



Annual Review 2024–25

UK Council
for International
Student Affairs

UKCISA

UKCISA in 2024–2025



We are UKCISA

408

members, including all public universities in the UK, a number of public and private colleges, schools, students' unions, and other specialised organisations

188

Higher education institutions

125

Further education institutions

125

Students' unions

30

Corporate/Education sector organisations/
Other

Over

40

#WeAreInternational
Student Ambassadors
from around the world

20

staff members,
five freelancers

15

trustees (two
new in 2024/25)

Over

20

volunteers on our
advisory committees



**We advocate for
a positive
experience for
all international
students**

Nearly

3,000

page views of Equity, Inclusion
and Innovation: a sustainable
international student policy

Success

in advocating for the Graduate
route during the Migration
Advisory Committee Review



**We deliver
world-leading
advice and
training**

34

training sessions to

788

attendees



**We provide
trusted
information
and guidance**

4,532

Total number of calls

2,969

Calls to our free public
advice line

1,563

Calls to the member
advice line

Launch of a new website,
with over

500 pages

Over

2.7 million views of
our website



**We amplify
international
student voices
#WeAreInternational**

Our Student Ambassadors
attended

22 events

spoke at

27 sessions

with

13 government and
sector agencies in
the UK and from
around the world

8 projects explored what
it means to implement
the #WeAreInternational
Student Charter

Over

£28,000

funding in #WeAreInternational
Grants Scheme

A few words from our President, Chair of Board and Chief Executive

Dear colleagues,



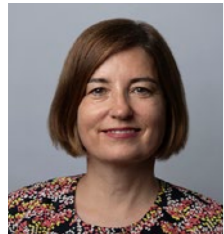
Lord Karan
Bilimoria

In a general election year, when immigration is high on the political agenda, UKCISA's work to advise students and members became even more significant. Restrictive visa policy for dependants had a negative impact on the student experience. However, the findings of the Migration Advisory Committee recognised the importance of the Graduate route to current and prospective international students as part of a UK education.



Professor
Koen Lamberts

In the most recent Statement of Changes to the Immigration rules, we welcomed the inclusion of a new rule that enables postgraduate research students to apply for a new visa, without having to return home, if their supervisor moves to a new institution. This is something we have called for, for several years, and demonstrates that policy advocacy can be rewarding over the longer term.



Anne Marie
Graham

Despite many challenges across the education sector, including pressures on budgets, our member communities came together to share insights to inform our advocacy and shape policies, disseminate good practice, and celebrate our international students' contributions. Members have connected and collaborated in many ways: our Annual Conference, our expert training offer, our responsive member symposia, and our expert practitioner network meetings provided a range of opportunities for members to learn from UKCISA and each other. This broad yet deep member engagement helps to ensure that our advocacy to government is informed and responsive.

To close the year, we launched a new UKCISA website. Our online presence, which attracted over 2.7 million views in 2024–2025, now provides improved navigation

and refreshed content to help members and students find the information and guidance they need. Supported by our confidential student advice line, prospective and current students can now more easily access free advice from our expert team in a way that suits them. For members, this brings with it a new UKCISA Manual and Forum to help them understand a complex policy environment. We look forward to working with stakeholders in the year ahead to explore the benefits of this new and enhanced window to our expertise.

Of course, policy stability remains a key ask for UKCISA on behalf of our members and international students. Over the last year, there have been effective strategic partnerships across the sector to achieve policy outcomes, including coordination across our International Student Employability Group members to inform the Migration Advisory Committee review and ensure that important messages were coordinated. We continue to consolidate our relationships with sector partners to advocate effectively for international students and those who advise and support them across our member institutions, including through our ongoing engagement in support of the upcoming update of the government's International Education Strategy.

The UK is unique in having an organisation like UKCISA to represent the interests of international students. Our work's impact on students and their advisers continues to make a difference because the interests of international students are at the heart of our mission.

It is our people who generate this impact for international students – our engaged trustees, our committed staff team, our inspirational ambassadors, and our hardworking members. Thank you for all the work that you do on behalf of the international students who are choosing the UK, and in support of UKCISA's vision and mission, to ensure that every international student who comes to the UK has a positive experience.

