

Barriers to growing the UK's Education Exports

The working group chaired by Carl Lygo was asked to identify real tangible help that is needed from BIS to help break down the barriers to export growth for UK Education.

Methodology: a questionnaire survey of interested parties and representative groups was undertaken. Two meetings of the working group took place on the 19th November 2013 and 13th December 2013. The Chair also conducted 11 focus group meetings with interested parties and 21 telephone interviews with CEO's in the sector.

UK Immigration Policy: whilst it was agreed this was not in scope, all involved expressed the view that the approach to students in the UK's immigration policy had a negative impact on export growth (e.g. with articulation agreements and in comparison to the "full package" that other countries could offer)

Without rehearsing the entire discussions and for the sake of brevity the best four key recommendations of the group are outlined below. The working group wanted to record that the enhancements being made to UKTI's approach to education exports and in particular the appointment of Emily Ashwell (MD UKTI Education) are warmly welcomed by the sector.

Recommendations:

1. Assistance in gaining recognition overseas for the credentials of UK education providers

This impacts both at sector level (for example, Further Education (FE) is difficult to define in comparison to international provision) and with individual providers who are not members of organisations such as UUK so are not automatically included in mutual recognition lists held overseas. At the FE sector level 2 specific barriers were identified: (1) we are selling a model with different regulatory arrangements whereas countries overseas are operating under a single, centrally regulated system; and (2) Ofqual will only validate English based FE products and is not prepared to validate courses/qualifications offered solely internationally. The specific recommendations are: (A) The creation of a UK government kite mark or seal of approval which would be an indication of quality, particularly for non typical providers. (B) Establishing a layman's and easy to access guide to how our system works for countries overseas as an assurance mechanism for when providers articulate this to foreign buyers.

2. Enhancement to the UKTI website to improve information flow

The UKTI website provides useful sector updates (in terms of basic description of market size, systems of education and general economic data) and notification of business opportunities which individual providers can follow up (provided they register with UKTI). Currently the "doing business in..." guides are too generic for the specific needs of the education sector and it is recommended that these should be enhanced for the benefit of all UK education providers. The purpose of further information is to enable a high level view to be taken of whether an opportunity deserves more time to be investigated by the provider and which direction be taken. The sector believes that relevant professional service firm providers would be willing to provide this advice to UKTI as a way of

advertising their services to the sector. A suggestion of the further information required is provided at Annex A below.

3. Trade missions and opportunities for the whole sector

The process for getting on to Ministerial trade missions is not clear, nor are the follow-up actions, and nor is the calendar known well in advance to co-ordinate UK provider initiatives. Australia and Germany are two examples of a good joined up approach where Government supports businesses. The sector appreciates that it needs to be more collaborative to work with Government to get the most out of such Trade Missions. The recommendation is that the new MD of UKTI Education should be given a greater role to assist in co-ordinating with the sector and setting follow up goals.

4. International Development Aid – Improved links to BIS

“One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world.” Malala Yousafzai addressing the UN July 2013. UK Education is respected around the world, it is a major source of “soft power” for the UK exporting the ideas of freedom and democracy. This is recognised in the work of DFID but the sector would encourage a greater link between the work of DFID and BIS in relation to the education sector. It is apparent to the UK sector that we are significantly disadvantaged when compared to the approach of other countries within the EU, specifically the approach taken by Germany.

Carl Lygo

London, January 2014

Annex A

A summary of what are the hurdles to exporting education products to Country X (with regard being had to the typical different legal structures in the UK – not for profit/profit and dealing with primary/secondary/tertiary/vocational and online education)

What laws govern the provision of education in Country X (with a relevant short summary), specifically:

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Tertiary education
- Vocational education
- Provision of online education

What is the educational regulatory system in Country X (for example the relevant licensing/recognition agencies in the primary/secondary/tertiary/vocational and online education).

What recognition lists are maintained in Country X, how does a UK provider gain access to inclusion on those lists, where can further advice be obtained.

What examples exist of UK education providers operating in Country X (and if felt appropriate a relevant contact)

Who should be contacted in the UK Embassy in Country X to help further?