



East Asia Agent Conference 2025

Innovate for a sustainable future

6 March 2025
Hong Kong

Gold Partner



Event/venue partners



THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

#EAEducationWeek
#EAAgentsConference

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Event Overview

The East Asia Agents Conference 2025, held in Hong Kong on 6 March 2025, provided international education agents with updates on policy, trends, and opportunities for business growth in a complex regional market. The event discussed challenges and solutions posed by changing demographics, new policies, fast-moving technology, digitally literate clients, and the popularity of online influencers.

The conference enabled agents to network with peers, UK universities and alumni, and to interact with stakeholders from the UK and Asia that help shape the international education and student recruitment environments within which their businesses operate.

Alongside updates on trends, the UK Agent Quality Framework (AQF), and international student satisfaction insights, the event fostered an environment where agents could exchange best practices within their professional education industry, enhancing their businesses, ethical services, and relationships with university clients.

Building on the success of the first East Asia Agents Conference held in Malaysia in 2024, this event continued the momentum initiated by the launch of the UK Agent and Counsellor Training and Engagement Hub.

The event was attended by 120 education agents, 50 UK university participants from 12 countries and territories.

Context

Latest HESA data indicates over 229,000 international students from East Asia choose to study in the UK, contributing to 30% of its total international students. This highlights the value of the region's education agent network to the UK, helping students and their families navigate the UK's higher education landscape.

The newly elected UK Government is committed to ensuring potential students receive high-quality support and guidance, integrating the AQF into the UK's education sponsor guidance. The UK's Secretary of State for Education has emphasised the Government's commitment to supporting and welcoming international students.

Key takeaways

Challenges and opportunities in East Asia

Students from East Asia are increasingly price-sensitive, seeking affordable access to international education with greater employability value. Despite regional volatility, shrinking youth populations, and East Asia becoming a preferred destination, the UK still attracts strong interest due to its higher education excellence and positive student experience.

Government support

Governments in East Asia are eager to increase outward student mobility, and recent global developments of late may enhance perceptions of the UK as a trusted education partner. In addition, the UK offers competitive 'shorter' degree programs and multiple entry routes, boosted by the appreciation of some regional currencies against the UK Pound.

Visa advantages

Applicants from East Asia enjoy high UK Visa issue rates, with no student visa caps, giving the UK greater competitive appeal.

Employability focus

UK universities need to integrate employability into more programs through industry collaboration, placement opportunities, and tailored careers services for international students. This focus on employability is central to the perceived value of an international education.

Innovation and diversity of service are essential for agents and institutions

Agents could expand and diversify their business offer by offering longer-term services, acting as an 'international education company' or consultancy. Agent diversification may include early planning for a child's entry into future higher education, directing potential students towards extra-curricular activities, developing guardianship services, hosting parental visits, or sourcing internship and job opportunities for students in the UK or in their home country by making industry connections. There is an opportunity for agents to play a more active role in providing employability services for returning students but also in supporting universities with insights into the job markets and required local skills needs.

Recommendations for UK institutions

- Consider ways to make a UK education more affordable in terms of accommodation costs and financial support e.g., payment models, or scholarships and bursaries, part-time work opportunities.
- More efforts to support international students integrate and make friends more easily with their UK counterparts and to address the issue of international students feeling reluctant to access university mental health support services.
- More proactive approaches to ensure agent partners meet the AQF and comply to the national Code of Ethical Practice, building adherence to its principles into any contractual relationship

Recommendations for education agents

- Encourage staff to complete the AQF and to adhere to its ethical standards as part of any ongoing professional development.
- Ensure the information quality is maintained while being innovative in the way they promote their partner institutions. Agents should be able to demonstrate that the student - and not revenue - is at the heart of their operation.
- Explore the wider diversity of offer in the UK that can enhance student employability and affordability. Many modern universities provide excellent employment-related services and industry opportunities to students.



