**Minutes of the International Education Council Meeting - 5 June 2014**

**ACTIONS**

* The Secretariat to circulate the response to the visa working group paper; proposals on how the overarching council might assess progress of all the sector councils; and Lord Young’s report on small businesses and the industrial strategy.
* Council Members to send suggestions to the Secretariat on where government and the sector might best allocate funding, if it were available.
* The Secretariat to take forward discussions with Home Office on recommendations from the International Student Experience Working Group, including the Resource for Employers on the Employment Regulations for International Students and ensuring banks are complying with the Home Office requirements for banking documents.
* Council members to express any interest in contributing to deliverables for David Willetts’ visit to India in November to the Council Secretariat.
* FCO to clarify the status of the Indian PM’s Skills Advisor post and for Secretariat to circulate this information to the Council.

**MINUTES**

**Welcomes and introductions**

Professor Sir Eric Thomas chaired the meeting, as David Willetts was overseas on Ministerial business and Matthew Hancock was out of London.

The Secretariat confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting were either in hand or complete. It was noted that the Secretariat was working with the Home Office to finalise the response to the international student recruitment working group report.

**Feedback from overarching Industrial Strategy Council meeting**

Sir Eric Thomas (ET) had attended the May Industrial Strategy Council meeting and shared the successes of the International Education Council to date, including UKTI Education’s achievements in Saudi Arabia and the progress of the working groups. The overarching Council had discussed how to assess the work of all the sector councils and it would be important that this was not overly bureaucratic. Lord Young’s report on small businesses and the industrial strategy had also been sent to the overarching council; the report welcomed the establishment of UKTI Education. The overarching Council had recognised that skills were very important for the industrial strategies. The relationship between further and higher education was raised and the Council noted the relevance of this discussion to international education.

**Education technology: working group report**

Dominic Savage (DS), Chair of the working group, presented a paper summarising the work of his group. DS explained how the group undertook research with the sector, including through a questionnaire and a meeting prior to this report to the Council. The focus of the group had been on defining what the UK’s international offer was in education technology (ed tech), the wide range of providers who were part of the offer and how to generate large business opportunities internationally. It was noted that multinationals often dominated the agenda in overseas markets and there was scope for further work to consider ways to address this.

The group had concluded that the UK ed tech sector had much to offer as an industry and good ideas for using technology well, which were all good foundations for an export base. It was recognised that ed tech successes were often based on individual cases and there was an opportunity to combine expertise with government support to achieve more from a collaborative approach. There were several routes in to markets, including through international schools, the private education sector and events and exhibitions. The group recommended a range of activities should be undertaken including work on a core script and stronger communications of the UK offer.

It was agreed that UKTI Education would take forward the work on ed tech with BESA and the wider sector. Emily Ashwell (EA) explained that her team had identified ed tech as a sector focus and that it could cut across all parts of education. She would work with the sector to target particular opportunities. She also clarified that UKTI Education had the scope to determine what constituted a high value opportunity as she was aware the sector had concerns about whether ed tech would fit with an approach focussed on high value opportunities.

Ed tech was recognised as a new way of learning. Content and assessment were recognised as fast learning areas within ed tech, where there was capacity for development. Assessment was needed in schools for recording and interpreting data, which could in turn help children become responsible for their own learning. Such issues were relevant in both a domestic and international context and work such as that done by the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group should be considered. JISC cited their work on JANET as an example with both domestic and overseas aims which it might also be possible to build upon.

The Chair suggested that Council members put together, and submit to the Secretariat, transformative ideas where the Government might focus funding if it were available. The Secretariat noted that there were two possible opportunities here: in the industrial strategy space as part of the autumn statement and the general election next year. It was recommended that ideas should be large-scale and have a clear purpose as well as allowing for partnership between the sector and Government (including financial contributions from the sector).

**Student experience: working group report**

Toni Pearce (TP), Chair of the working group, presented a paper summarising the work of her group. TP outlined the immediate areas of work where she requested support from the Council, including:

1. Re-establishing the Resource for Employers on the Employment Regulations for International Students.
2. Ensuring banks were complying with Home Office requirements for banking documents and a focus on the ease of opening bank accounts for international students.

TP went on to outline medium and long-term areas where the working group would continue to focus its resource, including:

1. Pre-arrival information and civic welcomes: TP emphasised the need to make a clear offer for international students available in one place. This might include what international students could expect from studying in the UK, how they could interact with the community, and guidance on working and regulations etc.
2. Private rental sector guarantor scheme: TP highlighted that some institutions would act as guarantors and others would not and there was therefore a need to share best practice.
3. Employment/employability: TP noted the importance of international students having clarity about post study work opportunities (both in the UK and overseas) and about working rights while studying in the UK. It was suggested that opportunities for UK students to work overseas after graduation should also be considered.
4. The working group outlined their intention to consider a set of principles for international students’ experiences, which would focus on atmosphere and intent rather than regulations. This could highlight what the UK experience should be like, by sharing best practice.
5. The group hoped to develop a way to coordinate more effective research into international student satisfaction (UKCISA and NUS were likely to fund a literature review in this area and would welcome Council Members’ input).