Signed by,

Lord Karan
Bilimoria
President

Professor Koen
Lamberts
**Chair of the
Board of Trustees**

Anne Marie
Graham
Chief Executive

A note from the Chair of our Student Advisory Group

Dear colleagues,



Pedram
Bani-Asadi

One of the highlights of my studies in the UK has been meeting people from countries around the world, learning about different cultures, creating a support network, and forming a friendship group in the UK. However, studying away from home can sometimes be a lonely experience. Being far from family and friends can be hard, and this year has felt even more precarious. I continue to be inspired by my peers who support each other and succeed in their own goals in these uncertain times.

It can feel like policies that affect our lives and dreams are constantly changing or are at risk. The shock withdrawal of the dependent policy last year has led to nervousness about visas and the ability for international students to follow our chosen next steps. I know that employability is at the top of most students' minds in their final year, as they look to take advantage of the Graduate route but struggle to access the job market. Awareness of the benefits that an international perspective can bring and the implications of the Graduate route need to be raised among employers.

The current context in the UK affects international students, too. The cost-of-living crisis and affordability of accommodation have severely impacted students who have tightly budgeted for their studies years in advance and can't increase their working hours to make up the difference. The riots over the summer have contributed to a feeling that international students may not be welcome in the UK and to a fear of facing racism and xenophobia. Added together, these challenges can pile on the pressure and affect international students' mental health and wellbeing. Surveys show that international students are still unsure about where to access support and can often feel uncomfortable in making use of the services offered.

UKCISA is unique in giving international students a space where we are empowered to share our experiences, have them validated, and be heard. My fellow Ambassadors and I are able to speak out about how policies affect us and our friends and peers, advocating for each other in conferences, sitting on panels, and engaging with industry professionals. In 2024–25, #WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors spoke at over 22 events, in 27 sessions, and with 13 government and sector agencies in the UK and from around the world.

A highlight this year was being invited to speak with representatives from the Department for Education, the Department for Business and Trade, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on the UK government's new International Education Strategy. We shared our hopes that the strategy will focus on the value that international students bring to the UK. We asserted the need to focus on the international student experience and include our voices in strategic dialogue, one of the key principles of the *#WeAreInternational Student Charter* for delivering a world-class international student experience.

We will continue to advise UKCISA on its work and speak publicly about all that international students bring to the UK and the challenges we face, as we work together to improve the student experience and to keep the UK a welcoming and inclusive global destination for all international students.

Pedram Bani-Asadi
**Chair of UKCISA's Student Advisory Group
and UKCISA Trustee**



**We advocate
for a positive
experience for
all international
students**



UKCISA works with UK government departments, agencies, devolved administrations, and sector organisations to ensure that the UK remains attractive and welcoming to prospective and current international students. We analyse and advise on policy implementation and guidance linked to immigration. We commission and conduct research, sit on high-level advisory groups, convene partner networks, and respond to formal consultations and calls for evidence.

This year, this has meant advocating for sustainable international student policies in advance of the general election period to the upcoming update of the International Education Strategy. We coordinated an effective submission to the Migration Advisory Committee's review of the Graduate route, welcoming its recommendation to retain the Graduate route without changes. This work has continued throughout the year to highlight the value that the route brings to students and the UK economy.

We've supported and advocated for members and students through the challenging transition to eVisas and celebrated the release of new Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) guidance after years of work with sector partners.

Our impact would not be as significant without the insights and the intelligence we derive from our members. Through our online forum, advice lines, advisory committees, and practitioner networks, we track emerging trends and inform policy. We liaise with government teams to resolve live issues, from highlighting errors in visa application forms to challenging inconsistent and incorrect application of policy guidance to students and educational institutions. We make strategic recommendations on proposed policy and legislation, sharing the impact on our wide and diverse membership and their students.

Our #WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors play a vital role in

highlighting the contributions of international students to the UK, the challenges they face, and the need for change. They sit on our Student Advisory Group, which guides our strategic direction. By listening to and being driven by them, we ensure that our advocacy is focused on areas that most impact their experience and provide prospective and current students with the support and advice they need to succeed in their studies in the UK.

Advocating for a sustainable international student education policy

UKCISA published a comprehensive policy position paper in April 2024, following consultation with members and students, which outlined its recommendations for a new or updated international education strategy to the government. We called for the

government to promote the UK as a welcoming country to study and live in, using positive language and acknowledging international students' contributions. We also called for fair and transparent immigration policy across the education sector and support for equitable careers and employability opportunities for international students and graduates.

