

Alumni Voices

**Beyond
graduation:
The lifelong
global impact
of a UK education**

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Research and insight



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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
HE	Higher Education
HEP	Higher Education Provider
IES	UK's International Education Strategy
TNE	Transnational Education
UK	United Kingdom

Executive summary



The third round of the British Council Alumni Voices survey provides robust and timely evidence of the enduring value of a UK higher education experience. Drawing on three years of longitudinal survey data, supplemented by a number of interviews, the findings highlight how UK education continues to deliver skills, support professional progression, and foster long lasting international networks that extend well beyond graduation and national borders.

Importantly, additional analysis by graduation cohort and over time shows that the perceived relevance and helpfulness of a UK education remain consistently high as alumni progress through their careers. This pattern reinforces the idea that UK education is not time limited in its impact, but rather adapts to changing professional journeys, supporting alumni as they move into different roles. For policymakers and institutions, this provides support that UK education represents a long-term investment rather than a short-term employability boost.

The skills developed through a UK education across various fields of study align strongly with long-term career priorities, particularly critical thinking, collaboration, self confidence, and communication. These skills also closely mirror the skills alumni identify as most important for career success. This alignment indicates that UK education equips graduates with durable, transferable capabilities rather than narrow occupational skills. In some areas, there is potential for stakeholders (including the Alumni UK programme) to strengthen the development of specific skills (such as leadership) by tailoring its provision to more effectively complement the needs of alumni.

The high ratings of social aspects in the survey indicate that UK education's impact is not limited to professional outcomes but reaches into the personal and social lives of alumni as well. Nearly three quarters of respondents report that in the last 12 months they have maintained contact with people they first met during their UK studies, and almost 84 percent have recommended a UK study experience to others.

These findings are strongly supported by interview insights into lasting ties to the UK and the social connections maintained, and highlight that social connection is not peripheral but central to sustained alumni advocacy, exemplifying the importance of the student experience beyond academic delivery. This report contributes to a broader body of British Council research on alumni engagement and international perceptions of the UK. It offers a unique perspective as it is one of the most comprehensive studies focused on international alumni engagement and tracking the impact of UK education on alumni over several years.

The findings from the survey and interviews demonstrate the UK's position as a high quality education provider whose impact is felt throughout the professional and personal lives of alumni, both within and outside the UK, and the insights could be beneficial to different audiences such as Higher Education Providers (HEPs) and the UK Government.

For any further information about this study or about the Alumni UK programme, please contact Alumniuk.team@britishcouncil.org.

84%
have
recommended
a UK study
experience

Introduction



The **Alumni UK programme** was launched by the British Council in November 2022 and brings together people who have studied in the UK or completed a UK transnational education (TNE) programme overseas. As of March 2026, the Alumni UK network includes over 140,000 alumni members across 218 countries and territories.

The UK Government's **International Education Strategy (IES)** identifies international alumni as one of the UK's most valuable and under utilised assets in advancing long-term global relationships, influence, and economic collaboration. Within the IES, **Alumni UK is explicitly recognised as the UK's flagship international alumni platform**, designed to sustain connections with international graduates over time and to deepen the benefits of a UK education far beyond the point of study. The IES places Alumni UK at the centre of its ambition to move from transactional student recruitment towards long-term, mutually beneficial global engagement.

This study is positioned directly within that strategic frame. It provides empirical evidence on how and why Alumni UK matters by examining the long-term value, impact, and global reach of a UK education through the experiences of international graduates who are members of the Alumni UK network. By doing so, it responds to a core question posed – implicitly and explicitly – by the International Education Strategy: **what is the enduring value of international education once graduates return to their home or third countries, and how can structured alumni engagement amplify that value for individuals and for the UK?**

The International Education Strategy sets out a clear expectation that alumni engagement should not be an add on, but a **strategic function** of the UK's international education system. It highlights Alumni UK as a mechanism for:

- sustaining long-term relationships with international graduates,
- supporting alumni as global professionals and leaders,
- strengthening international collaboration, trade, and influence,
- and enhancing the UK's soft power through trusted people-to-people links.

Over
140,000
Alumni UK
members

Against this backdrop, the Alumni Voices longitudinal study provides a critical evidence base. By tracking alumni outcomes, behaviours and perceptions over time, it allows an assessment of whether and how these ambitions are being realised in practice. In particular, it sheds light on the extent to which Alumni UK members continue to apply UK developed skills, maintain professional and economic links with the UK, act as advocates for UK education, and hold sustained, positive perceptions of the UK as a country and partner.

The IES positions this network as a means of converting the scale of the UK's international alumni population into long-term strategic value. This research engages directly with that ambition by focusing not simply on participation in Alumni UK, but on the outcomes associated with continued alumni connection: professional progression, entrepreneurship, international collaboration, and advocacy for the UK.

By drawing on three years of longitudinal data, supplemented by qualitative interviews, this study aims to understand how the UK education experience of Alumni UK members has influenced their professional journeys and views of the UK. The findings from this research offer insights into the value, impact and reach of a UK education.

Data was analysed across the following core themes:

- The overall value of a UK education experience
- Skills development and professional capability
- Employment, career progression and entrepreneurship
- Social experience and long lasting international networks
- Wider impact beyond the UK
- The UK in the world.

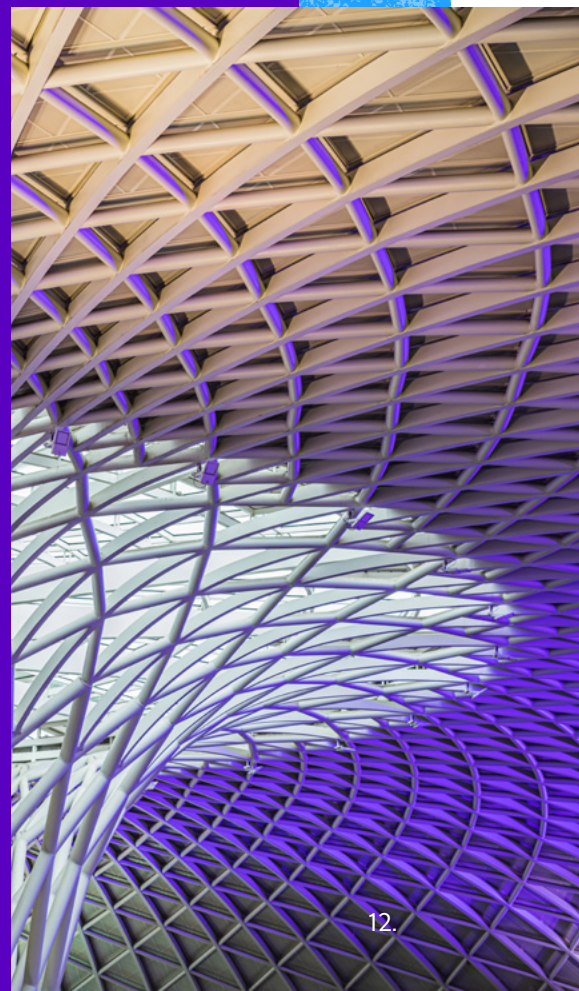
In doing so, the report supports the International Education Strategy in two important ways. First, it provides robust evidence that Alumni UK is not simply a communications or engagement initiative, but a strategic asset that underpins the UK's international education offer. Second, it demonstrates how alumni themselves function as global facilitators of international connectivity – supporting trade, collaboration, reputation, and trust in ways that align closely with the long-term objectives of the IES.

Overall, this study verifies the importance of Alumni UK as a central delivery mechanism within the International Education Strategy and provides evidence of the returns – personal, professional, economic, and reputational – that sustained investment in alumni engagement can generate for both international graduates and for the UK.



218
**countries
and
territories**

Methods



Approach

The British Council initiated the development of the survey instruments (questionnaire, interview guides). ACER UK provided expert guidance, operational management of the survey, data collection and management, initial data analysis, and reporting.

This longitudinal study involved the review, advice, and delivery of an online quantitative survey shared with registered members of Alumni UK (75,522 registered users as of January 2026). It should also be noted that respondents residing in China were surveyed using a different survey platform, due to local restrictions on transferring personal information outside of the country. As such, the data was collected locally, anonymised, and then merged with the wider data set.

In total, there were 4,140 participants in the survey from 130 countries. 1,497 of these were the same respondents from round 1 and/or round 2 (this same survey being administered in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025).

In addition to the survey, the British Council conducted several interviews in order to complement the survey findings with more qualitative in-depth insights. The interviews were focused on international graduates' experiences of UK higher education, and how experiences differ according to the nation of study within the UK. The consultations in the form of semi-structured interviews were conducted with 34 survey respondents¹ from over 20 different countries. The interviews were conducted to provide further information for evaluating the Alumni UK programme. The full report from the interviews is provided separately but some of the relevant insights have been integrated into this report.

As an incentive for participating in the survey, the British Council Alumni Voices respondents were offered a chance to enter a prize draw. The incentives on offer included 12-months' membership of the British Council digital library, a three-month subscription to LinkedIn Learning or a trip to the UK.

¹ Survey respondents who were interviewed for this study are referred to as interviewees in this report.

Survey data collection and analysis

ACER and the British Council met weekly during September and October 2025 to review and finalise the questionnaire. The regular discussion ensured that the questionnaire was suitable for longitudinal research and made sure the questions asked were fit for purpose and accessible to all groups.

The British Council consulted with Universities UK International (UUKi), UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), Independent HE, British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA), Graduate Futures Institute and JISC, in addition to several UK higher education provider, with regards to the survey content and design. The draft survey was also tested by international alumni in several geographic locations prior to the global rollout.

The survey was administered and analysed by ACER. The survey went live on 7th November 2025, and ran for just over two months, closing on 19th January 2026. During this time, ACER provided regular updates on survey responses.

The survey tool used for administration was Qualtrics. The platform meets GDPR requirements and can handle the desired question types and survey functionality, including appropriate branching and save/return functions. ACER survey staff ensured there was always sufficient server infrastructure in place throughout the administration to ensure all participants had quick and reliable access to the survey.

Prior to analysis, ACER performed a series of data-cleaning activities including validation checks and the recoding of missing data. ACER then assigned codes for all items and response options, systematically coded missing responses and non-responses, and reverse coded any negative items. Throughout this process, ACER created a codebook that will enable British Council to identify the meaning of all codes. The codebook also identifies any re-coding processes that have been undertaken during the validation and database creation.

All quantitative data was fed into SPSS and analysed using a range of descriptive analyses including cross tabs of survey items against a range of respondent characteristics including region, graduation year, engagement levels and disability. In many cases, there was no significant relationship between the variables examined. In cases where differences were found (e.g. skills and occupation), these were noted in the relevant sections in the findings.

34 interviewees from 21 countries

Interviews, data collection and analysis

Data was collected through remote semi-structured interviews with Alumni UK members. The interview guide explored interviewees' educational experiences, career trajectories, and ongoing connections to the UK. Interviewees who had completed UK transnational education programmes were asked additional questions about their sense of connection to the UK institution and to the region associated with their programme.

Interviewees were chosen from 3rd round respondents of the wider Alumni Voices survey. In total, 34 interviewees took part, from 21 different countries. Sampling was structured to ensure representation across three key characteristics: nation of study within the UK (England (London), England (not London), Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland); transnational education (TNE) status; and gender. This ensured that interviewees were able to provide detailed reflections on the value and impact of their UK educational experience.

Interview recordings were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis combined deductive coding, based on the study objectives and interview guide, with inductive coding to capture emerging themes from interviewees' narratives. Coding focused on identifying patterns in how alumni described the distinctive strengths of UK education, the role of place and institutional context, and the ways in which these experiences shaped career development and ongoing engagement with the UK.

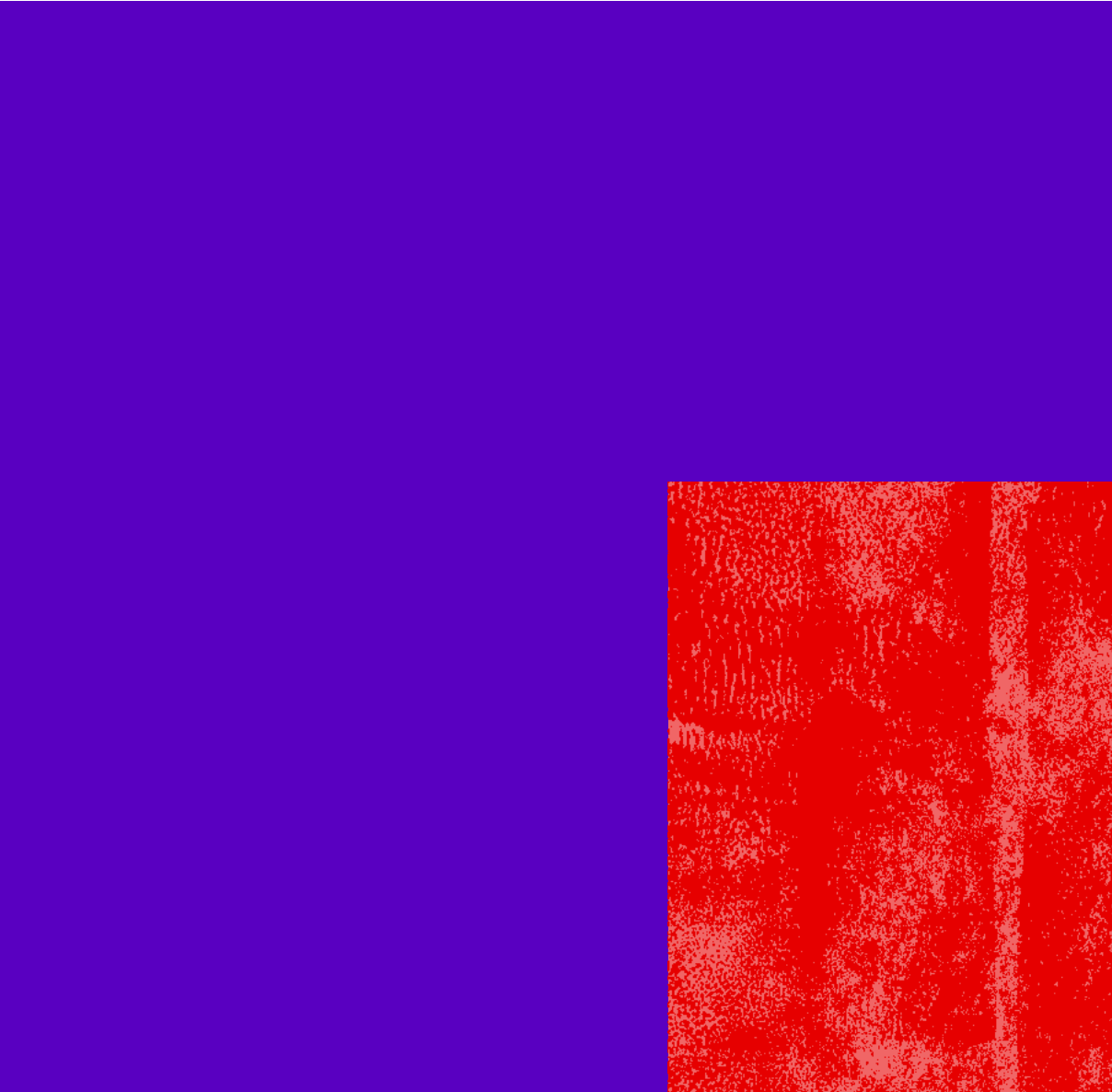
Limitations

As with any research, there are a number of limitations to consider when interpreting the findings. In this case, the main limitation is related to the sample. The Alumni Voices longitudinal study was sent to all registered members of the Alumni UK network. As not all members responded to the survey, there is likely a degree of self-selection bias, with individuals who have stronger opinions being more likely to participate, potentially skewing the results. This should be factored into any interpretation of the data.

