



Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Inquiry into Australia's trade and investment relationship with the United Kingdom

Introduction

The Department of Education and Training (DET) has a responsibility for advancing Australia's economic productivity and social wellbeing through international engagement in education.

As Australia's third largest export industry, international education plays an important role in Australia's trade and investment relationships worldwide. It is central to supporting diplomatic and strategic relationships, advances knowledge and innovation, and contributes to economic growth and global citizenship.

In 2016, the Australian Government released Australia's first *National Strategy for International Education 2025* (the National Strategy). The National Strategy provides a framework to grow the international education sector, to enhance our reputation as a leader in education and research and to develop strong partnerships between people, institutions and governments.

Australia's education and research relationship with the United Kingdom

Education is an important component of Australia's overarching trade and investment relationship with the United Kingdom (UK). Australia and the UK have a mature and long-standing education relationship signified by student mobility, multilateral engagement, institutional linkages, research collaboration and government agency engagement.

Student mobility

Along with Australia, the UK is a major destination for international students worldwide. It is the third largest destination country for Australian tertiary-level students after the USA and New Zealand and is Australia's second largest source of international students from Europe (after Italy).¹ As at November 2016, there were 7,278 UK student enrolments at Australian institutions, an increase of almost 9.8 per cent on year-to-date November 2015.²

Australia supports students from the UK to undertake study, research and professional development in Australia and for Australians to do the same in the UK. For example, since 2007, 77 students and professionals from the UK have accepted an Endeavour Scholarship or Fellowship to undertake study, research or professional development in Australia. Over this same period, 109 Australians have accepted an Endeavour Scholarship or Fellowship to go to the UK to undertake study, research or professional development. Since 2008, Endeavour Mobility Grants have supported over 655

¹ UNESCO, *Global flow of tertiary level students* data 2016, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>

² Department of Education and Training, *International Student Data 2015*, https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Pages/InternationalStudentData2015.aspx#Pivot_Table

Australian students to undertake a study experience in the UK and over 255 students from the UK to study in Australia.

Multilateral engagement

Australia, along with the British Council, co-chairs the Integrity of International Education Roundtable. The roundtable provides a senior-official level forum for discussions on a range of important issues including quality assurance, student visa arrangements and cross-border education. The other roundtable members are Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. The department's involvement in this initiative reflects its close and ongoing relationship with the British Council and shared concern for international students.

University linkages

The UK is the fifth highest source country for international institutional agreements (surpassed by China, USA, Japan and Germany). Universities Australia 2016 data lists 502 formal agreements between Australian and UK universities that support student and staff exchange, academic and research collaboration and study abroad.³

Research collaboration

Research collaboration between the UK and Australia is strong. The UK was Australia's second largest scientific publication partner during the period 2011-2015. Over the same period, Australian and UK authors collaborated in over 10 per cent (31,000 publications) of all publications to which Australians contributed.⁴

The Australian Research Council (ARC), through its National Competitive Grants Program, funds research projects involving collaborations between Australia and the United Kingdom that benefit Australia.

For example, researchers at The University of Western Australia (supported by several ARC-funded projects), are collaborating with researchers at Oxford University, as well as other international industry partners, to improve modelling of ocean-pipeline-seabed interactions. Their collaborative research has led to more accurate, reliable and cost effective design of pipelines, resulting in safer and more reliable energy supply in Australia (and worldwide).

Government agency engagement

Australian students and researchers benefit from close cooperation between DET and relevant portfolio agencies such as the Australian Research Council (ARC), the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

- DET's strong education and research engagement with the UK is underpinned by close collaboration at the government-to-government level including through the Australia-United Kingdom Education Dialogue (AUKED). AUKED provides a formal framework for senior

³ Universities Australia, *2016 University Linkages Data*, <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/global-engagement/international-collaboration/international-links/Link-Maps/umber-and-types-of-agreements-by-selected-country-over-time>

⁴ Thomson Reuters, *INCITES Essential Science Indicators and Journal Citation Reports 2015 data*, <http://researchanalytics.thomsonreuters.com/incites/>

officials to progress cooperation on a range of issues including student debt recovery, higher education reforms, research cooperation and research-industry linkages.

- Despite not having formal agreements with the UK, ASQA collaborated with the UK's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) to review and analyse Ofsted's approach to quality assurance.
- The ARC does not enter into country-specific agreements and memorandums of understanding, but is committed to creating and enhancing international collaboration opportunities under the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). In 2017, the ARC is funding 910 new and ongoing research projects by Australian researchers that have indicated an intention to collaborate with the UK, with a total funding allocation of over \$258 million.
- TEQSA renewed its Memorandum of Cooperation with the UK Quality Assurance Agency in June 2016 and also collaborates with the UK through the Quality Beyond Boundaries Group (QBBG), a network of international quality assurance agencies.

Impact of BREXIT and future opportunities

It is not anticipated that the UK's decision to leave the EU will have a significant impact on the education and research relationship between Australia and the UK. Nonetheless, through the National Strategy and in collaboration with the Council for International Education, DET will continue to scan the geo-political environment to identify opportunities to expand bilateral education and research cooperation with the UK over the long-term.