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Our relatively new [UK] government remains committed to ensuring that potential students receive high quality support and guidance.

Brian Greenwood, Associate Director of International Student Recruitment, University of Exeter and Executive Board member of BUILA

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Students don't just come to an institution to gain a piece of paper – they are there to build a network for the future.

Guy Perring, Regional Director, Asia Etio

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The East Asia region is of great significance to the sector and its partners, accounting for 30% of the UK's international students. East Asia's students remain attracted to the high-quality education that the UK has to offer and the potential that a UK degree provides. It's attractive because of the friends, the networks, and the global communities that are very much part of the UK degree experience.

Catriona McCarthy, Global Head, Student Mobility and Internationalisation of UK education, British Council

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Nowadays the younger generation are influenced by influencers more than anybody, so having students vouch or talk about their studies and their experiences garners a lot of interest from students and... creates that momentum that might drive them to a university that may not be in the rankings.

Dave Few, Associate Director, JACK StudyAbroad

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The British Council remains steadfast in our commitment to supporting you [agents] through initiatives like the free agent and counsellor training hub or collaborative events. Together we are shaping the future where UK education continues to be a global benchmark for excellence.

Leighton Ernsberger, Director Education East Asia, British Council



Appendix

Programme

Time	Programme	Speaker
09:30 – 09:45	Welcome and Introduction	Leighton Ernsberger , Regional Education Director, British Council Brian Greenwood , Associate Director of International Student Recruitment, University of Exeter Professor Ian Holliday , Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), The University of Hong Kong
09:45 – 10:15	Opening Plenary: Understanding Market Dynamics – Trends and Opportunities in East Asia	Sonia Wong , Regional Research Analyst, British Council
10:15 – 11:00	Panel Discussion: The Business of Student Recruitment Agencies in East Asia – Challenges and Opportunities	Panellists: Fraser Deas , Director Client Success, Grok Global Dave Few , Associate Director, Jackstudy Abroad Scarlett Peng , East Asia Regional Head, University of Nottingham Xiang Weng (Andy) , Visa Outreach Officer, South China/ West China/ Hong Kong & Macau Visa, Status and Information Services, British Consulate-General Guangzhou Daniel Zheng , Managing Director, HOPE International Education Moderated: Jazreel Goh , Country Director, British Council Malaysia
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee Break	
11:15 – 12:00	BUILA Workshop: Operationalising AQF	Mandy Zhang , Global Partner Manager, King's College London Brian Greenwood , Associate Director of International Student Recruitment, University of Exeter Yusuff Kaffo , Head of International Recruitment at University of Derby and on the BUILA Executive Team
12:00 – 14:00	Lunch and Networking	

14:00 – 14:50	Panel Discussion: The Value of UK Qualifications: How They Stand Out in the Global Job Market	<p>Panellists: Michael Chu, Associate Director – Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai, Regional Life Sciences and Human Resources & Business Support Chen Jun Luo, Nottingham University alumnus and British Council Alumni UK SGD ambassador, Senior Manager Community Grant Governance, Resilience and Engagement Division, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth Jirayut Srupsrisopa, Founder and CEO, Bitkub Capital Group Holding, Co. Ltd. Gloria Wan, Head of Client Relations, PTE China Qi Zhao, Deputy Head of International, University of Hertfordshire</p> <p>Moderated: Catriona Mccarthy, Global Head, Student Mobility and Internationalisation of UK Education, British Council</p>
14:50 – 15:40	Student Perspectives: Evaluating International Experiences in the UK	Guy Perring , Regional Director, Asia, ETIO Global
15:40 – 16:00	Closing remarks and Photo Session	<p>Catriona Mccarthy, Global Head, Student Mobility and Internationalisation of UK Education, British Council Brian Greenwood, Associate Director of International Student Recruitment, University of Exeter</p>
16:00 onwards	Conference ends Coffee Break and Networking	