National restrictions on data processing and sharing in China initially posed a limitation for this research. As a result, the Qualtrics survey tool could not be used, and the survey was instead replicated as closely as possible using Microsoft Forms (with a server located in China). While this solution enabled data collection to proceed, the MS Forms survey differed slightly in some small areas from the Qualtrics version, which introduced some challenges for analysis due to minor inconsistencies in the data.

It is important to note that comparisons across years are only meaningful when respondent profiles are comparable, therefore any interpretations should be carefully considered with that in mind. As many comparable groups are uneven in size (e.g. number of respondents in different countries) these findings cannot be generalised for the whole group but are rather exploratory in nature. Percentages and profile-based cross tabs are prioritised over raw counts.

Data



This survey captures the views of **4,140** alumni (64 percent were new respondents, and 36 percent were repeat respondents) across a globally diverse cohort, covering study experience, career outcomes, engagement with Alumni UK, perceptions of the UK, and priorities for improvement.

This section provides an overview of the respondents in the third round of the British Council's Alumni Voices longitudinal study. Similar to the previous two years, global reach of the population is very strong. Participants were from over **130** countries of birth, reflecting the genuinely global nature of the Alumni UK community and population.

Views of **4,140** alumni

Profile of the respondents

Table 1. Alumni Voices survey respondents overview by gender and region of residence

Country		Female	Male	Prefer not to say	Identify as other	Total
Americas	Count	225	194	3	3	425
	% within Region	52.9%	45.6%	0.7%	0.7%	100%
East Asia	Count	315	237	8	3	563
	% within Region	56.0%	42.1%	1.4%	0.5%	100%
EU Europe	Count	161	113	6	0	280
	% within Region	57.5%	40.4%	2.1%	0.0%	100%
Middle East and North Africa	Count	119	170	1	0	290
	% within Region	41.0%	58.6%	0.3%	0.0%	100%
South Asia	Count	276	639	6	0	921
	% within Region	30.0%	69.4%	0.7%	0.0%	100%
Sub-Saharan Africa	Count	290	377	0	2	669
	% within Region	43.3%	56.4%	0.0%	0.3%	100%
Wider Europe (and Central Asia)	Count	140	84	4	3	231
	% within Region	60.6%	36.4%	1.7%	1.3%	100%
UK	Count	53	36	3	0	92
	% within Region	57.6%	39.1%	3.3%	0.0%	100%
Missing gender data	Count	1,579	1,850	31	11	4,140
	% within Region	45.5%	53.3%	0.9%	0.3%	100%

Table 1 shows the proportion of male, female and other respondents in each region. Region refers to where the alumni are currently residing. Overall 44.7 percent were male, and 38.1 percent were female. South Asia and East Asia had the most respondents (23.9 percent and 22.6 percent).

For the interview sample, there were 15 males, 18 females and 1 who preferred not to state their gender. Five interviewees were TNE alumni, whilst the others studied in London (5), England – not London (4), Scotland (9), Wales (9) and Northern Ireland (2).

Additional descriptive summaries:

- 2.9 percent of all respondents stated that they had a disability.
- In terms of year of graduation, 69.6 percent graduated since 2000, of which 18.9 percent graduated since 2020 and 50.7 percent graduating between 2000 and 2020.
- 18.1 percent were TNE² students, 60.2 percent of which studied fully online, 24.7 percent studied at a local university for a UK qualification, and 15.1 percent studied in a branch campus of a UK university based outside the UK.
- Just under half of respondents who were new to the survey received a scholarship to engage in UK study, with most named ones being Chevening scholarships (9.12 percent), and Commonwealth scholarships.

² Transnational education (TNE) refers to the delivery of educational programmes by institutions in one country to students located in another, often through partnerships, branch campuses, or online platforms.

Results



Across all three survey waves, between 2024 and this year, alumni consistently describe their UK education as a formative experience that extends beyond academic learning. Respondents highlight the combined value of skills developed during study, opportunities created through exposure to UK teaching and professional cultures, and networks built with peers, academics, and institutions that endure over time.

This section of the report will outline the results of the analysis in six key parts. These are:

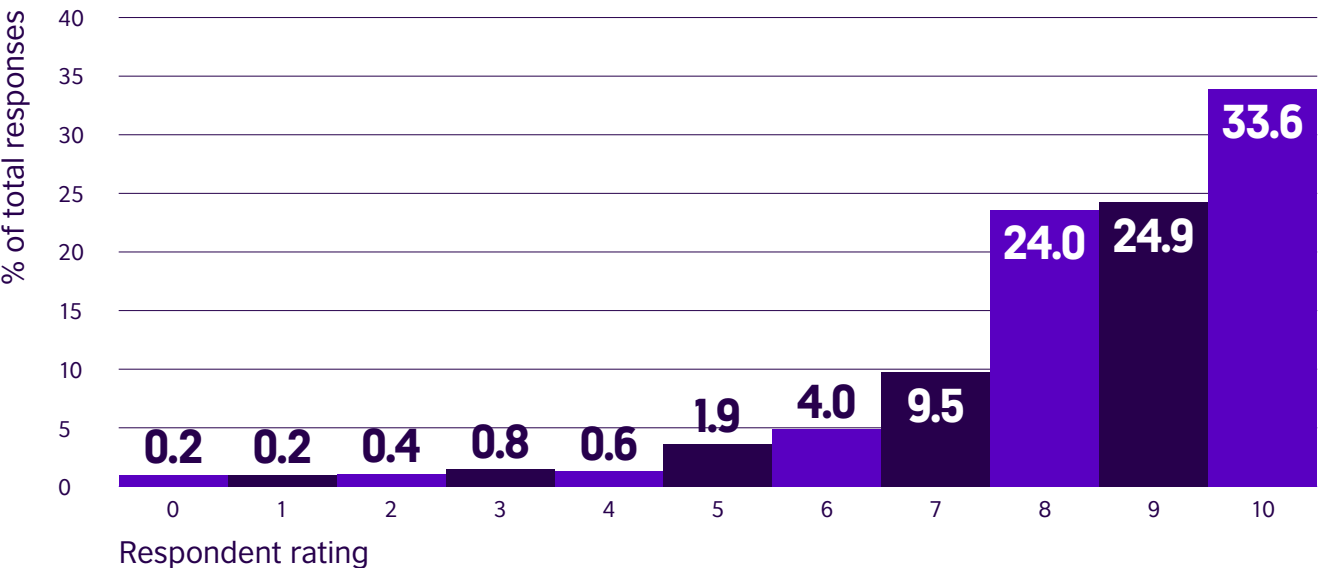
- The overall value of a UK education experience
- Skills development and professional capability
- Employment, career progression and entrepreneurship
- Social experience and long lasting international networks
- Adaptability and benefits of UK education globally
- The UK in the world.

Each of the following sections will provide insights into every one of these themes, based on the views of survey respondents, supplemented with interview findings where relevant.

The overall value of a UK education experience

This section outlines the overall perceptions of international students' UK education experience. The insights gained from this round of the study are consistent with the previous two years, meaning that they are extremely positive, with Alumni of UK education endorsing the quality and value of their experience.

Figure 1. Overall ratings of UK education experience



New survey respondents (i.e. those that did not participate in the previous years of the study) were asked to rate their UK education experience on a scale of 0 – 10, with 0 being very bad and 10 being very good. Figure 1 shows the results and demonstrates that respondents were overwhelmingly positive about their UK education experience, with 96 percent rating it a 6 or above. This is similar to the previous two years of the study, with 95.8 percent rating it a 6 or above in round 2, and 97.7 percent in round 1 (Krstic and Towne, 2024; Krstic and Towne, 2025).

All respondents were also asked to rate the relevance of their UK education experience for the world of work, and the mean rating was 8.31, which is broadly in line with the previous two years (being 8+ in both previous rounds). Further analyses explored responses by a number of different sub-groups, to unpick any emerging patterns in the data. These are gender, disability and type of study and there were no notable differences in their rating (full tables in Appendix 1).

Figure 2. Rating of UK education relevance by year of graduation

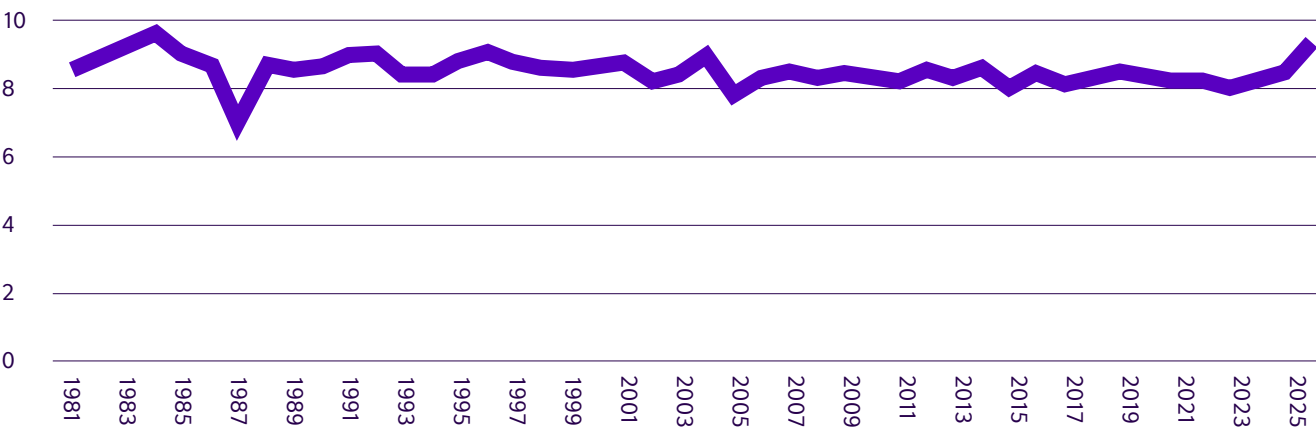


Figure 2 shows ratings of the relevance of respondents' education based on their year of graduation. The ratings are consistently between 7 and 10 on the relevance scale. This finding supports a narrative of long-term impact, which is particularly relevant for policy audiences interested in sustained benefits of UK education.

Respondents were also asked to rate the inclusivity (defined as: Inclusivity encompasses the extent to which you felt included and that your individual needs were catered for (teaching, accommodation, life on campus etc.)) of their UK education experience. The mean rating was 8.03, consistent with previous years (8.17 in 2025, and 9 in 2024).

In interviews, a strong theme in the data was that interviewees valued forms of support that sat alongside formal teaching. Examples given include professional development programmes, employability training, coaching, volunteering, and extra certifications. These supports are described as broadening the value of study beyond academic content and helping students build confidence, skills, and clearer career direction.

'They had this programme... which is for professional development. So, there we learned a lot about public speaking, presentation skills and also emotional intelligence.'
Male interviewee living in Sri Lanka



**96% rated
their UK
education
experience
a six or above**

The second area that comes through particularly strongly in the interview data is the provision of wider social enrichment activities, including volunteering and competitions. Although not always linked to career outcomes, these opportunities contributed to interviewees' sense of development, achievement, and confidence. For example, one interviewee proudly shared how they had won an amateur photography competition, which led to their photo being displayed in London Heathrow airport.

The longitudinal nature of the Alumni Voices data allows exploration of how perceptions evolve. Alumni who graduated many years ago continue to report the relevance of their UK education as high, suggesting that its value is not time limited but adapts as careers progress and contexts change. This offers a powerful support for the UK HE sector that a UK degree is not only relevant at the point of graduation but continues to shape professional journeys over the long-term.

Skills development and professional capability

A central theme emerging from the survey is the role of UK education in developing a broad set of skills that alumni continue to draw upon in their working lives. Alumni report that their UK studies contributed to both technical and transferable skills, supporting adaptability across sectors and countries. Respondents were asked to choose the top five skills they think they have developed the most during their UK studies from the following list:

- critical thinking
- collaboration/teamwork
- self confidence
- communication skills
- intercultural skills
- leadership
- global citizenship
- resilience
- project planning
- creativity
- advanced digital skills
- basic digital skills
- sustainability skills
- ethical use of AI
- harnessing AI capabilities.