Since the new government came to power in July, we've welcomed a more positive narrative on international students from the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, and the Minister for Skills, The Rt Hon Jacqui Smith.

In dialogue with civil servants as part of the update of the International Education Strategy, we reiterated these recommendations, highlighting the importance of a positive and sustainable international student experience for our education sector and local communities.

Representing students and members at the highest level

UKCISA is committed to supporting the international student community via our ongoing policy and advocacy work across immigration and international student experience. Our representation on behalf of students is led strategically via our ongoing engagement with, and advice to, international students and those who work with them in educational institutions across the UK's diverse educational sector.

UKCISA engages regularly with our expert practitioner networks in student advice and immigration Sponsor compliance. By hearing what is happening on the ground, we can consider our strategy and response and ensure that our ongoing advocacy to government and stakeholders represents the diversity of our membership and the live challenges facing those supporting students.

Home Office Student Policy Team and UK Visas and Immigration monthly meeting

We have continued to have conversations with the Home Office's Student Policy Team and the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) on a monthly basis. In meetings with the Student Policy Team, we seek to ascertain details of what is upcoming, ongoing or proposed in terms of policy and to understand the rationale (and the evidential basis for any decisions) of any proposed policy changes. In return, we continue to highlight the sector's high compliance standards and advocate for appropriate timescales to implement upcoming changes, so that our members can put in place measures to ensure that students are aware of changes (eg maintenance fee increases).

Our meetings with UKVI provide a regular channel through which to share our members' operational challenges. This has helped to alleviate (temporarily and permanently) problems that members have reported, for example, with the immigration application form and immigration healthcare surcharge (IHS) portal.

Key areas of discussion:

Remote delivery

Throughout our discussions with the Home Office on this policy, we have advocated for long lead-in times (at least a calendar year) between the publishing of any policy and its implementation, and for clarity of terms and explanations of how the policy will work in practice. We have also advocated that any data collected should be collected when the policy is fully implemented to ensure that it is fully representative.

eVisas

Throughout the digitalisation process of the UK visa system and the move away from physical documents, UKCISA has tirelessly advocated for international students. We have convened the sector and been the leading voice in calling for timely solutions to errors with eVisas and a robust infrastructure to support individuals who encounter difficulties navigating the process.

UKCISA also set up a dedicated eVisa FAQ webpage for students and members. This webpage seeks to provide assistance with some of the most commonly asked queries and signposting to other resources where appropriate.

UKCISA held a member symposium in January 2025, attended by over 300 members. This provided members from





across the sector with the chance to share insights into live issues relating to eVisas and methods of overcoming any associated impact on student experience. These insights, in turn, informed UKCISA advocacy to UKVI and the digitalisation project team and led to rapid implementation of effective solutions.

Working with partners for change

International Student Employability Group

In line with our recommendation in our policy paper to support equitable careers and employability opportunities for international students, UKCISA convened the International Student Employability Group (ISEG) to great effect in spring 2024. The group identified and collated evidence in support of the Graduate route to inform the Migration Advisory Committee report, preparing briefings and sharing key information with sector partners and student organisations to support a shared message sector-wide.

It provided critical evidence to the committee of the student experience of the route, as well as case studies and other evidence to demonstrate how the route is being used by graduates and UK employers.

Agent Quality Framework

UKCISA is a member of the advisory group supporting the implementation of the Agent Quality Framework across the UK education sector. Activity in 2024/25 has focused on working with sector partners and UKVI in order to understand how information about agents will be captured and reported by institutions committed to the Agent Quality Framework and be supported by transparent sponsor guidance. The group also worked with agents globally to help ensure that they understand upcoming requirements.

UKCISA has advised on the development of a refreshed guide for students and their families, highlighting what to expect from the process of using an agent. This area of work is critical to ensuring that individuals and their support networks understand

the process of engaging and working with an agent to select and apply to a UK education provider, and how to identify those that have been through the British Council-led agent training.

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme and new guidance

UKCISA is a member of a working group led by the Russell Group that meets with Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) team members monthly. This last year has seen the culmination of years of lobbying and collaborative work, and new

amalgamated ATAS guidance was released in January 2025. This guidance provides a more accessible and comprehensive look at the ATAS requirements and rules and greater clarity on areas that were previously ambiguous. We are grateful for the contributions from those involved in this work from our membership, whose insights and views were crucial to the ATAS team and their work.

