



# Annual review 2019-20

UK Council  
for International  
Student Affairs

**UKCISA**



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The #WeAreInternational students are important because it's necessary to have international students represent international students. We know our struggles; we have gone through them, so we better know how to deal with them. Being in spaces where we can influence policy, discussing and representing international students who otherwise would not be able to have their say is critical.

**Michelle Jideofor, UKCISA Student Ambassador**

# It is a great honour to be President of UKCISA – and I continue to be inspired by UKCISA’s enduring commitment to ensuring international students are welcome in the UK.

The value of education to society has never been more apparent or more important.

With much of the world continuing to turn inwards, education is a way to maintain global connections and friendships.

Our universities and colleges do so much more than teach students and turn them into graduates. They are driving forces for innovation, research and collaboration – developing solutions to a whole host of global challenges – which in turn creates jobs, generates investment and boosts our economy.

As a former international student myself who has forged a lifelong connection to the UK, I can attest to the myriad benefits of studying in another country. The student experience does not simply end upon graduation. I have long been a champion of the

employability agenda and it was therefore a real moment of celebration to see the reintroduction of post-study work rights via the Graduate Route. The value of this will be immeasurable and I would like to thank everyone at UKCISA for effectively making the case to government about this.

The full impact of Brexit remains to be seen, yet the announcement of a new points-based immigration system signifies a clear change in direction. UKCISA’s voice and dedication to ensuring the best possible outcomes for students in its lobbying efforts is making a difference.

I look forward to seeing how we can continue to shape this dialogue and advocate for international students in the UK over the coming year.



**Lord Karan Bilimoria  
CBE, DL**

President of UKCISA

# We are committed to our vision to ensure international students who choose to study in the UK have the best possible experience.

A lot has happened over the course of the last year, with the International Education Strategy and Brexit continuing to shape policy dialogue.

For UKCISA, there has been cause for celebration with our collective lobbying efforts directly influencing the development of this strategy – most importantly with the introduction of the Graduate Route, which will be crucial to ensuring many more international students can continue to live, study, and work in the UK. This is a fantastic achievement and testament to UKCISA's growing influence within the sector.

The ongoing impact of Brexit cannot be diminished. However, I am proud of how the team at UKCISA is responding to this shifting narrative and working hard to support EU, EEA and Swiss students and our members with the most accurate and up-to-date information, advice and training.

I do not think any of us expected a global pandemic to be added to our list of concerns – and for a sector that thrives on connection the impact has been far-reaching. However, it's been incredible to see how quickly our members have responded to these challenges by moving teaching online and working to ensure international students continue to have

the best possible experience. It will be interesting to see how much of this becomes embedded in our everyday practice over the next few years.

The sector as a whole remains united in our conviction that international education plays a critical role in our communities and beyond – and I look forward to continuing to work closely with colleagues across the UKCISA network to support international students over the coming year.

I would like to offer my thanks to all those who make the critical work UKCISA does possible:

- Firstly, **our funders** at the Department for Education and the Scottish Government for enabling us to support our members and international students
- **Our Board and Committees** – including the newly formed Student Advisory Group – whose expert input helps shape our activities
- To all **our colleagues in our member institutions** who consistently innovate and adapt to ensure international students have the best possible time in the UK
- Of course, none of this would be possible without UKCISA's **dedicated staff**



**Prof Koen Lamberts**  
President and  
Vice-Chancellor,  
University of Sheffield

## Our year at a glance

**May  
2019**

**Policy and good practice training.**  
UKCISA Members' seminar held in Glasgow.



**Sept  
2019**

**Reintroduction of Post-study work visa.**

UKCISA celebrated along with the international education sector the announcement of something we had all lobbied hard for.



**Feb  
2020**

**UKCISA three-year strategic plan published**



**July  
2019**

UKCISA's annual conference at the University of Keele



**Nov  
2019**

**#We Are International**

International Student Forum brought together international students from across the UK to share experiences and influence policy.

Student Ambassador programme launched.



**#WeAre  
International**

**Mar  
2020**

Beginning of UKCISA response to Covid-19 pandemic.



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## Welcome from UKCISA's Chief Executive

**UKCISA has a vital role to play in representing international students across UK universities, schools, colleges and students' unions. We will work with the sector to advise on a clear, efficient visa process, a world-leading student experience and a competitive post-study offer.**

This is my second annual review, but my first after a full 12 months as CEO. And what a year it has been. It began with us reflecting on a new International Education Strategy, which set out its ambitions to welcome international students to the UK, and ended with us wondering whether the world would ever be the same again, as the Coronavirus outbreak approached its global peak and the UK began its period of lockdown.