The survey data indicates that the most frequently chosen skills that respondents believe they developed most during their UK education experience across all fields are:

- Critical thinking, identified as their top five skill by 71 percent
- Collaboration/teamwork, identified as their top five skill by 68 percent
- Self confidence, identified as their top five skill by 62 percent
- Communication skills, identified as their top five skill by 60 percent
- Intercultural skills, identified as their top five skill by 48 percent.

Analysis of **field-specific skill** strengths shows that, although most skills are developed in the majority of fields, some variation exists. It is worth bearing in mind that as previously stated, the majority of respondents (over 80 percent) graduated before 2020, thus there may have been less emphasis on some of these skills at the time of their study. For example:

- **Collaboration** was rated very highly across all the fields, with the highest ratings being MBA (82 percent) and lowest Creative Arts & Design (51 percent).
- **Critical thinking skills** are highly rated across the fields, but are particularly strong in Health and Medicine (77 percent), MBA (76 percent), Humanities (74 percent), Law (72 percent), and Social Studies and Communications (70 percent).
- **Advanced digital skills** are notably low across most fields (10-29 percent), except Computer & Mathematical Science (44 percent).
- **AI-related skills** such as Ethical use of AI (0-9 percent) and Harnessing AI capabilities (0-3 percent) were not as frequently identified as their top five skill across all fields, likely due to the relatively recent developments in this field. These skills are not mentioned at all by older graduates, but are getting more frequently mentioned by more recent graduates.
- Creative Arts stand out for **Creativity** with 53 percent of Creative Arts students reporting developing creativity at 3-4x the rate of most other fields (typically 10-20 percent).
- **Leadership** varies, and is highest for MBA respondents (59 percent), and lowest for Creative Arts (29 percent) and Education & Training (24 percent).
- **Intercultural skills** are perhaps unsurprisingly more highly reported in internationally oriented fields such as Creative Arts (62 percent), Humanities (62 percent), Social Studies (62 percent) and lower in technical fields such as Engineering (48 percent) and Computer Science (46 percent).
- **Sustainability skills** are relatively low across all fields (7-21 percent), with Architecture (21 percent), Social Studies (18 percent), and Applied Sciences (16 percent) having the highest ratings. It is again worth bearing in mind the small number of newer graduates – only 3 percent of older graduates cited sustainability skills, compared to 15 percent of recent graduates, indicating that sustainability skills are becoming much more relevant to UK alumni.

Overall, when comparing the skills developed by graduates across graduation years, it is clear that alumni have developed a wider range of skills over time through their UK education experience. Responses from recent graduates are more diverse than those from graduates who completed their studies before 2020, and especially compared with those who graduated before 2000.

To measure the effectiveness of the skills developed through UK education, respondents were also asked to choose the five skills they consider most important for their career from the same list. This enables exploration of how skills developed during UK study align with the skills alumni later identify as most important for their careers. The most chosen skills were:

- Communication skills, identified as their top five skill by 74 percent
- Critical thinking, identified as their top five skill by 71 percent
- Leadership, identified as their top five skill by 59 percent
- Self confidence, identified as their top five skill by 53 percent
- Collaboration/teamwork, identified as their top five skill by 49 percent.

Figure 3. Skills alignment

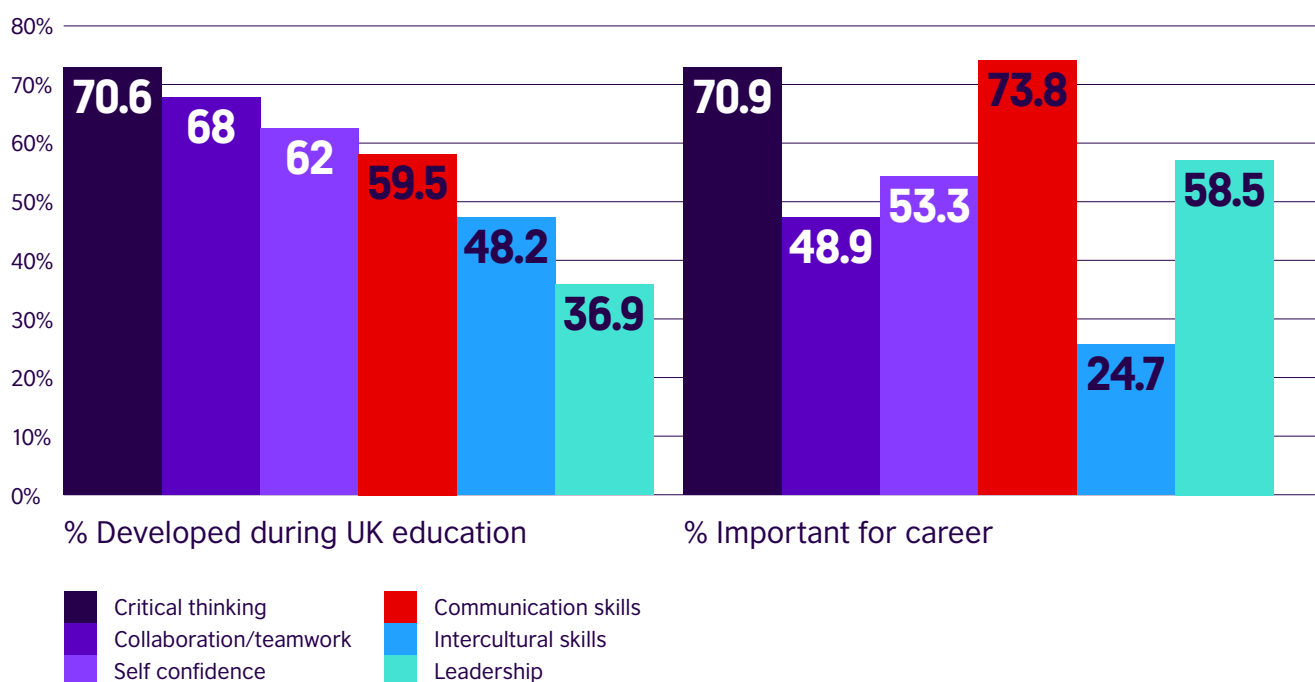


Figure 3 shows strong alignment, where four skills (out of 15 choices) were chosen both as most developed during their UK study **and** as most important for their careers. These were critical thinking, collaboration/teamwork, self confidence, and communication skills. This close correspondence suggests that the capabilities built and strengthened during study continue to hold value and relevance in graduates' professional lives and their career development.

It is worth noting that leadership presents an interesting nuance. Although 59 percent of alumni rate leadership as important for their career success, it does not feature among the top five skills they report developing through their UK education overall (just 37 percent list leadership as a skill they developed). Notably, this is not the case for MBA graduates, where leadership development is rated highly by 59 percent, suggesting that the picture varies by discipline. This may be an interesting finding to explore further in future rounds of the study, as it could offer valuable insight into how leadership development is experienced across different fields of study.

In addition, alumni report developing intercultural skills in their studies more often than they list them among their top five career skills. There were particularly highly rated by Creative Arts, Humanities and Social Studies graduates. However, it indicates that intercultural skills still operate as a broader capability that supports professional effectiveness indirectly (e.g., working across cultures, global perspectives) as they were still amongst the top skills chosen (in seventh place for the career importance).

These findings are supported by the findings from the interviews. UK education's ability to develop students' soft skills was a strong recurrent theme across all interviewees. The key skills reported include communication, leadership, self-reliance, critical thinking, intercultural skills, and wider personal development – in line with the survey findings. In terms of communication, interviewees referenced their ability to speak more clearly, write more effectively, present ideas with improved clarity and confidence, and adjust messages for different audiences. In professional settings, this reportedly translated into better stakeholder engagement, public speaking, and report writing, as well as an improved capacity to operate in an international environment.

‘What I have learned in my UK education has helped me... to be clear, specific in whatever we are telling to... students and... colleagues as well.’
Female interviewee living in Uzbekistan

For leadership-related soft skills, many interviewees referenced presentations, group projects, internships, and applied assignments supporting their development. The specific leadership skills mentioned include teamwork, negotiation, stakeholder management, decision-making, and the ability to coordinate others around shared goals. Some interviewees explicitly connect these skills to later managerial or strategic roles.

‘It filled the gap to the next role... Decision making and, of course, behaviour as a leader and a manager.’
Female interviewee living in Sri Lanka

Interviewees repeatedly described UK education as developing independent thought and self-reliance. They highlighted the high degree of independence in UK pedagogy. As opposed to being told exactly what to do, students were expected to manage reading, shape their own ideas, take initiative, and work proactively with supervisors and course materials.

‘You just have to be independent, and stay calm, and think independently. So that’s a big part of learning in the UK.’
Female interviewee living in China



Closely associated with this is the development of critical thinking skills, which again was a major theme in the data. Interviewees described developing a deeper analytical mindset through UK pedagogies, which were perceived to be orientated towards questioning, discussion, interpretation, and critical analysis, rather than memorisation or passive absorption of content. This reportedly led to interviewees becoming more inquisitive, more willing to question their assumptions, and engage at a deeper level by evaluating evidence. In many interviewees' accounts, this soft-skill development is closely tied to identity and worldview, not just academic performance.

'The core principles were to help you develop your critical and analytical thinking even more. And this is something which the university really cultivated in every aspect of the programme, and that really helped me to ask better questions, understand questions better, and deliver better.'

Female interviewee living in Mauritius

In terms of intercultural skills development, this was a dominant theme within the data, with many describing it as one of the most distinctive gains from their UK experience. Interviewees shared a perceived improvement in their ability to work with people from different national, cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds. They emphasised developments in their ability to read cultural nuance, adapt communication styles, and make others feel included.

'My studies at university really stretched me... You get to understand how other people think, the different perspectives people bring to the table.'

Female interviewee living in Ghana

For many interviewees soft skills and wider personal development were inseparable, with many sharing that UK education changed them on a deeper, more personal level. UK education was described as making them more open, more resilient, less shy, and better able to handle challenges and change. In a number of accounts, this transformation is framed as a turning point in life direction, rather than simply a period of study.

'It [my UK education] gives me a lot of extra boost in terms of self-confidence and also resilience... Whenever there's a problem, problematic situation, I feel like the way I handle it is very different from the previous ways.'
Male interviewee living in Sri Lanka

Another interesting finding comes from the survey respondents who were asked to rate the relevance of their UK education experience for the world of work in one question, and also to rate if their UK education experience has been a significant help on their professional journey. The analysis is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. UK education impact on work

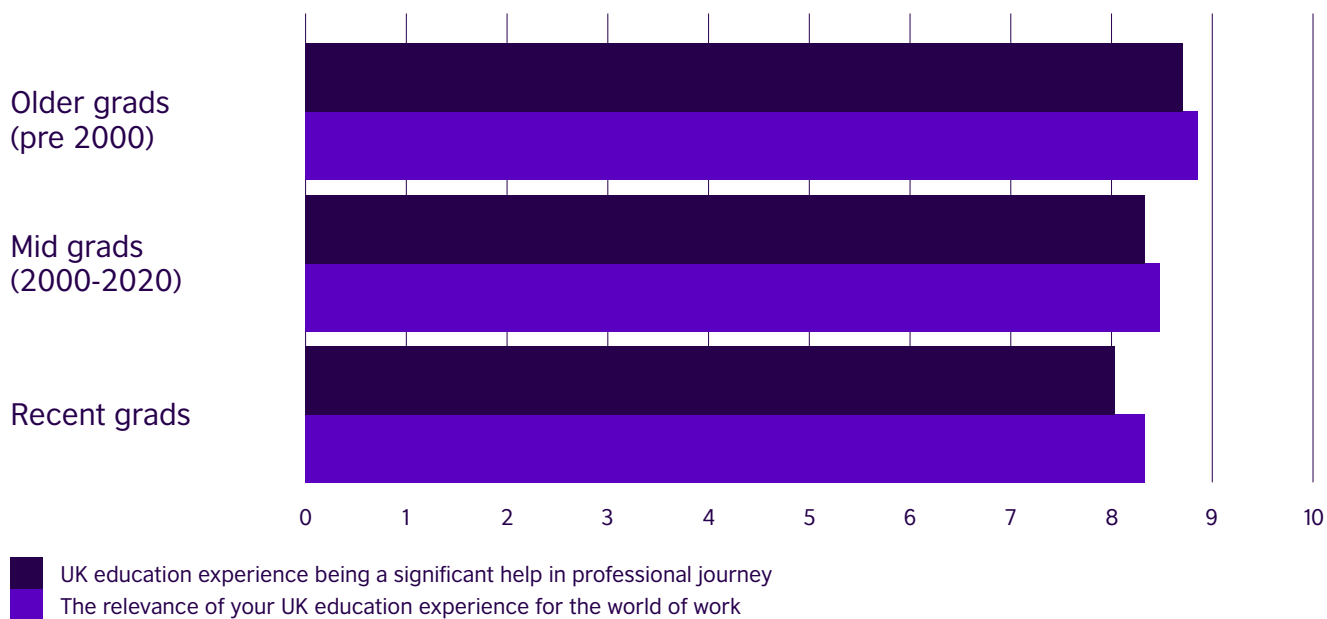


Figure 4 shows that mean ratings for both these questions are very high and similar (8.37 and 8.30 respectively), with very little difference in terms of graduation years. This indicates that a UK education has and continues to have a positive perceived impact on the professional journeys of alumni.

This is further supported by the interviews where interviewees highlight the importance of opportunities that connected university learning to professional practice. The specifics of this varied by study type, but included accreditation opportunities, access to professional bodies, guest speakers, access to studios, and real-world exposure through internships and industrial placements. These supports reportedly helped students understand industry expectations and translate academic learning into usable professional skills.