TP made reference to examples of good practice internationally and the benefit of bringing together research showing different approaches from other countries. It was noted that many higher education (HE) institutions made use of the International Student Barometer but that it was an expensive tool for further education colleges who might only have small numbers of international students. It would be useful to be able to track students’ journey in to HE and after graduation, to establish who had had a UK education previously and who had gone on to do well after gaining a UK education. The Home Office held some data on international students who have graduated from the UK which might be relevant to this aim. It was agreed that BIS would work with the Home Office on points 1 and 2 under the immediate areas of work outlined above.

The Council endorsed the work of the group to date and noted that the competitive market for international students meant that many UK institutions already had expertise in providing high class accommodation. There might be scope to share this experience and offer shared accommodation services at a marginal cost for mutual benefit.

The important role of British students in welcoming international students was also recognised. QAA confirmed that its guidance on international student experience was currently being revised.

**Forward work plan: HE student recruitment**

Colin Riordan (CR) presented a proposal to form a working group which would develop a package of measures relating to HE recruitment and aim to pilot them around the time of the autumn statement. CR explained that a number of Council members had met to discuss the proposal and the group would cover topics that cut across the whole sector, not just HE. That could include promoting pre-university qualifications for international students, which could feed in to the college agenda; MOOCs, where the University of East Anglia had already created a course for internationals students on the UK international experience; making entry easier and removing barriers; bringing together communications and marketing; employability opportunities/ post study opportunities; and careers advice and guidance if international students chose to work overseas. It would be possible to initially focus activities on one key market such as India.

Council members welcomed the proposal to form a working group and provided comments in the following areas:

1. Agents: There could be a way to deliver guidance on what should be expected from agents in a way which would protect the interests of students. The possibility of a voluntary approach by the sector to accredit and recognise agents was also raised. It was highlighted that institutions should be clear about what they should expect and agents they wish to use. It was concluded that a multi-pronged approach was needed for this.
2. Social media: It was emphasised that social media and advice from peers could play a big part in impacting on students’ decisions on where to study and a small number of negative stories could have a disproportionate effect. Significant investment would be needed if effective action were to be taken relating to social media and professional advice would be required to understand the market, be responsive and use it as a reputation management tool.

It was emphasised that the UK wanted to increase the number of legitimate students studying in the UK and that different institutions would have different strategies and different target countries. It was reinforced that there was no cap on the number of legitimate students who chose to study in the UK.

It was agreed that this working group and the NUS led working group should keep each other informed of their respective activities.

It was also noted that the QAA and the HE IU had recently published a report of the sector’s consultation on strengthening the quality assurance of UK transnational education.

**Schools working group**

Dr Chris Ray (DCR), as Chair of the schools working group, provided an update following the group’s first meeting on the morning of the Council. DCR noted that the group intended to submit a paper for discussion at the next IEC meeting. This would cover a whole range of areas, such as home based schools in the UK and branch campuses overseas; the focus on recruiting teachers and leaders; the student welcome; and inspections to ensure standards were maintained.

Challenges for the schools sector included:

1. Over the next 5 years, 175,000 teachers would be needed (and 300,000 by 2022) due to the expansion of the English Curriculum overseas.
2. Questions around the use of standards and kitemarks of British Schools Overseas.
3. The changing make up of students at British Schools Overseas (e.g. the majority of students were now from the host market, not ex pat students).
4. There were already 25,000 international students at UK boarding schools, but the number at independent day schools was also growing and meant an even stronger need for a consistently warm welcome.
5. The management of data about the destinations of international students educated in British schools.

The Council welcomed the work of the schools group and noted the strong reputation of UK schools overseas.

**UK-India relations and the role of education**

ET welcomed Giles Thompson (GT), Head of the South Asia Directorate at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. GT highlighted that the BJP had won the recent Indian elections and that Narendra Modi was the new Prime Minister. The success was partly attributed to strong campaigning, where he had tapped in to the aspirations of Indians, including jobs, opportunities and governance. Modi aimed to address bureaucracy and would cut 20 Ministerial posts. A focus on economic growth and development was expected.

The UK Government was already engaging across the whole policy agenda, and a range of senior Ministers were expected to visit India in the coming months. Education was one of the UK’s priority areas when working with India. India was planning to double education spend from 3-6% GDP and was expected to reconsider issues such as the private providers bill which had stalled under the previous government. The UK sector could work in partnership with India across the education spectrum from incoming students to IT, MOOCs and skills training to support the Indian economy.

The 2014-15 GREAT campaign aimed to increase the number of Indian students coming to the UK (including through the Chevening scholarships scheme) but the UK also aimed to increase the number of its students studying in India, e.g. through a programme which would shortly be announced by the British Council. It was highlighted that in November David Willetts would be attending the Science and Innovation conference and the Education Summit in India. Council members were asked to express any interest in contributing to deliverables for this to the Council Secretariat.

The Council asked about the status of Mr. S. Ramadorai and his post as the Indian PM’s Skills Advisor. It was agreed that the FCO would clarify and the Secretariat would circulate this information to the Council.

**Any other business**

EA noted that UKTI Education were likely to consult Council members on the event support and grants which UKTI currently provided for overseas activity and what they could do which would be of additional benefit.

ET mentioned that as well as visiting India, David Willetts would shortly be going to the USA and was expected to visit Latin America later in the year. The next Council meeting would be on 16 October 2014, 15:30-17:30.