We remain actively engaged with this working group and with the ATAS team to represent our members' feedback on the ATAS system and the new guidance.





“I initially approached UKCISA with a training query and they signposted to this. It was exactly what was required, very in depth, and reassured we are correct in our processes and advice. Worth every penny.”
Attendee at Higher education fee assessment in England

“I found the session very informative and felt like I was able to follow well and understand what was being discussed, even with very little experience of the subject matter.”
Attendee at Navigation Section 3C

“Great overview and so well paced and helpful.”
Attendee at Navigation Section 3C

We deliver world-leading advice and training

Our team of experts provides high-quality advice and guidance and delivers a national training programme that is relevant and responsive to the external policy context. We support our members through changes to the immigration system and fee regulations and encourage career progression in international support.

Our online training programme

Our training for professionals working with international students is delivered by our Immigration Advice Authority (IAA)-registered team of UKCISA staff and consultants from our extensive network. It covers our specialist areas of immigration advice and compliance, fee assessments, student experience, and staff skills, and is grounded in the principles of the #WeAreInternational Student Charter.

We continue to expand our dynamic and accessible training programme, ensuring that members across the UK can easily participate online. Our affordable pricing

structure allows multiple team members to join sessions together, fostering knowledge exchange and peer support.

We remain responsive to our members’ needs by managing waiting lists, offering repeat sessions, and delivering bespoke training for specific groups. To uphold our high-quality standards, we actively seek participant feedback after each session and conduct surveys to assess preferences for content, delivery methods, and format. This ongoing evaluation enables us to enhance our training programmes, ensuring that they remain relevant, engaging, and aligned with the evolving needs of our members.

The UKCISA Manual

Our unique UKCISA Manual is a comprehensive knowledge base offering up-to-date information about student immigration and fees assessment legislation. It has over 120 pages on immigration and visas, fees and student support, which fully equip members to navigate complex areas of law and

34 training sessions



788 attendees



“Everything was clearly explained and information on the slides were well developed via the discussions.”
Attendee at Financial requirements

“Very informative session. Delivered in a friendly and helpful way. Thank you.”
Attendee at Higher education fee assessment in Scotland

“It was very engaging, and the hosts were careful to go through examples with us.”
Attendee at Higher education fee assessment in Scotland

“The staff running the training were extremely kind and knowledgeable.”
Attendee at Post-study work options



Information and advice on eligibility for ‘home’ fees

This year, we provided information and tailored advice for students and members on the wide-ranging changes to eligibility for ‘home’ fee status in Northern Ireland and Wales. We published fresh versions of our separate *Who Pays ‘Home’ Fees for Higher Education?* guides for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and updated our website information for Scotland. The pages containing information about fees continue to be the most visited on our website.

We had discussions with the Scottish government about ordinary residence issues raised by some amended regulations and explained their effect to students and members. We liaised with the Department for Education about its new guidance on ‘home’ fees

for the children of Turkish workers, whose travel around the time of Brexit had been delayed by Covid-19. We explained that change to students and members.

This work enabled students to present the right information to fee assessors and helped our members in their fee assessment work, to assess and advise international students more confidently.

UKCISA advice lines for students and members

Our advice lines for UKCISA members and the public offer access to a specialist team of IAA-registered advisers who have extensive experience in student immigration and international student affairs.

understand its context. Furthermore, its historic commentary on changes to law, copies of relevant resources, such as up-to-date guidance documents or case law, and *Manual*-specific news items for members addressing changes to the Immigration rules, ensure that the *UKCISA Manual* has continued to be a vital member resource and anchor through a year of much change in the international education sector.

The *UKCISA Manual* has continued to grow and develop throughout 2024 and into 2025, and the Advice and Training Team has been working diligently to provide up-to-date, detailed, and contextually rich information. The *Manual* has been updated throughout the year, responding to four Statements of Changes to the Immigration rules,

which involved over 35 pages across the ‘Immigration’ section of the *Manual*. We have also rewritten and streamlined our ‘Student Support’ section to provide a more comprehensive source of referral points and external sources of information.

- Four Statements of Changes to the Immigration rules in 2024/25 have impacted over 35 pages in our *Manual*
- A complete overhaul of the student support content of the *Manual* has streamlined information for members with updated referral points and sources
- We provide 116 up-to-date pages on immigration, fee consolidation documentation and PDFs for members, whilst – behind the scenes – we have been building content for the new website launch.



