



Education exports worth almost £20 billion to the UK

Brendan O'Malley 01 February 2019

Revenue from education-related exports and transnational education – or cross-border educational activity – is worth almost £20 billion (US\$26 billion) to the United Kingdom economy.

The amount earned rose by 3.1% from 2015 to 2016 and by 26% from 2010 to 2016, to an estimated nearly £19.9 billion in current prices, according to new data released by the Department for Education.

Responding to the publication of a Department for Education **briefing** on *UK Revenue from Education Related Exports and Transnational Education Activity in 2016*, Vivienne Stern, director of Universities UK International, said: “These figures highlight the hugely beneficial economic impact of the UK higher education sector and our international students, including students that come to the UK to study and those studying on UK programmes overseas.”

But she warned that while growth shown between 2015 and 2016 highlights that a UK university education is still in high demand, growth in the UK’s provision of higher education to international students has stagnated following the **changes to student migration policy** made in 2012.

“The UK’s growth has not kept pace with other major study destinations such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada.”

According to Universities UK, the policy changes may have lost the UK more than £8 billion in export earnings from international students.

Earnings increase

The latest Department for Education figures show that total education-related exports were estimated to be £18.1 billion in 2016, and have increased by 22% since 2010. Transnational education (TNE) activity was estimated to be £1.9 billion in 2016 and has grown by 73% since 2010, albeit from a lower base.

Higher education accounts for the largest share of revenue from education-related exports and TNE activity. Higher education institutions contributed £13.4 billion (67%) of the total value. The revenue from other stages of education such as further education and schools is comparably smaller at £0.3 billion and £0.9 billion, respectively.

Stern called for the government to work quickly to introduce measures to rectify the

“plateau in growth” of international student enrolment.

She said: “The government’s upcoming International Education Strategy offers a real opportunity to rectify this plateau. We hope that recent proposals to extend the time international students can stay in the UK to look for work after graduating, for a period of up to one year for PhD students and six months for others, are introduced swiftly by government.”

However, she also said universities believe it is necessary to go further and introduce a two-year Global Graduate Talent visa “that would make the UK more attractive to students and would allow a wider range of employers, in all parts of the UK, to benefit from access to talented graduates from around the world”.

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