



Minutes of the International Education Council meeting - 25 September 2013

ACTIONS

- Terms of Reference and Ways of Working were agreed
- The Secretariat to provide guidance to members on how their papers should be labelled so that the intended level of openness or confidentiality is clear.
- The Council established working groups to consider i) visas, led by Kit Malthouse and ii) the barriers to growing UK education exports, led by Carl Lygo. The scope and membership of each group would be determined after the meeting, with both groups aiming to report back at the next Council meeting on 26 February.
- Council members to provide suggestions on issues they would find it useful for the Government to raise in its bilateral discussions with China.
- The Secretariat to provide future Council meetings with an overview of significant overseas visits planned by Government, where there would be opportunities to promote UK education.
- The Secretariat to invite Ian Livingston, the incoming Trade Minister, to speak at a future Council meeting. The current Trade Minister, Lord Green, would be succeeded in December 2013.

MINUTES

Terms of Reference and Ways of Working

It was noted that although the UK carried out a range of international education activities to achieve different objectives, the focus of this Council would be on education as an export.

It was recognised that visa policy has a significant impact on the success of education exports and should be an early topic for Council consideration.

The Council also recognised that outward student mobility was important to demonstrate reciprocity and the value that the UK placed on increasing our understanding of other countries.

But the overall objective was for the Council to develop a clear understanding of the UK's capabilities; where we are now and what we need to grow further.

The Terms of Reference were agreed. Members agreed to undertake to represent and connect with stakeholders in their part of the sector, although the mode of engagement might vary from member to member, depending on their organisation's role.

On ways of working, it was agreed that the Council should seek to be as transparent as possible bearing in mind that some information might be commercially confidential and should not be made public. The Secretariat was asked to provide guidance to members on the rules around freedom of information before the next meeting.

International Education Strategy

Maddalaine Ansell presented the International Education Strategy, which included key policy strands and potential priorities for the Council (presentation attached). In relation to priorities, members noted:

Transnational Education (TNE): It was noted that because further education providers were, in the main, small and medium organisations, they were often less well placed to respond to TNE opportunities and saw it as a higher risk endeavour than their higher education counterparts. The importance of ensuring quality assurance for further education delivered overseas was raised. While the QAA took the lead for higher education, there was no corresponding body for further education.

UK outward student mobility: It was agreed that outward student mobility could play an important part in promoting the UK and demonstrating ambition for a two way reciprocal relationship with overseas partners.

Range of the UK's expertise: It was noted that the UK had a strong offer in innovation, research, technology transfer, and quality assurance.

It was noted that in recent years, the sector, as a whole, has been less able to respond to major education opportunities. In moving forward, it is important to understand the level at which the sector could operate in response to opportunities. For example, it might be that sales expertise was needed. It was noted that the UKTI Education team had been established to support bids for high value opportunities.

Education Technology: It was suggested that the UK should not see itself as lagging behind the USA. The annual UK BETT (technology exhibition) showcases the UK's expertise and is the world's largest and best attended technology exhibition.

Visa policy: The importance and impact of visa policy was highlighted. While acknowledging the challenge of major policy change, it was suggested that work could take place to look at practical suggestions that might make things work more efficiently or address specific areas of difficulty. Discussion also included the possibility of improving the experience of international students in other ways, such as through housing and financial security.

Opportunity for British Schools Overseas to train UK Teachers: It was noted that there was significant opportunity for British Schools Overseas to engage in training for UK teachers, to fill perceived emerging shortages.

It was agreed that the first two working groups would develop proposals to increase the efficiency of the visa system and to identify the main barriers to growing the UK's education exports. Both groups would report back at the next meeting on 26 February.

UK-China relations

The British Embassy in Beijing gave a presentation to the Council on UK-China relations with particular reference to education. The presentation highlighted a number of points:

- China saw upskilling its workforce and improving their ability to innovate as key to its continuing success.
- China recognised that the UK system fostered creativity and was interested in our vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Further opportunities for the UK and China to work in partnership ranged from education policy development to student mobility at school and university levels, as well as long term cultural ties.
- Many Chinese students studying at UK schools went on to take UK qualifications at university level, either in the UK or through joint programmes.
- UK and Chinese universities already worked together on high quality research and innovation and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) were expected to provide new opportunities.

The Council highlighted the value of recruitment at school level and the importance of UK institutions finding the right Chinese partner with which to work.

English Language Training – the UK offer

Tony Millns delivered a presentation on English language training and progress on four particular actions that had arisen from recent visits to Mexico, Colombia and Kazakhstan: a prospectus outlining the UK offer, setting up a national centre for excellence in Colombia, international quality assurance pilots in Mexico and Italy, and discussions with Kazakhstan on the potential need for English language training for employees of the wealth fund's constituent companies. It was agreed that Tony would update the Council on progression at the next meeting.

The Council acknowledged the importance of building and presenting a package to meet customers' needs. The Council noted that UK domestic capacity would need to meet increasing demand.

Any Other Business

The Government would be publishing a small business strategy later in 2013. Members of the Council should contact the Secretariat if they wished to feed into the strategy.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held in BIS on 26 February 2014, 15.00-17.00.