

International Briefing

The internationalisation of higher education has grown dramatically over the past three decades, mirroring the growing globalisation of economies and societies. Universities in Scotland are amongst the most internationalised and therefore compete at a world-class level to succeed within the new environment.

By any performance measure, for a country of its size, Scotland has a remarkably effective higher education sector with a very good international reputation for quality. It also has centuries of experience in developing effective international partnerships and the number, reach and longevity of international partnerships the sector and academics are involved in exceeds almost any other sector in Scotland. For these reasons, Scottish higher education has a very strong attraction-factor internationally, whether that is attracting international students and companies to Scotland or companies, governments and organisations overseas seeking our services. Finally, Scottish higher education has a distinctly Scottish identity and therefore can fulfil an ambassadorial role for the nation as a whole.

International reputation and export record

The Scottish higher education sector produces about one per cent of the world's new knowledge despite having only 0.1 per cent of the world's population. Therefore, globally, Scotland punches well above its weight on innovation, learning and high-level knowledge. And this is recognised around the world. Scotland produces more citations per head of the population and more citations per £100 spent on research than any other country in the world. Globally, in fields such as biotechnology, optoelectronics, artificial intelligence, computing and many other disciplines, Scotland has a world class reputation.

Higher education is one of the world-class services that Scotland produces. It offers, like no other sector, the opportunity for the internationalisation of Scotland as a nation. As a major business in its own right higher education is worth £1.9 billion and employs 35,000 people. It exports more than £400 million worth of services and is therefore one of Scotland's biggest service sector exporters and generates high-level human capacity in the economy through educating people to a high level. The higher education sector creates new technologies and processes and other innovations of economic significance, which it transfers to the Scottish economy. It works with private businesses, governments and non-governmental organisations all over the world. They are also in demand in many developing countries where they help with capacity-building in everything from agriculture to health services to education.

Spread and reach

The Scottish higher education sector works on an extensive range of projects. In addition to core education and research services, which include delivering higher education in other countries, major research collaborations with international universities and academic exchange programmes, there is a large volume of sales of research, training and consultancy services to industry. Capacity-building work to support public services in other countries is another major area of international activity and it is also

important to emphasise the internationalisation of Scottish arts and culture which is facilitated by the higher education sector.

Universities carry out research, deliver education and help to empower people to facilitate change as well as working in partnerships that have a long-term sustainable impact. These key strengths make the Scottish higher education sector significant in their international development work. International engagement has mainly been fostered by the sector through the development of partnerships to deliver shared programmes and to facilitate the international mobility of students. These activities are helping to further countries' ability to build and increase capacity by transferring skills, knowledge and expertise as tools for academics and students alike.

Scotland's higher education sector works with more than half of the world's countries. Its scope of activities is equally vast including capacity building work, building training and research networks and the development of international partnerships in the areas of teaching, curriculum development and research. Scottish universities also provide training and advisory services within the travel and tourism industry, language policy to government as well as education and training in the oil and gas sector.

Scotland's higher education institutions play a leading role in Scotland's international development work and in 2007, universities were responsible for the delivery of one third of all projects under the Scottish Government's International Development Fund. International development activities are most commonly funded by higher education institutions themselves; however, funds may also be sourced from the Government, industry, companies and private finance, non-governmental organisations, research councils as well as grants and contracts. The volume and the range of the international development activities undertaken by universities show the capacity and academic strength of the Scottish higher education sector.

International Students

Scotland's higher education institutions attract over 37,000 international students therefore owning a 1.2 per cent share of the world market. Only a few Scottish industries can claim to occupy such a large proportion of world markets. In 2006/07 16.6 per cent of all students studying in Scotland were classed as international (either from Europe or other overseas) compared to only 14 per cent of the UK student body. Scotland receives around 50 per cent more applications from non-EU students to the UK than our population share and almost four times as many EU students than our population share. Scotland is not only more international than the UK as a whole but has one of the most international higher education sectors in the world. According to the OECD, Scotland would be ranked third, behind Australia and New Zealand, out of 18 countries based on the number of international students.

The number of international students in Scotland has increased significantly over the last ten years which demonstrates the impressive pull-factor of Scotland's universities, especially given increasing competition in what has become a strong market for international students. There are several schemes and initiatives that allow Scottish (and UK) domiciled students to study abroad for all or part of their education. One of the largest exchange schemes is Erasmus which is limited to European exchanges. Erasmus data for 2004/05 shows that 2,169 students came into Scotland through this scheme, double the number of students from Scotland which took part.

Scottish institutions have also been recognised for the support they give to international students. From six higher education institutions shortlisted for support for overseas students

at the THES Awards 2007, four of these were Scottish. Aspects of student support which were highlighted included the availability of student counselling, support for different religious faiths and dedicated units specifically designed to support international students within institutions.

International Staff

About ten percent of staff at Scottish universities are of non-UK nationality. The ability to attract and employ a significant number of international staff allows the sector to improve its research performance as it can utilise the best staff on an international basis. International staff do not only contribute academically but also more widely by becoming part of Scotland's labour force and therefore contributing both financially and culturally to Scotland's economy. Scotland has proved to be successful in attracting and recruiting international staff as there was an increase of non-UK research-intensive staff, as a proportion of all staff, from 25.3 per cent to 28.2 per cent in one year.

In Country presence of Scottish HEI's

In 2005/06 there were 18,590 students enrolled at Scottish higher education institutions but received their higher education entirely outside of the UK. A small fraction of these students were UK domiciled and took the opportunity to study abroad but the vast majority were a result of Scottish HEI's in-country presence in a number of countries across the world. That is approximately eight per cent of all students enrolled on programmes of Scottish higher education which are delivered overseas.

International Collaboration

Joint working and collaborating is an essential feature of higher education making its international work remarkable in regards to its spread and reach. At an individual academic level international collaborations are formed all the time. From a survey of member institutions it appears that Scottish universities have fully developed links with well over half of the world's 194 countries.

Scotland wide collaborations have the potential to raise Scottish higher education institutions' profile internationally. Scotland's economic growth is supported and influenced by the strength of the Scottish higher education sector also by means of attracting major companies and their investments into the country. Scotland both gives and gains value from international research collaborations. Most countries that collaborate with Scotland show significant gains in research impact, measured by citations, compared to domestic research publications.

A recent survey by Evidence Ltd demonstrated the high level of international collaboration taking place within Scottish universities. With regards to learning and teaching, more than 80 per cent of Scottish universities responding had the power to award joint degrees. Of these, 33 per cent do so in collaboration with an institution in one of the 44 other Bologna Process signatory countries and 8 per cent do so with an institution outside of the European Higher Education Area.

HESA data shows that Scottish higher education is successful in gaining international research grants and contracts with £50 million earned from these sources in 2005/06. However, Scotland also has a high volume of international collaborative research, particularly within the European Union. In 2005 Scotland earned £17.6 million in 2005/06 from collaborative research projects with the EU government, representing a 21 per cent increase in activity measured by income, over the previous year. This is a significantly higher increase than any other region in the UK.