Total calls
4,532

1,563
Calls to member advice line

2,969
Calls to free public advice line

Enquiries by topic:

Student immigration
1,940 (43%)

Fees assessments and funding
1,763 (39%)

Working during and after studies, including the Graduate route
499 (11%)

Other calls related to life in the UK
330 (7%)



We empower our membership

UKCISA's members underpin all our work, from policy and advocacy to training and events. Our membership comprises institutions from across the education sector, all committed to the highest standards of international student support. Our members are a diverse and supportive community, learning from each other in our practitioner networks, on our online Member Forum, and at our training and events.

The diversity and scope of our membership ensure that we provide a unique voice to policymakers, able to capture not just the widest possible range of publicly funded universities across the UK, but private providers, colleges, students' unions and sector organisations. By engaging our members to share their insights through our many channels, we enable them to guide our advocacy, and policy work on their behalf and ensure that our strategic decisions are informed and representative.



Our members

188 Higher education institutions

65 Further education institutions

125 Students' unions

30 Corporate/Education sector organisation/ Other

408 Total

Member benefits



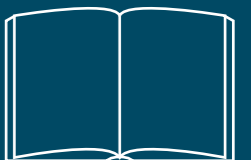
Advice line



Training and events



Forum



Manual



Networks



News



Kathy Boulton
Student Records
Team Leader
University of
Huddersfield

“The UKCISA membership is extremely important to my colleagues and I within the Student Records Team at the University of Huddersfield. We use the Who Pays ‘Home’ Fees guidelines to make our fee status decisions. Having these guidelines means that we can be really clear with potential students and direct them to the guidance so they can clearly see how we have reached our decisions. It also means we can back up requests we make for additional evidence, so potential students can understand why we are asking for these documents.

The members’ helpline is also a valuable resource for us when we have more complex cases and allows us to discuss the evidence we have in relation to the guidelines. In summary, UKCISA is an essential support system to ensure we are making accurate and fair fee assessments.”



UKCISA Annual Conference 2024

The UKCISA Annual Conference is our flagship member event, providing a chance to network with colleagues, develop professional skills and hear the latest policy developments. Each year it brings together UKCISA members, #WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors, practitioners and experts working in international education.

UKCISA’s Annual Conference took place at the University of Kent in June 2024. We explored the key issues shaping the future of international education in the UK. The opening plenary, *Navigating Change: The Impact of the UK General Election on International Education*, examined the potential policy shifts and implications for students, institutions, and the sector as a whole. Expert speakers offered insights into the evolving political landscape and its effects on international education in the UK.

The event featured contributions from UKCISA’s #WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors, who shared diverse perspectives and experiences of international students studying in the UK.



42 sessions



322 attendees



Another key session, the Agent Quality Framework plenary, *Perspectives, Challenges, and Opportunities*, brought together sector experts to discuss the evolving role of education agents, the importance of quality assurance, and strategies to enhance transparency and collaboration in international student recruitment.

The conference concluded with a lively closing plenary featuring UKCISA President, Lord Bilimoria,

and journalist, Gavin Esler, who engaged in a thought-provoking discussion on the importance of international education and its role in shaping the UK's future.

Throughout the three-day event, experienced members and sector experts delivered insightful presentations and shared best practices, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across the sector.

“The event was exceptionally well organised, offering a perfect blend of insightful plenary sessions, hands-on professional development workshops, and valuable networking opportunities. The discussions on the latest policy developments and the contributions from international students, UKCISA members, and expert speakers were extremely insightful.”

“The UKCISA conference is more than just a conference; it's a celebration and affirmation of all the work we do. We come away revived and enthused, armed with new information and ideas.”

“Wonderful, amazing opportunities to learn, reflect, and discuss topics we care about. Always a highlight of the year!”

“I joined the Buddy Scheme and was lucky that my buddy and I got along well. Thanks for pairing us!”

“It's great to know we are all in the same boat and open to new ideas in different universities. The conference provided invaluable insights and connections.”

Conference delegates





**We disseminate
our knowledge**

Providing trusted information and guidance

Our website is a trusted source of information and guidance for our members, as well as international students and their families.

This year, UKCISA completed the redesign and redevelopment of our website – a key milestone in modernising how we support members, students and the wider international education community. The project was driven by the need to improve access to essential guidance and resources, particularly for our diverse audience of advisers, institutions, and international students.