‘So I could walk to BBC Studios and then just observe how the journalists were doing their work. We were allowed to ask them questions and sometimes we’ll have them come to our lectures... for me, having the opportunity to go to the studios and learn and ask the experts questions, it was very useful’
Female interviewee living in Ghana

Employment, career progression and entrepreneurship

Employment outcomes and career trajectories form a key pillar of this analysis and provide evidence of the long-term impact of UK education.

A UK education was described by a number of interviewees as transformative in shaping career direction and professional identity. As opposed to simply enabling promotion or employment, the UK experience influenced how interviewees understood their interests and professional pathways, and in some cases, prompted a shift away from an original career trajectory toward new sectors or opportunities.

‘It was life changing for me... and the start of this shift was really my experience at [a UK] university... a door opened that day.’

Female interviewee living in USA

Interviewees also reported on the importance their UK education had to career progression. Many interviewees described their UK education as a catalyst in this regard, enabling promotions and increased responsibilities. Interviewees frequently linked this career advancement not only to the qualification itself but also to the skills and professional exposure gained during their studies.

The survey findings similarly show the variety of profession paths for graduates of UK education.



‘In terms of career growth, I [have] also recently been promoted to professor and my UK education really has helped me advance in my career.’

Female interviewee living in the Philippines

Table 2. Primary occupation of the respondents

Primary occupation	Frequency	Percent
Paid work for an employer	2,507	60.6%
Self-employment/freelancing	437	10.6%
Running my own business	424	10.2%
Engaged in a course of study, training or research	291	7.0%
Unemployed and looking for work	161	3.9%
Developing a creative, artistic or professional portfolio	109	2.6%
Retired	78	1.9%
Voluntary/unpaid work for an employer	51	1.2%
Doing something else	49	1.2%
Taking time out to travel	17	0.4%
Caring for someone (unpaid)	16	0.4%
Total	4,140	100.0%

Table 2 shows that over 60 percent of respondents were in paid work for an employer, with a further 21 percent either running their own business or being self-employed. Around 7 percent were engaged in a course of study, training or research. Less than 4 percent of respondents were unemployed.

Table 3. Job level

Primary occupation	Frequency	Percent
Individual contributor/middle management	861	35.1%
Senior management	651	26.5%
Director level	378	15.4%
Junior role/entry level	253	10.3%
CEO level	215	8.8%
I prefer not to say	95	3.9%
Total	2,453	100.0%

Table 3 shows the job levels of those respondents that are working, with the highest percent (35 percent) being in middle management or individual contributor, and 8.8 percent being CEO level.

Those who were working were asked to rate the following statements that came from HESA Graduate Outcomes survey (2025):

- *My current work fits with my future plans*
- *I am utilising what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current work*

Those who were studying were asked to rate the following statements, that also came from HESA Graduate Outcomes survey (2025):

- *My current study fits with my future plans*
- *I am building on what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current studies*

Over 85 percent of respondents who were working rated their statements highly (6+), and over 90 percent of those studying rated their statements 6+, illustrating the value of their UK study experience.

These views are further supported by their ratings of how much their UK education experience has been a significant help on their professional journey.

Over 85%
say their
current work
fits with their
future plans



Figure 5. Helpfulness of UK education

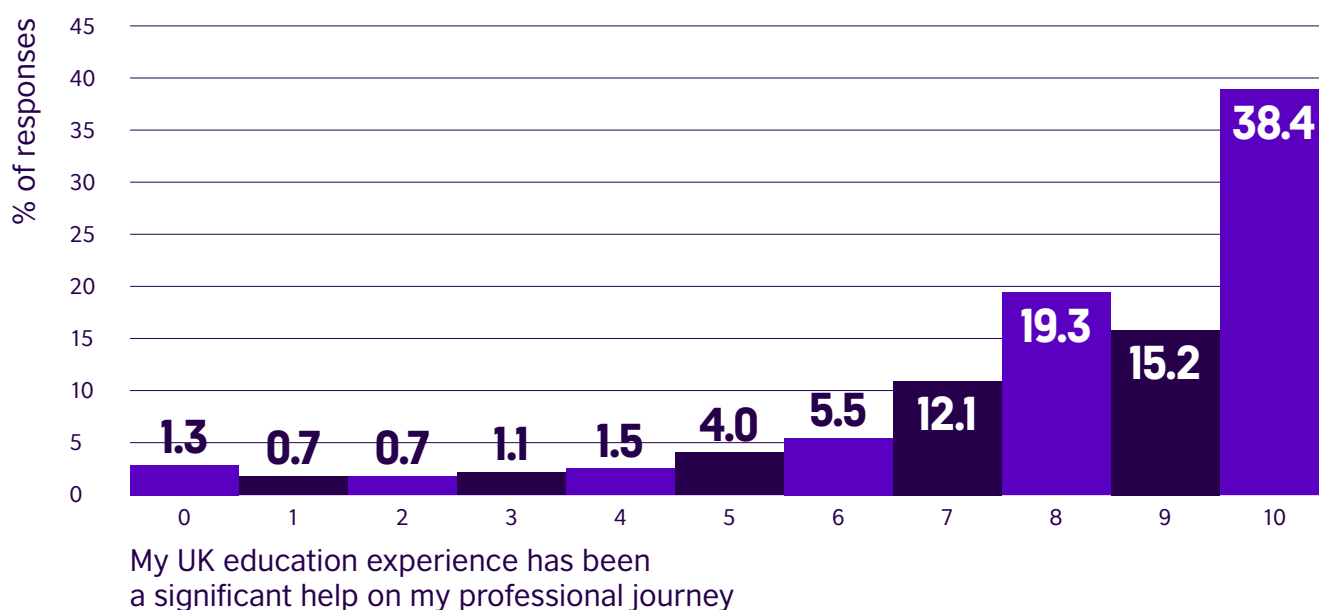


Figure 5 shows the ratings of respondents when asked about the helpfulness of their UK education experience on their professional journey. Over 90 percent of respondents rated it as 6+, with a mean rating of 8.25.

A dominant theme in interviews was that UK qualifications provide a clear employability advantage in international markets, as they are widely recognised internationally as high quality and rigorous. Interviewees describe UK degrees as helping them stand out in competitive labour markets, linking this increased employer confidence to the continued prestige of UK education.

‘As long as it’s a British degree, they know that the quality is there, so they know what to expect basically from someone who came back from postgraduate studies.’
Male interviewee living in the Philippines

Some respondents also referred to the relevance of institutional or subject strengths as well as to the recognition attached to scholarships. The prestige of some UK scholarships was noted to increase employment profile, such as the Chevening scholarship.

‘There’s a certain non-negotiable expectation that comes with... anyone that’s had a UK education, and in addition to that a Chevening scholarship... that you cannot compromise on excellence... [and] integrity to the things you bring to the table.’
Female interviewee living in Ghana

The recognition and prestige associated with a UK qualification was particularly helpful for those working in international contexts. Interviewees shared a perception that degrees from their own country's institutions would not be as recognisable and that UK qualifications infer a degree of credibility in these contexts.

'In my country of birth, they would understand better what is a PhD from the UK than what is a PhD from France.'
Female interviewee living in USA

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the development of subject-specific skills and knowledge was noted as an advantage of a UK education. Interviewees from all UK nations shared that the alignment between course content and job requirements was an advantage.

'The learnings or the job description or the tasks or the responsibilities are very parallel to what I have studied in the UK... So, I was able to really apply my learning ... So, I was able to thrive in that role.'

Male interviewee living in the Philippines

In terms of time taken to find work, just under a third (29.5 percent) of survey respondents were employed before they started their studies and returned to their employer. For others, the following table shows the time it took them to get a job.

'It truly elevates how they see my qualifications and how they can put their trust in me as a doctor.'
Female interviewee living in Indonesia



Table 4. Time taken to find work

Description	Frequency	Percent
Immediately	481	32.30%
Within 3 months	377	25.32%
More than 3 months, but less than 6 months	230	15.45%
More than 6 months, but less than 12 months	180	12.09%
Between 12 months and 18 months	111	7.45%
More than 18 months	110	7.39%
Total	1,489	100.0%

Table 4 shows that over a third of respondents (32.3 percent) found a job immediately. Another 40.7 percent found a job within 6 months, and only around 7 percent took over a year. 75 percent of those who already had a job stated that the new qualification improved their career prospects with their employer. This is in line with the findings from the previous years of the survey.

A similar theme emerged from the interviews that UK education helped graduates secure their first post-study role. Interviewees often described the UK degree as giving them an edge in recruitment, especially for international, multinational, or prestigious employers.

‘My UK education did give me a big advantage as a... new job seeker in the market... that was why I stood a higher chance in getting my first job.’
Female interviewee living in Singapore

75%
improved
career
prospects

Table 5. Use of UK qualification

Description	Frequency	Percent
Yes, both the level and subject of qualification was a formal requirement	1,231	54.09%
No, the qualification was not required	612	26.89%
Yes, while the qualification was not a formal requirement it did give me an advantage	211	9.27%
Yes, the level of qualification was a formal requirement	140	6.15%
Yes, the subject of the qualification was a formal requirement	68	2.99%
I do not know	14	0.62%
Total	2,276	100.0%

Table 5 shows that over 70 percent of survey respondents reported needing their UK qualification to get their current job, and in 54 percent of cases both the level and subject of qualification being a formal requirement, illustrating how UK qualification contributes to alumni's employment prospects.

Similarly, in several interviewee's cases, their first job closely aligned with their field of study, with many emphasising the practical nature of UK education and the fact it gave them exposure to systems and tasks directly relevant to their future employment. However, some interviewees did share examples of where they had taken up roles not directly linked to their subject of study. In these instances, they highlighted the range of transferable skills gained from their UK education, and their perceived importance in enabling entry into the new sectors. This underscores the value of UK education beyond credentialism. Key skills shared include research skills, project management, and the array of soft skills mentioned in the previous section.

‘Although I was not applying for anything directly building up on my programme, I made quite a huge deal out of the fact that I had written a complex dissertation in critical discourse analysis, and I could manage projects and work with data and analyse information... in tech... it’s very transferable.’
Female interviewee living in Germany

By examining alumni status over time, the survey allows insight into how individuals' job levels and responsibilities change, and how these changes relate to their UK education. Future longitudinal analysis of repeat respondents can show if there is a clear progression over time into more senior and leadership roles and provide evidence of how UK education can support sustained professional development rather than short-term employment gains alone.

Social experience and long lasting international networks

Beyond employment and skills, the survey highlights the social dimensions of a UK education as a distinctive and enduring benefit. Alumni consistently rate highly the social aspects of their UK education experience, and the connections and networks formed during their time in the UK.

Figure 6. Ratings of the social aspects of a UK education experience

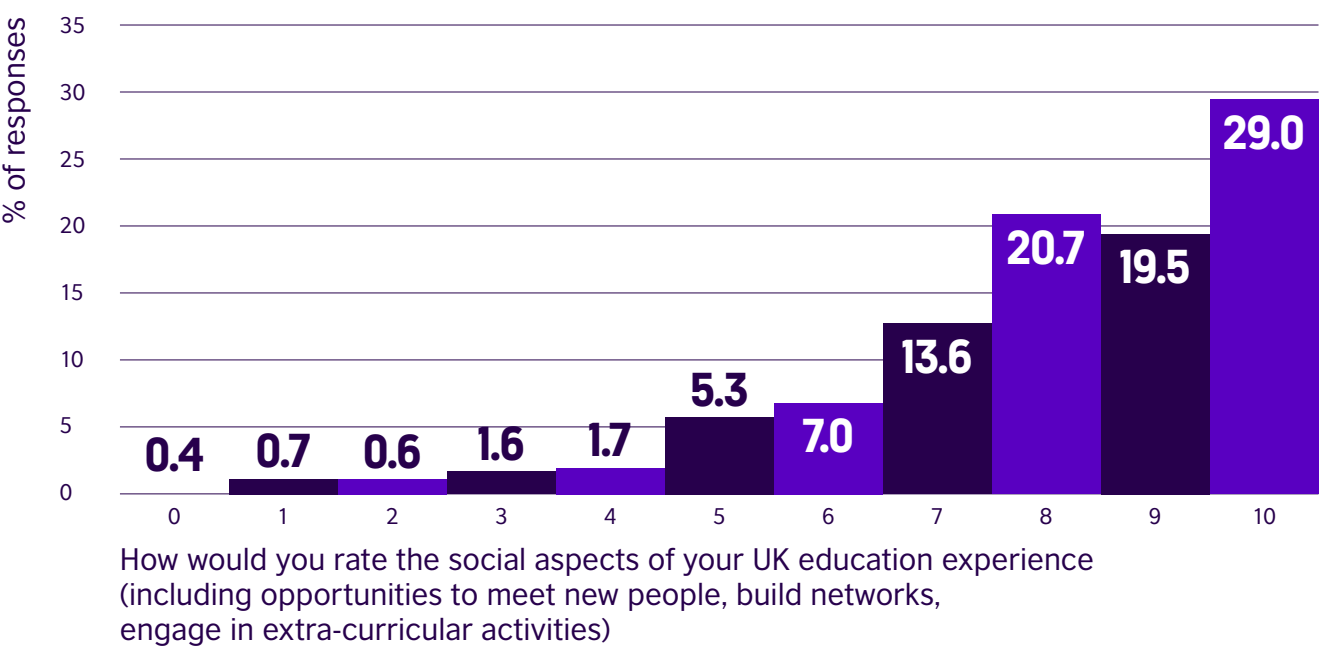


Figure 6 shows that 90 percent of respondents rated the social aspects of their UK education experience 6+. These ratings were consistently high when examined by gender and disability status.

Around 84 percent of alumni recommended UK study in the last 12 months. Those who report stronger social experiences during their UK studies are highly likely to maintain contact with peers, underlining the importance of social connection for long-term advocacy as presented in the following tables.

