

VEREDUS TALKS



A thought piece: Professor James Miller University of the West of Scotland

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONALISING HIGHER EDUCATION

The pursuit of knowledge, of being curious, of seeking to share our learning, is a universal experience. It therefore stands to reason that universities across this vastly interconnected world would want to be as international as possible.

Internationalisation covers a broad range of activities undertaken by universities. From recruiting international students to the development of international campuses and transnational education partnerships to co-creating groundbreaking curriculum to strategic partnerships between universities and industry partners in different countries. These partnerships can vary too: from academic and student exchanges to research, learning and teaching as well as knowledge exchange partnerships. Internationalisation will mean different approaches for different universities, aligning to their mission, their sense of place and strengths.

The benefits to internationalisation are vast. At its best, it's an enduring, University-wide commitment to enhancing the experience of staff, students and the community in encouraging a globally aware and inclusive learning environment. Internationalisation when executed correctly, benefits us all. Some thoughts on how this can be the case at a local, national and international level.

Locally

At UWS, we are the fourth largest recruiter of international students in Scotland. I am immensely proud that almost 38% of our students are international. Our students coming from across the globe – 133 nations at last count - to study at one of our five campuses.

Our international students play a pivotal role in enriching the learning and research experiences at our University. At UWS we're committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that promotes global connections and cultural exchange. This is a benefit both to international students, our 'home' students, our staff as well as the wider communities in which we are located as well as a massive contribution to our work supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Why do we recruit international students? Undeniably, there is a financial rationale but more fundamentally, it's intrinsic to our mission. As a University located in five diverse places I see our role as anchor institutions, engrained in the communities we serve, working in partnership with towns, cities, and nations to drive economic and cultural activity.



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Nationally

I am fortunate to lead a University in a nation that is a world-leading destination for international students. People from across the world want to study in Scotland and the impact that has on Scotland and our economy is significant, according to Universities Scotland, the annual economic impact of international students to the nation is £4.75 billion.

In addition to students, our sector is populated by staff who are the leading in learning, teaching and research. 38% of all academics in Scotland are from outside the UK. This rises to 55.6% of academics in areas such as engineering and technology. The importance of the sector working together and in partnership with policymakers to ensure we maximise our impact internationally is vital, which is why I am delighted to be elected as Universities Scotland's International Committee Convener, taking on the role in the new academic year.

Internationally

I believe firmly in international scholarship. Knowledge and curiosity are not restricted by borders. However, the reality is that it might not be possible or practical for some students to study abroad. Recognising this dilemma, many universities, including my own, work in partnership with institutions in other nations to offer students the opportunity to study for an awarded degree in their home country. This is called trans-national education (TNE).



In 2020-21, TNE was delivered by UK universities in 228 countries and territories to 510,835 students on every continent. TNE encompasses different deliveries at a range of study, reflecting the needs of the places in which it's located. This way of working together to deliver education combines local requirements with the world-leading expertise of our universities, bringing benefits to staff and students in the host country and back at UWS.

In the past decade, there has been a significant focus in Scotland on widening participation to higher education in Scotland. One of the reasons we are keen on recruiting international students is we know the impact that our students will have on whichever community they live or sector they work, the transformational impact of a university experience must not be underestimated. We recruit internationally because we believe in widening participation, and we don't think that belief should stop at the border. We recruit internationally because it's part of our mission as a University and part of our vision and values.

The impact of our international students at UWS extends beyond our campus regions. In the academic year 2022/23, 85% of our international student intake were from economically challenged regions, including India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Ghana. This diverse international student cohort positions UWS as a key contributor to global development, with our graduates making significant impact in countries and communities worldwide. Our students will make an impact wherever they choose to call home in the future.



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The future

The future economic and cultural success of UWS, Scotland and the UK is how we work together with international partners to solve global problems. Challenges such as the climate emergency, will not be solved in silos.

To fully contribute to finding those solutions there requires a policy environment which will continue to allow us to attract the students and staff that both the sector and the wider economy requires for us to all to collectively prosper, whilst simultaneously address the challenges posed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. mission as a University and part of our vision and values.

