

**Submission by Middlesex University London to Higher Education Commission Call for Evidence  
Inquiry into higher education exports**

**17 April 2018**

**Key recommendations:**

- TNE is not a substitute for recruiting international students to the UK and a post-Brexit migration system that is welcoming and fair to international students is needed. The UK must send a consistent message to the world about the quality of education in the UK and the desire of universities to welcome them to study in our country.
- Overseas operations do entail risk that must be appropriately managed. The QAA's Quality Code for collaborative provision is valuable tool in managing this risk.
- Current student loan arrangements create barriers to home students study part of their courses on overseas campuses. Government should seek to address this to enable home students to enjoy the opportunity to study overseas.

**Middlesex University's TNE strategy**

Middlesex University is a global centre of learning. With our roots in North London and 19,000 students at our London campus in Hendon, we have 35,000 students on Middlesex courses worldwide at our overseas campuses and through our franchise and validation partners. We have been awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise in recognition of our outstanding achievement in growing our operations overseas and boosting the UK economy.

Middlesex was one of the first UK universities to open an international campus when we opened our Dubai campus in 2005 which now has over 3000 students. Our Mauritius campus opened in 2009, has around 900 students. We also have 200 students at our campus in Malta which opened in 2013.

We also have partnerships with around 25 providers - which we are keen to grow - where we franchise or validate provision including in Hong Kong, India, Greece, Austria and Ireland. We offer one of the most comprehensive exchange programmes in the UK through the Erasmus programme. Most of our degree programmes provide exchange and work placement opportunities in an overseas campus or a partner university elsewhere in the world.

For Middlesex, TNE plays a key role in meeting the aims of our University Strategy, enabling the University to extend its work in boosting social mobility and productivity overseas. Our international campuses and partnerships extend the Middlesex offer to students around the world, widening access to our distinctive practice-based offer and enabling students to fulfil their potential.

Middlesex University is part of the solution to the objectives in the Government's Industrial Strategy and through our TNE activity we are also playing a key role in exporting British skills and strengthening the UK's soft power overseas through the network of alumni our campuses and partnerships create.

TNE also helps us to internationalise our curriculum development. We now co-design new programmes with our campuses, for example our MSc in International Tourism Management which benefits from academic expertise and industry input provided by our Dubai Campus. This benefits all our students and prepares them for working in international environments at home and abroad. Home students also benefit, for example through working with students from overseas campuses on online projects and access to field work opportunities around the globe.

Middlesex TNE activity plays an important role in developing infrastructure and stimulating growth in the countries we operate in. In Mauritius, for example, our campus opens up higher education opportunities to students from Africa and in particular Nigeria and East Africa.

Our international reputation and network of academic partnerships enables the University to compete internationally and provides an important income stream. Today our overseas campuses bring the University a total of around £10 million each year in income. However, it is important to say that TNE is not a substitute for recruiting international students to our home campus in London. International student recruitment to London is a huge asset for the UK and it is important we nurture this asset and its benefits for the UK economy.

### **Managing risk in TNE activity**

It is important to note that overseas operations do entail risk that must be appropriately managed. Some operations succeed while others may fail. Central to managing risk effectively for Middlesex is strong oversight from our home campus in London. Middlesex has developed a structured approach to setting up a new campus which we've used successfully across our three campuses. We also have well established, robust processes for establishing and managing partnership provision. Also important is close engagement on the ground from UK staff to oversee things and in particular, quality assurance arrangements. The Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code for collaborative provision is an important benchmark document for TNE activity. We also work within the frameworks of local regulatory bodies where we are active overseas.

### **A post-Brexit migration system to support TNE**

The post-Brexit migration system must be welcoming and fair to international students and send a consistent message to the world about the quality of education in the UK. Studying at a UK university overseas creates an opportunity to articulate with a UK university and study in the UK with all the related benefits for the UK economy and international learning environment. The current visa arrangements and signals from UK Government around immigration and the role of international students make this difficult. For Middlesex, a key driver for overseas students studying on our TNE programmes is the London brand, even if students are not studying in London. The current Government pilot of universities to streamline and provide more post-study time for graduates to seek employment in high skills shortage occupations in the UK is welcome but risks diluting the London brand. London and modern universities are underrepresented in the pilot creating a divide in the sector between universities seen by potential international students as favoured by the Government and those that are not. We need a level playing field for all universities and to avoid sending confusing messages to international students around the quality of education and desire of universities to welcome them to study in our country.

As indicated above, TNE is not a substitute for recruiting international students to our home campus in London. International student recruitment to London is a huge asset for the UK and it is important we nurture this asset and its benefits for the UK economy.

### **Student loan arrangements**

A key benefit of TNE activity by UK universities is that it creates opportunities for home students to do part of their study on an overseas campus. Current student loan arrangements create barriers to this kind of mobility experience which could have great benefits for our home students. Government should seek to address this to enable home students to enjoy the opportunity to study overseas.

### **A framework of support and networks to support TNE**

Middlesex University welcomes the Government's target of increasing education exports to £30 billion by 2020 and work to support this through the Department for International Trade, the Education Sector Advisory Group and the British Council. This framework of support and networks to help the development of UK TNE is vital. We do though need more regular and robust reporting on TNE activity so we can identify obstacles and measure progress more effectively. There is also scope to target UK research funding tactically overseas to support the development of key markets.

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