the need of a diverse sector.

Independent Higher Education

<https://ihe.ac.uk/>

Independent Higher Education (IHE) is the UK's representative body for independent providers of higher education, professional training and pathways. Our 90+ members and subscribers deliver professionally focused education across a range of specialist subjects, designed for all stages of the education journey. Offering courses from Level 2/3 technical education through to Level 4/5, Degrees, CPD and Professional Doctorate programmes, IHE members pivot around their industries and specialisms which sets them apart from traditional universities and colleges. IHE's formal representative role is underpinned by a mission to promote the values of diversity, flexibility, innovation, student focus and collaboration within UK higher education. We achieve this by advising, supporting and promoting the institutions in our membership, all of whom in joining sign up to these values and commit themselves to putting them into practice.

Jisc

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/>

Jisc is a UK-based non-profit organization that supports higher education, further education, and research through digital technology. Jisc provides network and IT services, including the Janet Network, which is used by 18 million people. Jisc helps institutions save time and money through sector-wide deals and shared services. Jisc offers expert advice, practical assistance, and training to improve education and research. Their goal is to make the UK a leader in technology for education and innovation

Office for Students (OfS)

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

The Office for Students is the regulator for higher education in England. We protect the interests of students by supporting a diverse and independent higher education sector. Universities and colleges that choose to register can access benefits such as public funding and gives them eligibility to apply for the power to award degrees. Registered higher education providers must meet our requirements for teaching quality, student outcomes, equality of access, and their management, governance and financial sustainability. We monitor the performance of universities and colleges, publish data and reports, and take action if a registered provider is failing to meet our requirements. We want students to receive a high quality academic experience and positive outcomes, with qualifications that hold their value over time. Quality and standards assessments check that universities and colleges meet our requirements, while our Teaching Excellence Framework encourages outstanding education.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/>

Established in 1997, QAA is a world-leading quality agency providing quality assurance and enhancement. As a full member of ENQA and INQAAHE, QAA ensures that learners experience the highest possible quality of education. We work in the four UK nations and are custodian of UK-wide sector reference points including the Quality Code for Higher Education. Our key areas of work include:

- Setting, monitoring and reviewing against the standards of UK higher education in collaboration with the sector
- Providing advice and support about quality and standards to universities and colleges, higher education sector organisations and governments
- Evaluating and enhancing the quality of UK transnational education
- Training, guidance and events to help higher education providers develop and improve their own quality assurance processes
- Consultancy, training and international services to develop approaches to higher education quality both in the UK and internationally.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

<https://www.ucas.com/>

UCAS is the shared and centralised admissions service for undergraduate higher education at universities and colleges across the four nations of the United Kingdom. As a non-profit organisation and independent charity, it connects international students with UK higher education opportunities, providing dedicated support to international students and those who advise them throughout the admissions process. Each year UCAS supports over 150,000 international applicants from over 80 countries and territories find their university and course of choice within the UK.

UK ENIC

<https://www.enic.org.uk/>

UK ENIC is the UK's National Information Centre for international qualifications, providing impartial assessments to compare foreign qualifications with UK standards. Formerly known as UK NARIC, it offers services like the Statement of Comparability, assisting students, professionals, and employers. Operating under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, UK ENIC ensures international qualifications are recognised appropriately. As part of the ENIC-NARIC Networks, it supports global qualification recognition across Europe. UK ENIC plays a key role in Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), which facilitate the acceptance of international qualifications between the UK and other countries. These agreements enhance trade, education, and professional mobility, ensuring qualifications are recognised both in the UK and abroad. UK ENIC leads technical discussions, supports negotiations, and drafts treaty

texts for MRAs, contributing to agreements with countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, India (most recently), Mexico, and Peru. These partnerships promote international education, student mobility, and professional exchange. For professional qualifications, UK ENIC collaborates with regulatory and professional bodies to support mutual recognition under UK Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

Universities UK International (UUKi)

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/universities-uk-international>

Universities UK (UUK) is the collective voice of 141 universities. We work with the government and higher education sector to champion UK higher education. UUK acts as the collective voice of universities, bringing them together to pursue a common cause: thriving universities, serving society. UUKi is the international arm of Universities UK. In the UK and abroad, we connect higher education leaders, share insights, influence policy and create opportunities, acting as the collective voice of UK universities on the global stage.

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