In the months in between, we celebrated the news of a competitive graduate route for international students who are completing their course from summer 2021 onwards, marking a significant commitment to the international student experience. Recent changes in government have led to a general shift in the rhetoric around international students, and a positive shift in policy beyond post-study work. On the other hand, we said farewell to EU membership and started to prepare for the end of free movement for EU, EEA and Swiss nationals and all the challenges that this entails for our members and prospective students from the region.

At the start of 2020, UKCISA launched its strategic plan for the next three years, which outlines our vision for a world class international student experience in the UK, and sets out our priorities to ensure that we continue to adapt and develop our services in response to the rapidly changing external environment, while maintaining our reputation for highly trusted advice, guidance and specialist training. We were also grateful to the University of Sheffield for allowing us to take over the leadership of the #WeAreInternational campaign. As part of our work to expand this campaign, we announced the inspirational first cohort for #WeAreInternational Student Ambassador programme, representing member institutions across the UK.

It's a testament to the commitment, talent and adaptability of our team across the organisation that UKCISA has responded to the fast pace of change in the policy environment, while proactively identifying areas where we can further improve the international student experience.



**Anne Marie Graham**  
Chief Executive of UKCISA

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We've been able to do this not just through the diligence and expertise of staff, but through excellent dialogue with government stakeholders, including the Home Office, Chief Inspector for Borders and Immigration, Office for Students, and the devolved administrations – as well as our funders at the Department for Education and Scottish Government. We have also established closer collaboration with partners across the sector, from public and private higher education institutions, colleges and schools, to colleagues in the legal and commercial sectors. We are committed to collaborative working with government, sector organisations and members to continue to provide a high-quality experience for international students across the UK education sector, and help UK governments deliver their ambitions for international education.

The first year in post has of course been challenging, but I expected nothing less from the role and I've enjoyed every minute. I am particularly grateful for the insights I've gained from engaging directly with our members and international students, which are essential to ensuring that UKCISA continues to deliver relevant and responsive services.

The year ahead will naturally be shaped by our –, and our members' –, response to the conditions created by the current global pandemic. Nonetheless, I want to reassure our members and other stakeholders that we remain focused on our 'business as usual' – navigating a new immigration system that will come into being from 1 January 2021 and developing training and guidance to support our members and students with these changes.

I look forward to working with you all to support the UK education sector, and the international students it welcomes.



Anne Marie Graham

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*I am particularly grateful for the insights I've gained from engaging directly with our members and international students, which are essential to ensuring that UKCISA continues to deliver relevant and responsive services.*

# UKCISA's vision is that every international student who comes to the UK has a positive experience and is able to tell friends and families that the UK is a welcoming place to study and live.

In February 2020 we published our new three-year strategic plan.

- This strategic plan outlines our vision for 2020-2023, and reiterates our mission and our values for international students, members and other stakeholders. In the midst of a rapidly changing external policy context, we hope that our strategic plan will be a useful guide to our commitment to service delivery, to member engagement, to advocating for international students and, of course, to developing our own staff.
- We look forward to working in collaboration with our members, partner organisations and UK governments to provide a world class international student experience in the UK.



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*Our strategy will ensure we are recognised by international students, members, governments and partners across the sector as the number one source of information, advice and guidance for international student support.*

# Our student ambassadors will be equipped with policy knowledge and leadership skills to lead change, and forge an exciting network of emerging global talents and future leaders.

## Student Forum

We hosted our first #WeAreInternational student forum on 18th November 2019 during International Education Week, bringing together international students from across the UK, to inform policy and practice.

We invited 48 international students from higher education and further education institutions, studying foundation programmes to PhDs, to Woburn House in London to discuss diverse aspects of the student experience. Topics included student representation, community engagement, and graduate employability. The engagement between participants was exceptional, with many conversations about shared and individual experiences. The buzz started over coffee in the registration period, and continued through group work in breakout sessions to sharing personal stories and experiences in the panel sessions – the students were so involved and determined to make the most of their day, it was a privilege to be part of it.