Figure 7. Relationship between social aspects and recommendations of UK study experience

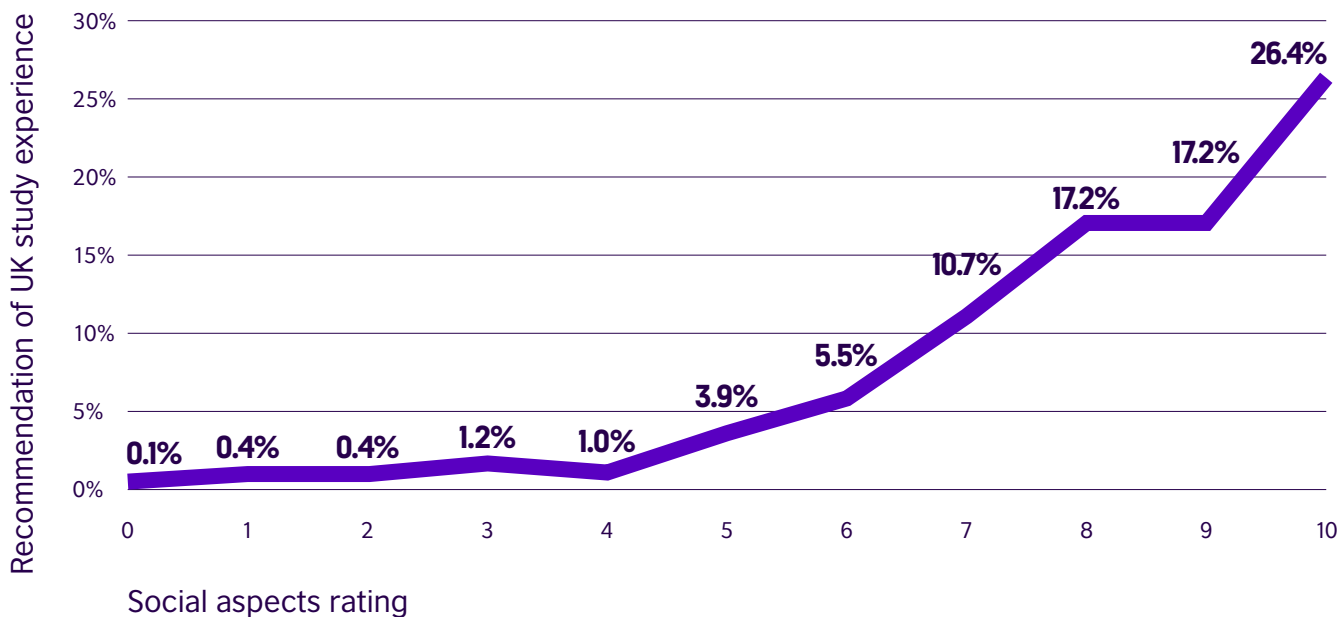


Figure 7 shows that strong ratings on social aspects scale are associated with higher percentages of recommendations of UK study experience.

In addition to being asked whether they would recommend the UK as a place to study, the respondents were also asked for their reasons for recommending it.

84% of alumni recommended UK study in the last 12 months



Table 6. Reasons for recommendations of UK study experience

Reasons for recommending	Percent
A place to visit	57.5%
A place to work	48.3%
Its arts and culture	38.3%
As a place to do business/trade	24.2%
Its sports teams/events	14.2%
No, I have had no opportunity to do so	7.5%
I prefer not to say/I do not know	4.2%
No, I would not recommend it	2.5%

As mentioned previously, 84 percent of respondents recommended the UK as a place to study, and **Table 6** summarises reasons given for recommendations. It shows that over half of respondents have recommended the UK as a place to visit and nearly half have recommended as a place to work. Nearly 40 percent have also recommended it for its arts and culture, and nearly a quarter recommended it as a place to do business and trade.

Table 7. Contacted or met with anyone encountered during the UK study experience

In the last 12 months have you contacted or met with anyone that you first encountered during your UK education experience?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3,021	73.0%
No	981	23.7%
I do not know	83	2.0%
I prefer not to say	55	1.3%
Total	4,140	100.0%

Table 7 shows that 73 percent of respondents have either contacted or met with someone in the last 12 months who they first encountered during their UK education.

In interviews, a major theme was that UK education enables graduates to build lasting international networks with classmates, supervisors, and wider alumni across multiple countries. These networks were often described as extending beyond the UK itself, linking interviewees into wider global communities.



‘I have so many friends from so many countries now... mostly anywhere I go I have someone to call to have a coffee or even to stay at their place.’
Interviewee living in Armenia

Interviewees described a range of networks, from informal friendships and support networks to formal alumni structures. Professionally productive networks resulting from their UK education were described more often than just social ones. Interviewees described network utilisation in two main areas. Firstly, interviewees frequently described using their UK networks to identify job openings, gain referrals, or receive career intelligence. In some cases, network use appeared to be strategic and deliberate. In others, it is more informal but still materially useful.

Secondly, interviewees described using networks to enable idea exchange and technical learning with professional associates. Key platforms for this were conferences and alumni meetings, including workshops, talks, and events. Interviewees shared the need to engage regularly with these platforms to maximise network effectiveness.

‘I didn’t know ... being a student at my university is like being connected with all its organisations all over the world. So that was the key moment when I realised that... It was an absolute happiness that I felt.’

Male interviewee living in Ethiopia

‘Every year we get to attend conferences and events and then see where the other peers are and what they do. And we get to have like an exchange of ideas with other students.’
Female interviewee living in the Philippines



In both cases, ongoing connections with lecturers and university staff featured prominently in the data. Interviewees described instances of professional collaboration, as well as former lecturers introducing graduates to contacts and raising awareness of professional opportunities such as available grants.

In terms of interviewees' capacity to develop and sustain networks, three core areas emerge from the data. Firstly, the role of technology. UK education networks are often sustained through digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn, with multiple interviewees describing relationships that persist over many years and continue to provide professional and social value. Secondly, formal alumni structure facilitated by organisations like the British Council and Chevening Scholarships were a recurring feature of interviewees' experiences, indicating they play a central role in network development and sustainment. Finally, the structure of UK study in itself, with supportive supervisors, group-based learning, and conferences playing a central role. Supervisors in particular were recurrently referenced as connectors, introducing students to wider research communities.

'We had more time working with others because we had all the modules, all the classes we had to do group work. So, we had better networking and better communication.'
Male interviewee living in Iraq

'Through my supervisor, he introduced me to his South African collaborator as well as collaborators within the UK.'
Female interviewee living in the Philippines

Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all interviewees experienced networks evenly, with different levels of development and endurance shared. Some interviewees reported barriers to continued network engagement, which include weak local alumni infrastructure, a lack of discipline-specific communities, limited available time, political sensitivities, and the gradual fading of relationships over time.

'It is difficult to make a communication or links between the UK university and Iraqi university because... of the security situation or political situation.'
Male interviewee living in Iraq

'With time it's difficult to stay in touch. Because everybody has now, you know, developed their own journeys and careers.'
Female interviewee living in India

It is clear that many respondents in both interviews and surveys report maintaining contact with people they first met during their UK studies, even many years after graduation. These ongoing connections underline the role of UK education in building global networks that support collaboration, knowledge exchange, and professional opportunity. For UK HEPs, this provides strong evidence that the student experience is not only academically valuable but also socially transformative, contributing to the UK's longer term soft power and influence.

Adaptability and benefits of UK education globally

Employment outcomes show that alumni follow a wide range of professional trajectories, with over 60 percent in paid employment and more than 20 percent either running their own business or self employed. This diversity underscores the role of UK education in supporting flexible career pathways, including entrepreneurship and self employment, which aligns with global labour market shifts towards portfolio careers and independent work. This is particularly relevant for international audiences assessing the adaptability of UK qualifications across different economic contexts.

The survey team followed up with a selection of those who were running their own business or were self-employed and asked if their current job involves trading or collaborating with organisations and/or individuals in the UK.

Table 8. Trading or collaborating with organisations in the UK

Description	Frequency	Percent
Yes	100	55.6%
No	74	41.1%
I do not know	6	3.3%
Total	180	100.0%

Table 8 shows that over half of entrepreneurship respondents trade or collaborate with the UK.

They were further asked if they employ other people.

Table 9. Employing other people

Description	Frequency	Percent
No, I don't employ people to work for me	34	18.9%
Yes, I employ 5 or less	78	43.3%
Yes, I employ 6-20 staff	43	23.9%
Yes, I employ 21-50 staff	11	6.1%
Yes, I employ over 50 staff	14	7.8%
Total	180	100.0%

Table 9 shows that over 80 percent of entrepreneurship employ other people. Therefore UK-educated entrepreneurs in this survey could be described as job creators who maintain UK connections through collaborating and trading with UK. Further analysis shows that male alumni are more likely to run their own businesses (61.4 percent), and that South Asia leads in entrepreneurial alumni (33.5 percent), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (21.5 percent) and East Asia (18.9 percent). In terms of the field of study, Business graduates dominate among entrepreneurs (40.8 percent). These findings support the case for UK education's economic impact worldwide.

Another aspect of UK education's impact globally is the value of English language skills that alumni develop during their education for their professional journey. The alumni were asked if the English language skills they developed during their UK education gave them an advantage on their professional journey.

**80% of
entrepreneurs
employ
other people**

Figure 8. Value of English language development

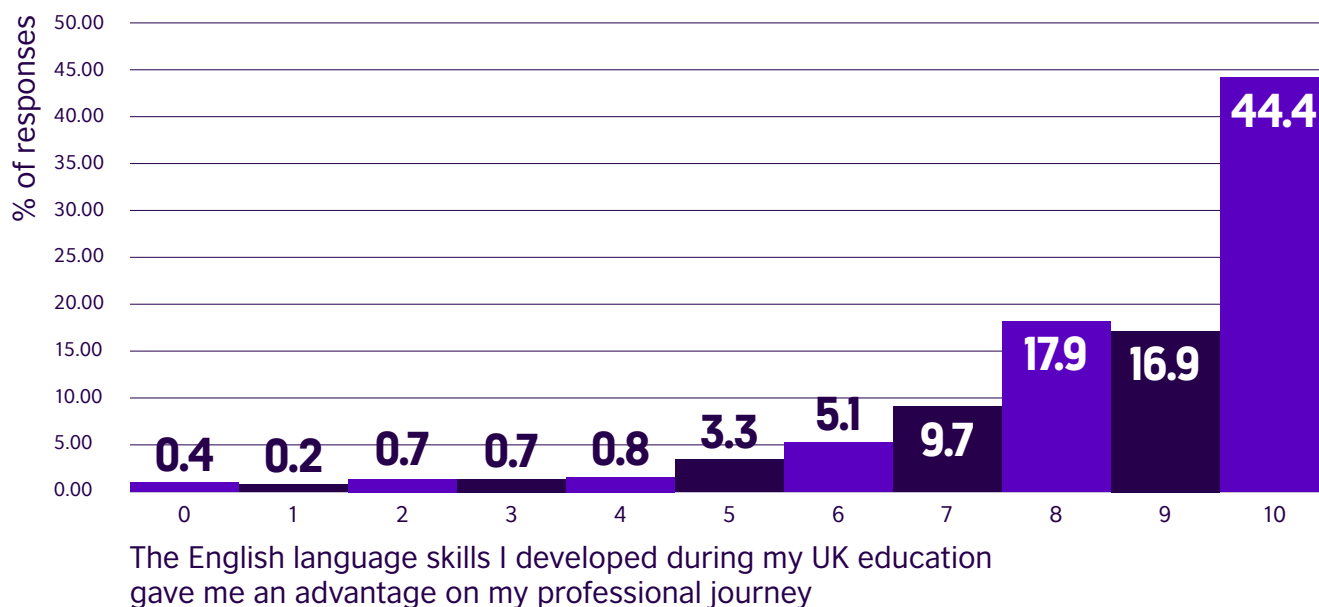


Figure 8 shows that 94 percent of those for whom English was neither an official language in the country where they grew up nor the main language they used at home when growing up rated it as an advantage (6+ rating) for their professional journey.

In interviews, the development of English language skills was also noted by interviewees as an employment benefit. English proficiency was cited as an advantage for first jobs, as well as positions in multi-national companies, with some examples of interviewees collaborating with British overseas industry. There was also one example of British English, as opposed to English more generally, being a market advantage. This was from an interviewee who works as an English teacher.

‘English is so important professionally and it’s really an advantage to speak English in terms of your job.’

Female interviewee living in USA



In addition to technical skills, interviewees also linked the general studying abroad experience to career benefits, noting wider gains than just technical skills. This included international exposure, cross-cultural understanding, maturity, and the ability to bring different perspectives to work. Employers reported to appear to value these traits, suggesting that it is not just the degree itself that adds value to graduates' employment profile, but also what UK study signals about adaptability, professionalism, and global outlook.

'I think that they also see that I have this experience of studying abroad and thinking that I could also give some kind of different perspective.'
Female interviewee living in Indonesia

Interviewees also emphasised the enduring importance of soft skills outlined above like critical thinking, attention to detail, clear communication, and problem solving. These skills are described as highly portable across sectors and career stages, and as shaping how interviewees write, explain, manage, and solve problems.

'At [my institution], it was more about a thinking framework, a sort of mindset... to this day I am using this framework because it just helps me understand manufacturing processes a lot easier.'
Male interviewee living in Hungary

Interviewees repeatedly connected their personal growth with living and studying among people from many different cultures and backgrounds. This diversity is described as making them more open-minded, culturally sensitive, inclusive, and able to understand others. For some, this was presented as one of the most meaningful parts of their UK education experience.

'I am more receptive to truly learn, to see different people with different kinds of backgrounds or education or gender is beautiful, rather than having a negative or suspicious feeling. And now I can also make friends much more easily with international people as well.'
Female interviewee living in Indonesia

Overall, the findings show that the wider impact of a UK education is felt through alumni's economic and professional activity in their home and third countries: many become entrepreneurs and job creators, maintain tangible links to the UK through trade and collaboration, and leverage the English language skills, international outlook, and transferable ways of thinking developed during study. This is a good illustration of how UK education contributes to wider international connectivity and capability, with benefits to the local communities and organisations worldwide, while also sustaining the UK's long-term global relationships.