The design reflects a refreshed brand presence and delivers an improved user experience, with clearer navigation, streamlined content structure and improved accessibility across all devices. A powerful new search function makes it easier than ever to find information quickly – something that members highlighted as a top priority.

The site has been built on a more flexible, scalable platform that allows UKCISA to respond rapidly to policy changes, publish timely updates, and introduce new features with ease.

This future-proofs the website as a long-term digital asset, ensuring that it will continue to serve the evolving needs of our sector for years to come.

To build on UKCISA's reputation as the leading authority on international student affairs, we ran a content audit of all the information available on our website. Refreshing content so that it is written to the highest accessibility and communications best practice will ensure that we are the number one source of information and advice for international students.

We will continue to work closely with our members, listening to what matters most, and improving our online resources and member benefits.



Top five web pages in 2024–2025

1. England: HE fee status
2. Home or overseas fees: the basics
3. Student work
4. UK student finance, scholarships and other funding
5. Graduate route



Top 10 countries for website visits

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. UK | 6. Ireland |
| 2. India | 7. Germany |
| 3. USA | 8. Netherlands |
| 4. Nigeria | 9. France |
| 5. Pakistan | 10. China |

Ireland and the Netherlands returned to our top ten this year, taking the place of Ghana and the United Arab Emirates.

Web traffic

1.1m
users

2.7m
views

Top news story


Version 7 of Who Pays 'Home' Fees for HE in England?


14,190
views


Our social media channels support our mission to deliver accurate and timely information to our members, prospective and current students. The channels we use help us to get the right message to the right audience, promoting our work, events, and training, building on the #WeAreInternational campaign, and bringing together the UKCISA community. This year's popular topics included information about


the transition to eVisas, messages of welcome to international students from the government, and videos from students and members on their top tips for studying in the UK.

In 2024–25, we focused our communications on LinkedIn and Instagram, where our followers significantly increased. We continue to monitor engagement and trends on Facebook and X.

 **6,098**
[+6.5% up
on 2023–24]

 **11,114**
[+29.8% up
on 2023–24]

 **8,405**
[-1.7% down
on 2023–24]

 **5,065**
[+21.3% up
on 2023–24]

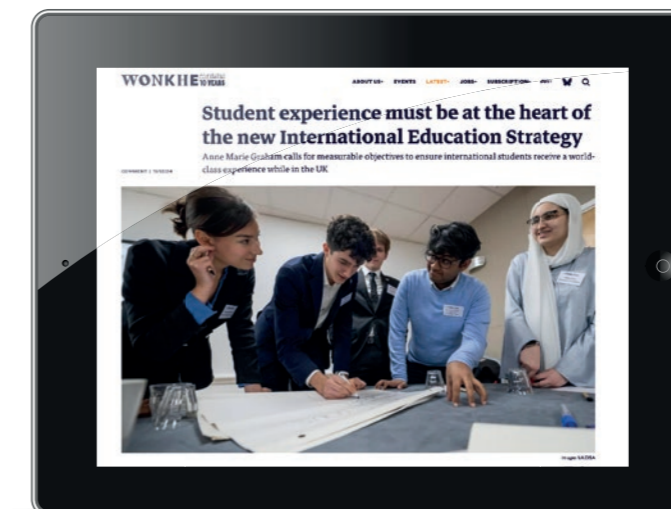


We use email marketing to connect with our members and student audiences. Our weekly *Member Newsletter* is a core part of our strategy to stay in touch with our member community and is supported by a regular Chief Executive member update. It continues to receive good readership (seeing strong open rates on each email) and an increasing number of subscribers.

This year, we launched a refreshed monthly *Student Newsletter*, with an updated layout, curated information on visas and fees, the #WeAreInternational campaign, and news from our sector partners, including Student Minds, the

Graduate Outcomes Survey, and the Student Grief Network. This has led to a significant increase in the click-through rate, from 5% in April–July 2024 to 10% in the second half of 2024.

We work with trusted sector press to position ourselves as thought leaders in international education and amplify the voices of international students. Our staff and Ambassadors have had articles placed in sector press, **Wonkhe**, and been quoted in **The PIE**.



In 2024–25 our staff team attended over 40 events, to discuss the issues most relevant to international students, share our knowledge and expertise and promote UKCISA's work.