Following the daytime event, we hosted an evening reception at the British Library, with many of UKCISA's friends and colleagues from key sector organisations, which provided a great opportunity to start some conversations about future collaborations as well. At this event we announced that we were taking over the reins of the #WeAreInternational campaign from the University of Sheffield, and kicking off a new #WeAreInternational Student Ambassador Programme, to provide UKCISA with an international student network to feed into our planning, our Board and our committees, and to represent UKCISA across the sector as student champions.

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*It was a useful and interactive event, I learned much information I wasn't aware of prior to this conference. It allowed us to express our opinions on improving the quality of education and additional services for international students. ”*

*- Participant at Student Forum*

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## #WeAreInternational

### Student Ambassador Programme

The #WeAreInternational Student Ambassador Programme is an education policy and leadership development scheme for exceptional individuals from around the world currently studying and living in the UK. We launched the programme in November 2019 and invited applications from all international students in the UK. Our members were fantastically supportive in helping us to spread the word about the programme and in encouraging students to apply.

After a very competitive process, we selected 10 extraordinary international students out of 112 applications who demonstrated great knowledge and genuine passion to drive positive change for international students studying in the UK.

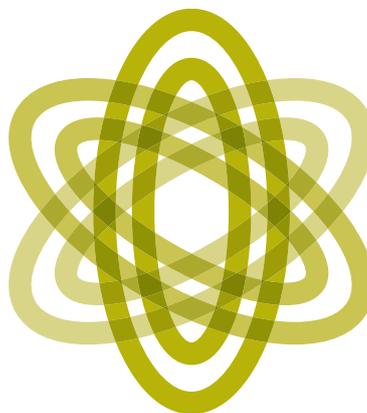
The first cohort of ambassadors was announced in March 2020 and we were fortunate to be able to hold a very positive residential training and orientation session just before lockdown began, where we got to know the students better and were impressed by their passion and energy for the ambassador role.

Each of the ambassadors has their own areas of interest and expertise, ranging from mental health and academic support, to employability and cross-cultural integration.

The pandemic meant that many of our early plans had to be put on hold or restructured, but the student ambassadors remain committed to working with the sector to help shape the international student experience. In our review of 2020-2021 we will look back over the many ways they are engaging with the sector and bringing the benefits of their experiences to help shape policy.

With many uncertainties ahead, we are keen to work with members and partners across the sector to understand their concerns on areas that affect international student experience and student mobility. We are also enabling our student ambassadors to share their insights, and contribute to the possible new landscape of international education post-Covid.

We continue to invite members, friends and partners of UKCISA and the #WeAreInternational campaign, to work with our student ambassadors to help shape policy making and represent the international student experience in any context where their insight would be useful.



**#WeAre  
International**

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*International student ambassadors are necessary because as various policies are drawn up for international students, there is a need for feedback from us students in terms of potential effects and benefits.”*

*- Nebu George,  
Student  
Ambassador*



## **Student Ambassadors March 2020 to August 2021**

### **Back row from left**

- Michelle Jideofor, Botswana, University of Bristol (UG)**
- Daniel Haid, Germany, Sheffield Hallam University (PhD)**
- Khoa Nguyen, Vietnam, University of Leeds (PGT)**
- Nebu George, India, Bangor University (PhD)**

### **Front row from left**

- Adetoun Adebayo, Nigeria, University of Nottingham (UG)**
- Parvathy Ramesh, India, University of Glasgow (PGT)**
- Katie Crabtree, USA, Leeds Trinity University (PhD)**
- Abdullah Umar Zulaidi, Brunei Darussalam, Newcastle University (UG)**

### **Not in photograph**

- Anant Rangan, USA, University of Birmingham (UG)**
- Yunyan Li, China, University of Bristol (PhD)**

# UKCISA members include every university in the UK, many colleges, schools and students' unions. Together we are a community that shares and learns from each other to improve the international student experience.

UKCISA's institutional membership continues to include every university in the UK, many FE colleges and an increased number of students' unions. Members regularly use the members' area of our website for specific detailed immigration, fees and student support information, to post on the forum or to access locked resources. This year our advisers answered over 1,500 queries on our members' line.

In February 2020 we appointed a new Membership Manager at UKCISA. Daniel Hooper joined us after nearly a decade of experience at organisations like JUSTICE, the British Institute of Radiology and ACEVO.

The role had been vacant for a number of years and Daniel was brought in to help deliver our new strategy and to help UKCISA engage with the membership. Daniel is drawn to the collaborative nature of membership organisations and inspired by the amount you can learn from members. He aims to ensure we understand the challenges members

might be facing, learn how we can continue to support their work and ensure they are kept informed about all of the great resources we have available.