The UK in the world

In interviews, when considering their perceptions of the UK, interviewees consistently position the UK as a leading global actor, particularly in education, research, and professional fields. Many believed the UK to be setting global standards in areas such as science, public relations, and skills development. As has been discussed in previous sections, much of the knowledge, technical skills, and behaviours fostered in the UK have influenced interviewees and reportedly had significant positive impacts on their career trajectories.

‘The UK stands really, really tall... in terms of practice, theory and implementation and all of those things and specialisation as well.’
Female interviewee living in Ghana

Beyond education and employment, interviewees frequently described the UK as globally engaged through its institutions, businesses, and wider activities. Interviewees specifically referenced the UK’s enduring international student communities, visible diplomacy, and institutional presence abroad, through organisations like the British Council and the British High Commissions. This outward orientation contributes to perceptions of the UK as accessible and globally integrated.

‘The educational system of the UK is designed to be welcoming to students from all over the world. It’s very telling of how the UK is connected to other parts of the world.’

Male interviewee living in the Philippines



‘I feel that [UK] education is really impacting and changing different corners of the world.’
Male interviewee living in Kenya

Perceptions of the UK and its global role were also often rooted in historical relationships, including imperial legacies, Commonwealth ties, and long-term institutional engagement.

‘Because of the history of Singapore... we had a very, very close relationship. I think till now we still have a very close relationship ... In fact throughout my career, that connection continues and contributed to both countries’ trade development.’

Female interviewee living in Singapore

For many interviewees, their perceptions of the UK varied significantly, often shaped through national histories of British influence, family stories, or long-standing exposure to British institutions and symbols. The data shows that interviewees, particularly those with negative perceptions, often move from abstract or inherited ideas about the UK to more grounded, favourable, and emotionally rich understandings based on direct experience.

‘I come from a country that was colonised by Britain. I know that a lot of people in my country come with the idea that there are difficulties that we face when we go there, and I have always advocated that that is not the case. That when you actually go and live there, it’s an experience that transforms you, and you see the great good that the British Council and everybody is trying to do.’

Female interviewee living in India

As a society, interviewees reported Britain to be high trust and well-functioning. Interviewees highlighted trust, fairness, reliable institutions, and the smooth operation of everyday systems as distinctive national characteristics. These perceptions were often formed comparatively, especially against home contexts described as lower trust or more bureaucratically difficult.

Perceptions of the UK were also shaped by everyday cultural codes and activities. Factors such as British manners and media, including film, documentaries, TV, and music, became part of how the UK was imagined and valued.

‘I used to listen to pop music but now I’ve shifted to English choirs, cathedral music and church chorales, and I have followed a radio station in England... which is close to my heart.’

Male interviewee living in India

‘We feel very secure. We feel like the culture and everything else is just like what we really want.’

Male interviewee living in Indonesia

Beyond the study experience itself, many interviewees described an enduring emotional attachment to the UK. This connection is sustained through everyday practices such as following UK news, reading UK literature, watching documentaries, revisiting notes and photographs, or keeping up with cultural content. A strong pattern in the data is the language of home or second home, with many describing the UK as a place they understood and felt they belonged. In fact, several interviewees indicated a desire to live in the UK again.

'I think [the] UK has shaped me so much that I don't have to say I've been anglicised, but it's so impactful. Not just in terms of culture, but the way you behave, the gentleness, the mannerisms, you know the good English manners and culture...'

Male interviewee living in India

'So, it just happens with your life. You know, the UK was like a crown jewel... It was everything now I understand about myself and the way I try to explore the world... it was day one of my life when I arrived in the UK on many, many levels.'

Female interviewee living in Kazakhstan



'I think the UK is like my second country... it is the country where I got the space to grow better'
Male interviewee living in Iraq

There were some examples of ongoing connection to the UK through relationships. Interviewees connected their feelings to the UK to family currently living in the UK, meeting spouses, friends, and professional connections, as well as engaging in Alumni UK or university organised activities, which kept the UK connection alive even without physical visits.

The survey also examines how alumni view the UK and its place in the world. The previous findings suggest that many international graduates apply the skills, perspectives, and networks gained through UK education in their home countries or third countries. However, it is also important to consider what perceptions about the UK are held by those who are living outside of the UK.

The following present the views of the survey respondents who were asked to rate how favourably or unfavourably they viewed the UK as a result of participating in the Alumni UK programme on a scale of 0 – 10, with 0 being extremely unfavourably and 10 being extremely favourably.

Figure 9. Favourability towards the UK as a result of participating in the Alumni UK programme

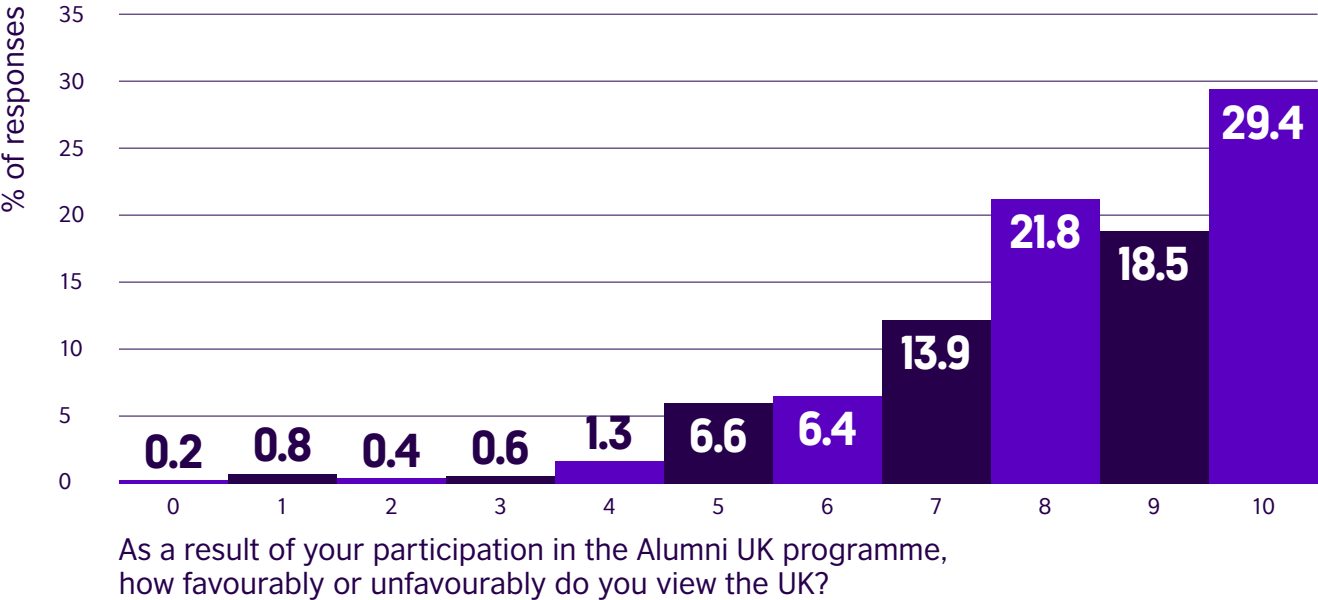
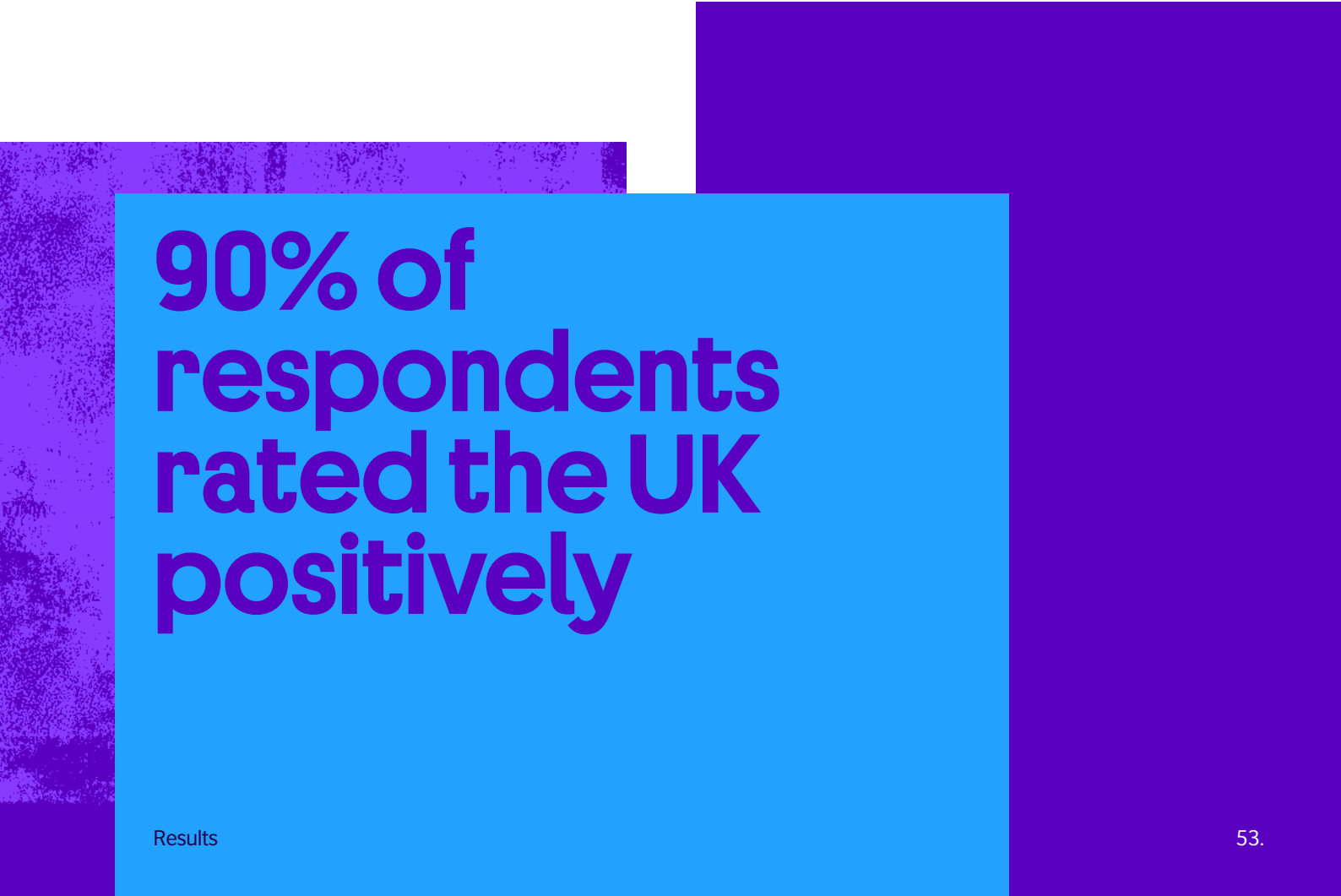


Figure 9 indicates that those who engage with Alumni UK view the UK very positively. 90 percent of respondents rated the UK as a 6+, with a mean response of 8.12. This suggests that the UK is not only viewed as a place of study, but also as a country with attractive values, culture, and influence.

There were no significant differences in ratings when analysed by gender or disability.

Survey respondents were asked a further six questions to better understand how international graduates of UK education view the UK and its place in the world. These questions align with those used in the British Council's 2025 *Global Perceptions Survey* (British Council, 2025), which examines views on the UK and other leading nations among more than 19,000 18–34-year-olds across the G20, all of whom have at least a high school education. This provides an opportunity to compare the global perceptions of the UK by those with UK education experience and those without, providing further insights into the value of UK education as a platform for UK international influence and prestige.



**90% of
respondents
rated the UK
positively**

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the following statements on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being strongly disagree and 10 being strongly agree:

- 1. The UK offers the skills and qualifications people like me need for a successful career.
- 2. People from the UK are open and welcoming.
- 3. The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions.
- 4. UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries.
- 5. The UK’s government works constructively with other governments around the world.
- 6. UK is a force for good in the world.

The results are presented in Figure 10:

Figure 10. Overall perceptions of the UK in the world

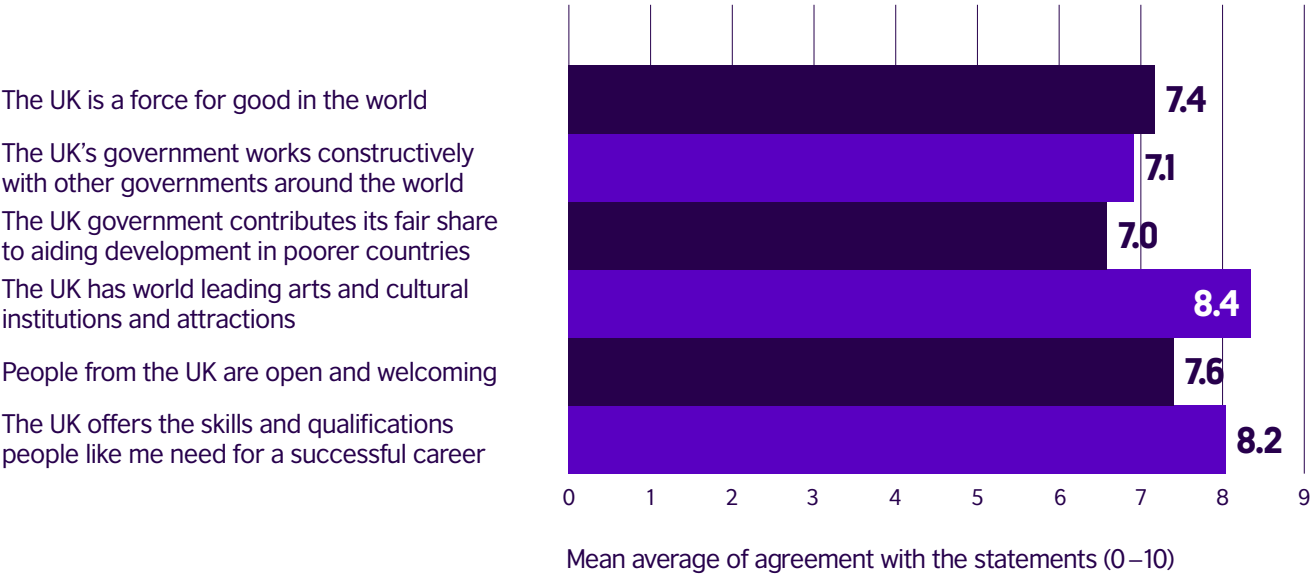


Figure 10 demonstrates a very positive view of the UK and its place in the world, with most statements getting a mean agreement rating above 7. However, all mean ratings are slightly lower than they were in previous years of the study (Krstic and Towne, 2024; Krstic and Towne, 2025).