UKCISA Staff members Anne Marie Graham, Yinbo Yu, and Heather Knight spoke at BUILA, BUCA and EAIE conferences





**We amplify
international
student voices
#WeAreInternational**

UKCISA works with international students across the UK to make sure their voices are heard in all aspects of the student experience. The #WeAreInternational campaign celebrates international students in the UK, sharing their contributions through storytelling and welcoming current and prospective students to the UK. The University of Sheffield and its students' union co-founded the campaign in 2013. With the support of over 160 universities, educational institutions, and international organisations, the campaign aims to recognise and value the positive impact of international students and staff in UK universities.

#WeAreInternational Student Ambassador Programme

The #WeAreInternational Student Ambassador Programme is UKCISA's network of future global leaders. We empower international students to shape a high-quality student experience, using their knowledge and first-hand experience of studying in the UK to influence policy and develop an inclusive global community.

In 2024–25, we appointed a new cohort of #WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors and worked with the 2023–2024 group, who joined us for their second year. Our Student Ambassadors developed their policy knowledge and leadership skills to lead change by:

- sharing their international student experience at annual sector conferences such as UK ENIC, Universities UK International, Jisc Digifest, AMOSSHE, and UCAS
- engaging with UKCISA members by sharing their experiences at the UKCISA Annual Conference through panels, roundtables, and focus groups
- speaking directly to policy makers in round-table meetings and panels with the Department for Education, the Department for Business and Trade, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the All Party-Parliamentary Group on International Students, Jisc, and the PIE

This year, we highlighted the experience of international students and our members across a range of platforms and forums.



In 2024–25, #WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors spoke at over:

22
events

27
sessions

13
government and sector
agencies in the UK and
from around the world



Digifest 2025, Coco Ren, Adityavarman Mehta, Gino Obaseki, Ana Guseva

© Simon Birkett and Jisc



UKCISA Annual Conference.
Vartika Khandelwal



UKCISA Annual Conference.
Yi Ling (Edeline) Lim



UKCISA Annual Conference,
Ambassador World Cafe. Xiaoxiao Hou



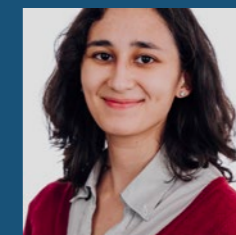
APPG for International Students,
November 2024. Xiaoxiao Hou, Ana Guseva,
Assanatou Sy, Melody Sequeira



"It is easy to feel lost in a foreign environment after moving abroad, –so I am immensely grateful to UKCISA for casting a

spotlight on international students, especially by fostering intentional conversations on how to better the experience. Through UKCISA, I have attended events and training sessions that helped hone my transferrable skills, enabling me to represent international students in other capacities as well. A big thank you to UKCISA for always keeping the wellbeing of international students at the forefront of it all."

Edeline Lim, #WeAreInternational Student Ambassador 2024–25



"Only four months into UKCISA, and I have learned I am part of so much more than a charity advocating for international

students in the UK – I have joined a melting pot of exceptionally dedicated and bright students, staff, and freelancers. And not only does UKCISA facilitate some of the most enriching brainstorming sessions on the international student experience, but it also ensured that this passion was shared in dynamic meetings and events. Just a few months ago I never imagined having the opportunity to contribute to roundtables with professionals from the higher education sector like in the PIE Live 2025, let alone be a panellist for an employability symposium of the British Council

Understanding perspectives, learning from experiences and working towards a better academic, professional and social landscape for internationals is what UKCISA enables – and what I am increasingly committed to advancing."

Saida Alimdjanova, #WeAreInternational Student Ambassador 2025–26

#WeAreInternational Student Charter

The #WeAreInternational Student Charter is a student-led document that provides guidance on the fundamental principles for delivering a world-class international student experience, from pre-arrival to post-graduation.

Written in 2022, the framework is becoming more established, and we can reflect on increasing numbers of examples of how our members are using it at an institutional level. We also use the Charter to guide our own work at UKCISA. This year, each of our training courses specifies which principle of the Charter they relate to and can help to support relevant member activity. We also continue to profile the Charter across our member network and with external stakeholders, to promote its benefits and enhance practice across institutions.

#WeAreInternational Grants Scheme

The UKCISA Grants Scheme has been running for over ten years. It supports the exploration and uptake of good practice across the international student experience.