If you have any questions about your membership or any suggestions about how we can continue to support you, please feel free to get in touch with us at [members@ukcisa.org.uk](mailto:members@ukcisa.org.uk)

A list of current members can be found at <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Membership/List-of-current-members>.

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*Just to thank the team at UKCISA for their ongoing support. The website is excellent, the weekly bulletins are extremely helpful and the current online training opportunities are excellent, particularly the mental health and “communities” training. Thanks guys.”*

*- UKCISA member*

MEMBERSHIP

435 MEMBERS

184 HIGHER EDUCATION

80 FURTHER EDUCATION

115 STUDENTS' UNIONS

56 CORPORATE + EDUCATION SECTOR

NATIONAL TRAINING

62 COURSES (inc in-house)  
1,152 ATTENDEES

MEMBERS SEMINARS

2 SEMINARS  
89 ATTENDEES

SOCIAL MEDIA

4,388 FOLLOWERS

2,618 LIKES

ADVICE LINE CALLS

1,510 MEMBERS' ADVICE LINE

3,012 STUDENTS' ADVICE LINE



SUBSCRIBERS TO E-NEWS

3,828 STUDENTS

1,728 MEMBERS



WEBSITE NUMBERS

2,564,382 PAGEVIEWS

1,521,103 PAGEVIEWS OF STUDENT ADVICE

67,836 PAGEVIEWS OF UKCISA MANUAL

WEB TRAFFIC

46% FROM UK

54% OTHER COUNTRIES



TRAINING VENUES



## Events: bringing the sector together to drive the international education agenda forward



In May 2019, Scottish members explored 'The Big Picture' at a seminar in Glasgow for international education with UKCISA Board member Alan Mackay, Deputy Vice-Principal International and Director of Edinburgh Global. Members also heard from UKVI followed by a panel discussion on the future borders and immigration system, as well as a presentation on UKCISA-funded research into the social experience of international PhD students.

More than 340 UKCISA members met in the beautiful green campus of Keele University from 3-5 July 2019 for our annual conference. Members networked, learned and shared ideas at 55 parallel sessions, and attended plenary sessions with the Department for Education, the Higher Education Policy Institute, UKVI – and met our new Chief Executive Anne Marie Graham.

September 2019 took us to the European Association of International Educators (EAIE) Conference in Helsinki, where UKCISA presented

on Brexit and preparing students to leave and return from study.

November 2019 saw the final cohort of 12 students join the Postgraduate Certificate in International Student Advice and Support, run in partnership with the University of Nottingham.

To round off the year, we headed back to Glasgow in March 2020 for another members' seminar, which was to be the last face-to-face event prior to lockdown. Members from a range of institutional roles and representatives from the Scottish Government joined to explore international student health and wellbeing, including presentations on the Student Minds Mental Health Charter, Glasgow Caledonian University's work on mental health in the curriculum, the experience of international PhD students and tutors, and FE students' mental health.

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*It was easy to see everyone's genuine concern about international students' wellbeing and their passion to support and facilitate their success. As a former international doctoral student in the UK - this is tremendously heartening!”*

*– Dr Dely Lazarte Elliot, University of Glasgow*

## Our vision will continue to guide our activities and will see us looking to build and develop relationships within the sector and beyond to advocate for the international student experience at all levels.

The year ahead promises to bring unprecedented challenges for international students. However, the pandemic – alongside the UK's departure from the European Union – represent both an opportunity and an imperative to scale up our ambition to deliver a world-class student experience.

UKCISA's work in engaging with government on behalf of international students has never been more important. We are uniquely positioned to act as a bridge between government, education providers and international students. By mobilising our networks, UKCISA will play a vital role in building a richer evidence base for policy development, ensuring a stronger student voice in key international education initiatives and bringing a cross-sectoral perspective to influencing key policy issues.

We will continue to work to support our members to ensure international students who choose the UK feel safe, part of a community and empowered to make the most of their experience.

We will build on past success of the We Are International campaign, launching a new campaign website later in 2020 with resources open to all to use. We will also build on our student ambassador programme, recruiting a new cohort of ambassadors to serve from 2020-2022, and will continue to find opportunities for them to engage with the sector and get involved in shaping policy.