To explore this further, data was segregated for those rating the statements 6+ in all three years of the survey. This was done in order to be more directly comparable with Global Perceptions findings which reports in this way.

Figure 11. Overall perceptions of the UK in the world by round of survey

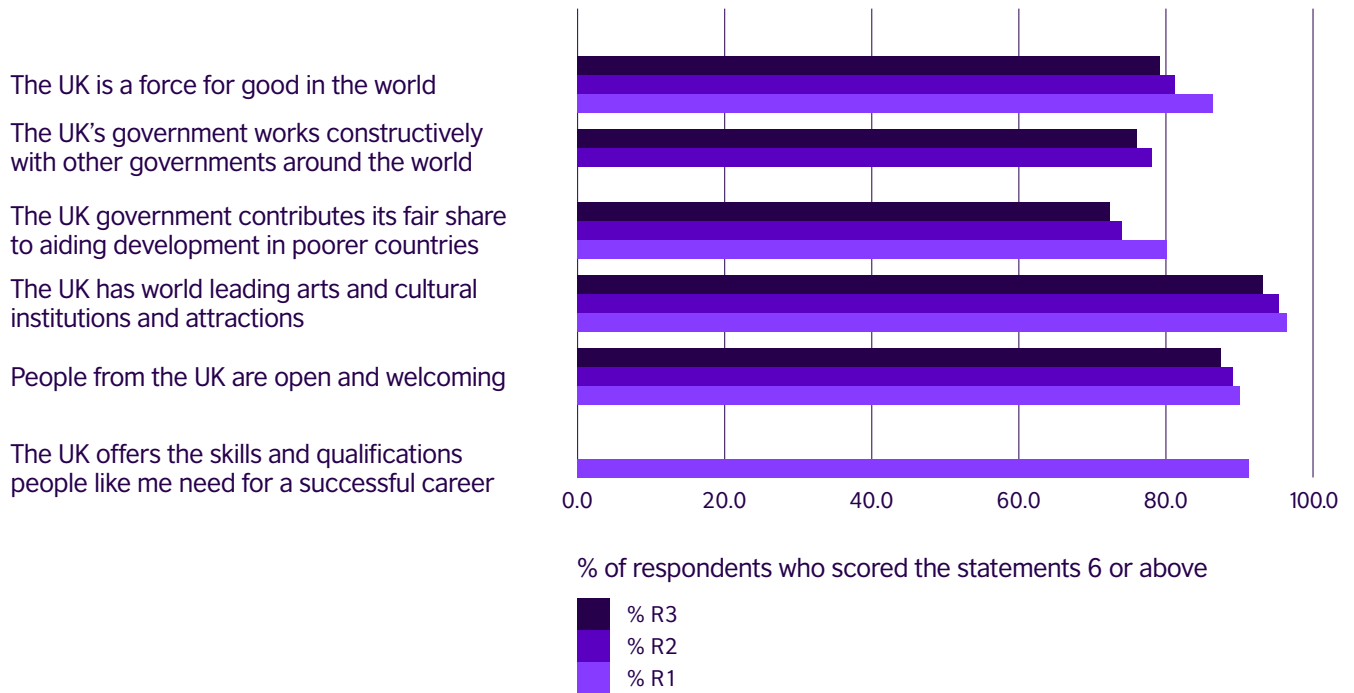


Figure 11 presents perceptions of the UK in the world by round of survey, with all respondents, with data from those respondents who scored the statements 6+.

Findings show that the highest-scoring statements in every round are: *“The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions”* and *“People from the UK are open and welcoming”*. These perceptions are very stable, with only small differences between R1, R2, and R3 and imply that soft power attributes (culture, people, trust) are perceived as a consistent strength for Alumni UK graduates.

“The UK offers the skills and qualifications people like me need for a successful career” also scores highly, but this statement was not presented for rating in previous years, so it is not yet possible to do any comparisons over time.

More variation appears in governance-related items, such as:

- *“The UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries”*
- *“The UK's government works constructively with other governments around the world”*
- *“UK is a force for good in the world”*

The comparison indicates that these statements were all scored the highest in round 1 and then started gradually and modestly declining in the next two years. This could suggest that perceptions of the UK's government and international role are more sensitive to change over time than cultural or people-based perceptions.

Table 10. Analysis of Global Perceptions survey alongside comparable Alumni Voices survey data

Quality statement	All respondents (Global Perceptions average results)	Global Perceptions: Everyone apart from those who have a UK education	Global Perceptions: Those who have a UK education	Alumni Voices round 3 data (i.e. international graduates of a UK education)
People from the UK are open and welcoming	58%	57%	63%	85%
The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions	63%	62%	65%	93%
UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries	53%	51%	60%	73%
The UK's government works constructively with other governments around the world	56%	55%	63%	76%
The UK is a force for good in the world	55%	52%	61%	78%
The UK offers the skills and qualifications people like me need for a successful career	59%	59%	62%	91%

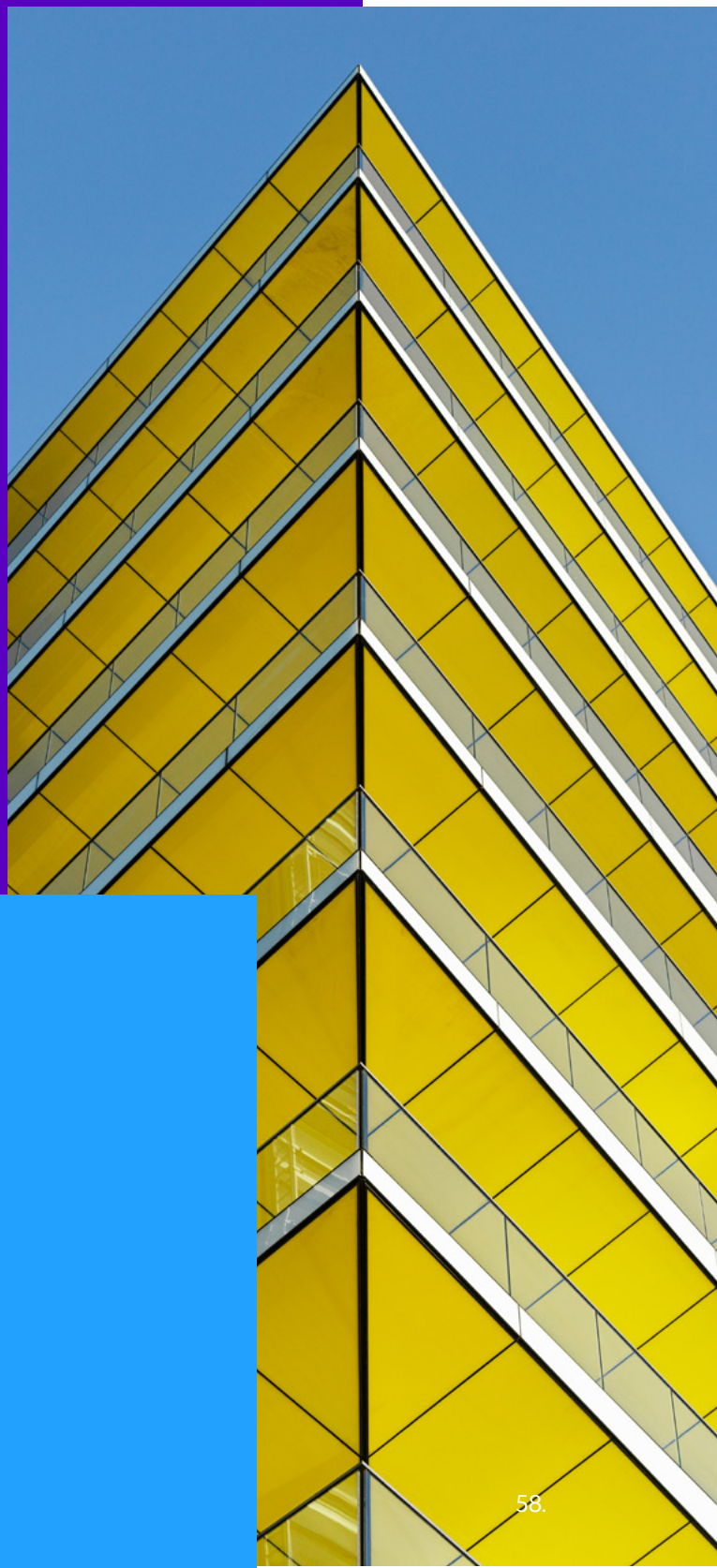
Table 10 presents a comparison of the perceptions held by UK alumni with perceptions of young people without a UK education experience. Quite clearly, those who have experienced a UK education score all of these quality statements much more highly. This translates as evidence that a UK education correlates strongly with trust (in UK people and in the UK Government) and with favourability and attraction towards the UK.

There were no significant differences when analysing these ratings by gender or disability status of the respondents.

Overall, the UK's image is consistently positive, especially in areas linked to culture, people, and skills.

Alumni Voices longitudinal survey design will enable monitoring of change at the individual level for these perceptions by repeatedly capturing same alumni's ratings over time, allowing shifts in how they perceive and view the UK to be tracked for the same individuals rather than inferred from different cohorts.

Discussion of results



The findings demonstrate that the impact of a UK education extends well beyond the period of study, shaping alumni careers, behaviours, and perceptions in ways that have sustained global reach. International graduates apply the skills, values, and networks developed through UK education across diverse national and professional contexts, helping them contribute to economic, social, and professional development in their home countries and regions.

A key dimension of this global impact lies in the long-term benefits of skills developed during UK study. Alumni report strong development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self confidence, the very skills that they later identify as central to career success. These capabilities support graduates to operate effectively across borders, sectors, and cultures, enabling them to adapt to changing labour markets and to contribute meaningfully within different national contexts. The persistence of high relevance ratings across graduation cohorts further suggests that these skills retain value over time, reinforcing the long-term global utility of a UK qualification.

The findings indicate that a UK education experience has a major role in securing employment, with more than 70% of respondents reporting that their UK qualification was required to obtain their current job, with over half indicating that both the level and subject of study were formal requirements. Therefore, there is evidence that a UK education experience carries strong labour market currency internationally, functioning not only as a signal of quality but as a concrete credential required by employers.

UK education also supports diverse global career pathways, including entrepreneurship and self employment. With more than one fifth of respondents either running their own business or working as freelancers, the findings indicate that UK education equips alumni to create employment and economic activity beyond traditional salaried roles. This is particularly significant in contexts where entrepreneurial activity plays an important role in economic development, innovation, and job creation. The adaptability of UK qualifications across different economic systems strengthens their global relevance.

The social and network building dimensions of UK education further amplify its global impact. A substantial majority of alumni maintain contact with people they first met during their UK studies, often many years after graduation. These enduring international networks facilitate professional collaboration, knowledge exchange, and cross border partnerships. Such connections extend the influence of UK education, supporting informal diplomacy and international cooperation at an individual level.

Alumni behaviours also demonstrate how UK education contributes to the UK's international presence and influence. High levels of recommendation of UK study experiences, as well as advocacy for the UK as a place to work, visit, and engage culturally and economically, indicate that alumni act as informal ambassadors within their own countries and regions. These activities translate personal educational experiences into broader perceptions of the UK, reinforcing its reputation as a provider of high quality education and a credible international partner.

Finally, the consistently positive perceptions of UK culture, people, and skills among alumni highlight the role of UK education in shaping long lasting global attitudes. While perceptions related to governance and international affairs show greater variation over time, culture and people based perceptions remain stable strengths. UK education appears to anchor these positive views through lived experience, contributing to the UK's soft power by embedding familiarity and trust that persist long after graduation.

Taken together, the findings show that UK education generates global impact not only through individual career outcomes, but through the cumulative effects of skills transfer, economic contribution, international networks, and sustained positive perceptions of the UK. This reinforces the role of international education as a strategic asset with benefits that extend far beyond national borders.

Conclusion



This third wave of the British Council's Alumni Voices survey provides robust evidence that a UK higher education experience delivers sustained value for individuals, institutions, and the UK's global interests. The findings clearly demonstrate that UK education equips international graduates with high quality skills, supports long-term career progression, and fosters enduring global networks that continue to generate benefits well beyond the point of graduation.

Taken together, these findings directly reinforce the ambitions set out in the UK Government's **International Education Strategy**. The strategy positions international education as a long-term national asset, not only for its economic contribution, but for its role in developing global talent, strengthening international partnerships, and enhancing the UK's influence and reputation worldwide. The evidence in this report shows that UK education delivers precisely these outcomes: alumni consistently apply the skills, values, and professional standards gained through UK study across diverse global contexts, contributing to economic growth, innovation, and capacity building in their home and third countries.

A defining feature of UK education's global value is its **durability**. Skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and intercultural competence remain highly relevant across career stages and labour markets, supporting adaptability in a rapidly changing global economy. The high and stable ratings of relevance and helpfulness across graduation cohorts demonstrate that UK education is not simply a quick-win intervention, but a long-term investment in human capital. This aligns strongly with the IES emphasis on ensuring UK education prepares graduates not only for immediate employment, but for sustained professional success in a global workforce.