In 2023, we launched the #WeAreInternational Grants Scheme to focus on integrating the principles of the Student Charter in higher and further education institutions in the UK through research and projects.

From 2022 to 2024, eight grants were awarded to institutions running pilot projects and conducting research into how to better support international students to have a positive experience in the UK. The final reports were published in June 2024 and presented at UKCISA's Annual Conference. A webinar also shared key findings with 115 UKCISA members in August 2024.

Much of the work initiated in these pilot projects continues in their institutions. Thanks to the grantees' hard work, the projects have had an impact far beyond the pilot stage and the institutions in which the research took place. UKCISA gratefully acknowledges financial support for the Grants Scheme from the Department for Education, the Scottish Government, and British Council.



Emily Sandwell,
International Careers
Consultant, Careers Service,
University of Stirling



Jo Speed, Joint Head of
Careers/Business Engagement
Manager (Employability),
Student Skills and Employability,
University of Stirling



Temitope Shittu,
International Event Intern,
University of Stirling

#WeAreInternational Grants scheme pilot project

International talent symposium: a regional approach to employer and student engagement

University of Stirling



This project aimed to address Principles 1 and 5 of the #WeAreInternational Student Charter, to create a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment for our international students; and ensure targeted support in this area of their student experience.

The symposium was created to support international students in navigating the Scottish graduate labour market and to address the lack of awareness amongst local businesses about the benefits of hiring international graduates. The innovative approach stemmed from the breadth of stakeholder engagement and collaboration, with support from local business networks supporting local SMEs (small- to medium-sized enterprises), Stirling Council, and the Stirling City Region Deal.

The main event was attended by 86 students, 17 guests from large companies and local business networks, and 15 university staff members from different services and faculties. Feedback highlighted that the project has been very effective in raising awareness of the students' skills and cultural diversity, the Scottish labour market and international graduate visa routes.

The idea has since been discussed with organisations, institutions and employers across Scotland, and inspired a stream of work around supporting entrepreneurship for international students both in Scotland and if they return home. The project is also relevant to the Scottish Government's own strategic objectives as highlighted in its International Education Strategy published in 2024.






**We develop
excellence**

The 2024 Trustee Elections marked a further step in UKCISA's ongoing efforts to diversify its Board of Trustees. Following the changes to our recruitment process in 2023, we are able to invite applications from a broader pool of candidates, including those from outside our own member organisations. This approach helped us attract 33 applicants from a wide range of backgrounds, including professionals from member and non-member institutions and individuals currently studying or recently retired. After a thorough review by our Nominations Committee, four candidates were shortlisted and put forward for election.

A total of 99 member organisations participated in the vote, representing a 23% turnout from our 429 members and an increase in engagement compared to previous member elections. We're keen to build on this and see even more members take part in the 2025 and 2026 elections. By continuing to widen the reach of our recruitment and highlight the value of getting involved in UKCISA's governance, we aim to encourage greater participation, not only in voting but also in applying for future trustee roles. The election of Chris Chang and Jonny Exon is a clear outcome of this more inclusive process, and we're confident that this direction will help strengthen the Board and better reflect the diversity of the international education sector.



A photograph of two people walking towards the camera on a paved outdoor area. On the left is a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue polo shirt and khaki shorts, holding a clear Evian water bottle. On the right is a woman with long red hair and glasses, wearing a black and white striped dress and black sandals, holding an orange cup. Both are wearing white lanyards with UKCISA badges. In the background, there are glass doors and other people.

“It’s been a pleasure to serve as a trustee for UKCISA over the years. Having the opportunity to contribute to the strategic direction of the charity has been both rewarding, inspiring, and challenging.

Challenging is precisely how I would describe the last year, with significant unexpected policy changes and funding cuts. I’m immensely proud of how the trustees have worked with the brilliant team at UKCISA to problem-solve and navigate those challenges.

UKCISA is in a unique position to support both its sector members and international students, keeping the student experience at the heart of every decision.

I have particularly enjoyed watching the development of the #WeAreInternational student ambassador programme. Having the opportunity to listen to and understand the lived experiences of our ambassadors as international students in the UK is an invaluable asset to the sector, and hearing their stories is truly inspirational; I look forward to more of that with the incoming cohort of ambassadors.

Laura Rose-Troup, UKCISA Trustee

**UK Council
for International
Student Affairs**

UKCISA

UKCISA

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