We will continue to work on delivering our three year strategic plan and our equality and diversity agenda. Our priority for the year ahead will be to support our members and international students through all the changes that the new immigration system will bring.

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*By putting the international student experience at the heart of policymaking, we can ensure international students feel welcomed, enjoy an excellent academic experience, and create a lifelong connection with the UK.”*

*– Anne Marie Graham, UKCISA Chief Executive*

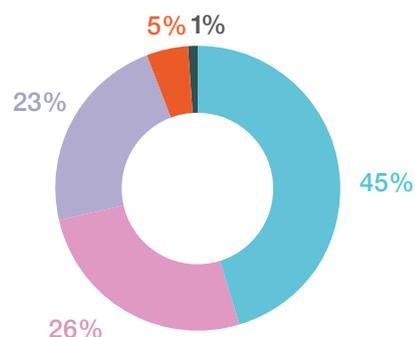
## Finance and funding

# 72% of UKCISA's income comes from our members, through annual subscriptions, attendance at training events or our annual conference.

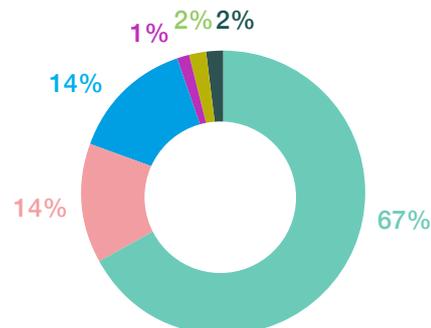
The grants from the Department for Education (DfE) and Scottish Government also help to ensure as wide a range of

services as possible, including free advice and guidance to students, parents and others in the UK or from around the world.

<b>INCOME:</b>	<b>£1,537,000</b>
Membership subscriptions	£698,000
Training and conferences	£403,000
DfE Grant	£350,000
Scottish Government Grant	£70,000
Other income	£16,000



<b>EXPENDITURE:</b>	<b>£1,470,000</b>
Staff	£987,000
Operational costs	£200,000
Training and conferences	£207,000
Projects	£21,000
Legal, professional and financial	£28,000
Other costs	£27,000



Accounts are subject to audit and do not reflect USS pension deficit

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## About UKCISA

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

It does so through a national training programme, dedicated advice lines for advisers and students, extensive online information, publications, good practice and liaison and advocacy with institutions, supporting agencies and government.

### UKCISA's aims are to

- increase support for international education and raise awareness of its values and benefits
- reduce obstacles and barriers to greater student mobility
- encourage best practice, professional development and the highest quality of institutional support for international students throughout the education sector.

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## Board of Trustees

### 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

#### Prof Koen Lamberts

Chair of the Board, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Sheffield

#### Alan Mackay

Deputy Vice-Principal International, Director Edinburgh Global, University of Edinburgh (*Honorary Treasurer*)

#### Mark Allen

International Director, East Sussex College Group

#### Lynsey Bendon

Assistant Director (Operations and Student Experience), University of Sunderland in London

#### Hannah Brian

Deputy Chief Executive (Student Engagement), Leeds University Union

#### Eva Crossan Jory

NUS Vice President (Welfare), National Union of Students

#### Marianne Davies

Head of Immigration Services, University of Warwick

#### Prof Nora de Leeuw

Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, University of Leeds

#### Sara Dyer

Head of International Student Support, University of Sussex

#### Lizzie Huckle

Head of International Student Support, Imperial College London

#### Ross Porter

Head of International Compliance and Advice, University of Greenwich

#### Alex Proudfoot

Chief Executive, Independent Higher Education

#### Laura Rose-Troup

Head of International, Newcastle College

#### Ruth Sweeney

Head of International Student Advice, King's College London

### The following organisations have observer status

- Association of Colleges (AoC)
- Association of International Student Advisers (AISA)
- British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA)
- English UK
- GuildHE
- Immigration Compliance Network (ICN)
- Universities UK (UUK)
- National Union of Students (NUS)

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### President of UKCISA

Lord Bilimoria CBE, DL

### Chief Executive of UKCISA

Anne Marie Graham

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## UKCISA

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UKCISA is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (Company Number: 4507287) and a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales (Charity Number: 1095294). Its registered office is at 3-5 Islington High Street, London N1 9LQ.

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**UK Council  
for International  
Student Affairs**

**UKCISA**



Department  
for Education



**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
[gov.scot](http://gov.scot)