The findings also underline the strategic importance of **alumni engagement**, a core strand of the International Education Strategy. Alumni of UK education emerge as influential advocates, partners, and connectors: maintaining professional ties with the UK, recommending the UK as a place to study, work, trade and collaborate, and contributing to positive perceptions of the UK internationally.

These behaviours illustrate how alumni networks extend the reach of UK education, supporting trade, research collaboration, and people-to-people connections long after students return home. The Alumni UK network is therefore not simply an engagement mechanism, but a vital component of the UK's international education ecosystem and soft power infrastructure.

Importantly, the report highlights the role of UK education in supporting **inclusive global growth**. UK educated alumni are found across a wide range of sectors and regions, including as entrepreneurs and job creators, many of whom maintain tangible economic links with the UK. This aligns with the IES objective to deepen international partnerships and contribute to shared prosperity, positioning UK education as a platform for mutual benefit rather than one way gain.

Finally, by drawing on three years of longitudinal evidence, this study moves beyond snapshots of satisfaction to demonstrate **sustained impact over time**. The consistency of alumni perceptions, behaviours, and outcomes strengthens the credibility of the findings for policymakers, sector stakeholders, and international partners. It shows that the benefits associated with UK education – skills development, employability, global networks, and positive perceptions of the UK – are not episodic, but cumulative.

In conclusion, this report provides strong empirical support for the central premise of the International Education Strategy: that international education is a strategic national asset for the UK. UK education delivers long-term value for graduates, supports global economic and social development, and strengthens the UK's international standing through trusted relationships, shared skills, and enduring networks. Sustained investment in the quality of the UK education experience, and in meaningful alumni engagement, will be essential to fully realising these benefits in the years ahead.

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Appendix 1 – Summary tables

Table A1. Scholarship information

Description	Frequency	Percent
I didn't receive a scholarship	1,442	54.56%
Chevening Scholarship	241	9.12%
Marshall Scholarship	3	0.11%
Commonwealth Scholarship	85	3.22%
Warm Welcome Scholarship	8	0.30%
GREAT Scholarship	21	0.79%
Hornby Scholarship	7	0.26%
British Council Women in STEM	44	1.66%
Other / not listed	792	29.97%

Table A1 shows that just under half of respondents who were new to the survey received a scholarship to engage in UK study, with most named ones being Chevening Scholarship (9.12 percent), and Commonwealth scholarships. Other scholarships mentioned were various government-funded scholarships schemes (e.g. Indonesia LPDP, Bolashak Kazakhstan, HCED Iraq, CONACYT Mexico, CAPES/CNPq Brazil, MARA Malaysia, HEC Pakistan), International and multilateral programmes (e.g. Erasmus / Erasmus+ / Erasmus Mundus, British Council programmes and DFID/ODA-linked awards, World Bank-linked scholarships, or EU or European Commission funding) and Employer or private-sector sponsorship.

Table A2. Relevance of UK education by gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Female	8.25	1,579	1.80
Male	8.47	1,850	1.66
Prefer not to say	7.48	31	1.93
Identify as other	8.36	11	1.50
Total	8.36	3,472	1.73

Table A2 shows that there are no gender differences in ratings of their UK education, with all groups rating the relevance of their experience as very high.

Table A3. Relevance of education by disability

Disability	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Yes	8.00	120	2.19
No	8.39	3,235	1.70
Prefer not to say	7.74	98	1.91
Total	8.36	3,453	1.73

Table A3 shows that there are no significant differences in ratings of respondents who reported having a disability and those who did not in relation to their UK education, with all groups rating the relevance of their experience as very high.

Table A4. Relevance of UK education by TNE

Type of study	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Non-TNE	8.30	3,390	1.735
TNE	8.36	750	1.862
Total	8.31	4,140	1.759

Table A4 shows that there are no differences in ratings of respondents who studied in the UK, and those who studied outside the UK in relation to their UK education, with all groups rating the relevance of their experience as very high.

Appendix 2 – Survey questions



Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
About you	1	Please enter your email address that you use to access the Alumni UK services		Not asked in China versions
	2	In which country/territory were you born?	Do not ask	
	3	In which country/territory are you currently living?		
UK education on experience	4	Thinking of your most recent UK study experience, where did you study for this? (choose one) a. I studied in the UK b. I studied for a UK qualification outside the UK (in another country) [if b is chosen go to 4a then 4b, otherwise 5]		
	4a	You have told us you studied for your UK qualification outside the UK. In which country/territory did you study this?		
	4b	Which of the following would best describe where you studied for your UK qualification?		
	5	Did you obtain a scholarship to support your UK study experience? [choose one] a. I didn't receive a scholarship b. Chevening Scholarship c. Marshall Scholarship d. Commonwealth Scholarship e. Warm Welcome Scholarship f. GREAT Scholarship g. Horny Scholarship h. British Council Women in STEM i. Other / Not listed	Do not ask	

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
	6	Please select up to five skills that you believe you developed most during your UK education experience: [choose up to five] • self confidence • critical thinking • communication skills • leadership • basic digital skills (ability to use digital devices apps and networks to access and manage information) • advanced digital skills relevant to your field of study (including the ability to use specialised software) • collaboration/teamwork • project planning • intercultural skills (the ability to operate effectively with people from different backgrounds/cultures) • global citizenship (knowledge and understanding of global issues and the wider world and your place in it) • resilience • creativity • ethical use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) • harnessing AI capabilities • sustainability skills (relating to net zero, green economy, carbon reduction) • Other (please specify) _____ • None of the above		
	6a	Was there anything missing from your UK education experience which could have helped you more? [optional, free text]		
	7	How would you rate the social aspects of your UK education experience (including opportunities to meet new people, build networks, engage in extra-curricular activities)? [0=very bad, 10=very good]	Do not ask	
	8	How would you rate the relevance of your UK education experience for the world of work? [0=not very relevant, 10=very relevant]		
	9	How would you rate the inclusivity* of your UK education experience? [0=very bad, 10=very good] *Inclusivity encompasses the extent to which you felt included and that your individual needs were catered for (teaching, accommodation, life on campus etc.)	Do not ask	
	9a	What could your university have done to make your experience more inclusive? [Only display if score 5 or less in previous question]	Do not ask	Not asked in China version

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
	10	How would you rate your overall experience of a UK education? [0=very bad,10=very good]	Do not ask	
	11a	How did you gain your work experience? [choose all that apply] a. Via an internship/placement as part of my course b. I volunteered whilst studying c. I worked part time whilst studying d. I satyed in the UK after graduation and was employed	Do not ask	
	12	As a result of your UK study experience, how favourably or unfavourably do you view the UK? [9=extremely favourably, 10=extremely unfavourably]	Do not ask	
	13	In the last 12 months have you recommended a UK study experience to anyone? [choose one] a. Yes, several times b. Yes, once or twice c. No, I have had no opportunity to do so d. No, I would not recommend it e. I prefer not to say / I do not know		
	13a	[For those who answer d to q13, optional] Please tell us why you would not recommend a UK study experience [free text]		
	14	In the last 12 months, have you recommended the UK to anyone for any of the following reasons? (Check all that apply, BUT MAKE F, G, H EXCLUSIVE) a. As a place to work b. As a place to visit c. As a place to do business/trade d. Its sports teams/events e. Its arts and culture f. No, I have had no opportunity to do so g. No, I would not recommend it h. I prefer not to say / I do not know		
	15	In the last 12 months have you contacted or met with anyone that you first encountered during your UK education experience? [choose one] a. Yes b. No c. I do not know d. I prefer not to say		

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
Career	16	Which one of these options best describes your primary occupation or activity? a1 ☐ Paid work for an employer b2 ☐ Self-employment/freelancing c3 ☐ Running my own business d4 ☐ Developing a creative, artistic or professional portfolio e5 ☐ Voluntary/unpaid work for an employer f6 ☐ Engaged in a course of study, training or research g7 ☐ Taking time out to travel – this does not include short-term holidays h8 ☐ Caring for someone (unpaid) i9 ☐ Retired j10 ☐ Unemployed and looking for work k11 ☐ Doing something else [if answer a, b, c then direct to q.17 then continue onwards; If answer d, e, g, h, i, j, k then go to q22; If answer 'f' (engaged in a course of study, training or research) then direct to q. 16a then go to q.22]		
	16a	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [0=strongly disagree, 10=strongly agree] <i>My current study fits with my future plans I am building on what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current studies</i>		
	16b	RR Only Thinking of your current job, and comparing this to your situation 12 months ago, which of the following statements best applies to you? [choose one] a. I have the same job b. I received a promotion c. I have a similar job with a different employer d. Other (please specify) For 'paid work' only	RR Only	For repeat responders in the China version (run through MS Forms) the survey asks q16b, followed by q21, followed by q19, and then q17
	17	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [0=strongly disagree, 10=strongly agree] <i>My current work fits with my future plans</i> <i>I am utilising what I learnt during my UK study experience in my current work</i>		
	17a	Does your current job involve trading or collaborating with organisations and/or individuals in the UK [choose one – display only to 16b or 16c] a. Yes b. No c. I do not know d. I prefer not to say		In China version, this question is asked of all responders in some form of employment (including paid work for employer).

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
	17b	You have told us that you have started your own business, or are self employed or freelancing. Do you employ other people to work for you? [choose one – display only to 16b and 16c] a. No, I don't employ people to work for me b. Yes, I employ 5 or less c. Yes, I employ 6-20 staff d. Yes, I employ 21-50 staff e. Yes, I employ over 50 staff		
	18	How long after completing your UK education experience did it take you to find work? [choose one] a. I was employed before I started my studies and I returned to my employer b. Immediately c. Within 3 months d. More than 3 months, but less than 6 months e. More than 6 months, but less than 12 months f. Between 12 months and 18 months g. More than 18 months If answer is 'a' then go to Q18a and 18b but not 19 and 20, all others go to 19	Do not ask	
	18a	Did your employer support you to engage in UK education? [choose all that apply] a. they gave me time to pursue this study b. they contributed financially to support my studies c. other	Do not ask	
	18b	Did this qualification improve your career prospects with your employer (for example getting a promotion)? a. yes b. no c. don't know d. prefer not to say	Do not ask	Not asked of self-employed, or running own business
	19	Did you need your UK qualification to get your current job? [choose one] a. Yes, both the level and subject of qualification was a formal requirement b. Yes, the level of qualification was a formal requirement c. Yes, the subject of the qualification was a formal requirement d. Yes, while the qualification was not a formal requirement it did give me an advantage e. No, the qualification was not required f. I do not know	Optional Only ask if they answer b or c to question Q16b	

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
	20	What was the main reason that you decided to take up your work or activity? [choose one] a. It fitted into my career plan / it was exactly the type of work I wanted b. I did not receive any other job offers c. It was an opportunity to progress in the industry I am interested in d. To see if I would like the type of work it involved e. To gain and broaden my experience in order to get the type of job I really want f. It allowed me to work in the right location g. It was well-paid h. In order to earn a living i. In order to pay off debts j. To work in my family business k. I prefer not to say	Optional Only ask if they answer b or c to question Q16b	
	21	Which of the following best describes your job level? [choose one] a. Junior role/entry level b. Individual contributor/middle management c. Senior management d. Director level e. CEO level f. I prefer not to say	Optional Only ask if they answer b or c to question Q16b	
	22	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement [0=strongly disagree, 10=strongly agree]: “My UK education experience has been a significant help on my professional journey”		
	23	Which of the following statements best describes your use of English prior to your UK education? a. English was an official language in the country where I grew up b. English was not an official language, but was the main language I used at home when growing up c. None of the above If c go to 23a and 23b, otherwise 24		
	23a	Does your current job require you to use English? a. not at all b. a little c. most days d. all of the time Only for paid employment/self-employed/running your own business		

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
	23b	Only ask of c and d from Q23a To what extent do you agree with this statement (on a scale of 0 to 10) – “The English language skills I developed during my UK education gave me an advantage on my professional journey”	Optional Only ask if they answer b or c to question Q16b	
	24	Please select the five skills that you believe are most important for your career: [choose five] • self confidence • critical thinking • communication skills • leadership • basic digital skills (ability to use digital devices apps and networks to access and manage information) • advanced digital skills relevant to your field of study (including the ability to use specialised software) • collaboration/teamwork • project planning • intercultural skills (the ability to operate effectively with people from different backgrounds/cultures) • global citizenship (knowledge and understanding of global issues and the wider world and your place in it) • resilience • creativity • ethical use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) • harnessing AI capabilities • sustainability skills (relating to net zero, green economy, carbon reduction) • Other (please specify) _____		
Alumni UK programme	Intro	This section of the survey focuses on the Alumni UK programme – the global network for graduates of a UK education.		
	25	In the last 3 months, how often have you engaged with British Council Alumni UK online (including through web content, LinkedIn or other social media posts)? a. 0 times b. 1 to 2 times c. 3 to 5 times d. More than 5 times		

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
	26	Through being part of the Alumni UK programme over the past 12 months, I have: (Please select all that apply) • Attended Alumni UK online events or activities (e.g., Professional Skills Series, Sector Spotlights, Alumni UK Live) • Attended an Alumni UK in-person event in the country where I currently live • Connected with new people through the Alumni UK network or events • Applied for an Alumni UK initiative (e.g., Ambassadors programme, Photo Competition, Climate Grant, or Disability Inclusion Community Steering Group) • I have not done any of the above		
	27	And which of these activities have you found most useful? [choose one, display to all but 28e] a. Accessed Alumni UK professional development opportunities (including Professional Skills Series and Sector Spotlights series) b. Attended Alumni UK virtual events (including Alumni UK Live) c. Attended Alumni UK physical events in the country where I currently live d. Connected with new people that I didn't previously know e. Connected with people I already knew through my UK education experience f. Applied for one of the programme initiatives (e.g., Alumni UK ambassadors, Photo Competition, Climate Grant, Alumni UK Disability Inclusion Community Steering Group)		
	28	To what extent has participation in the Alumni UK programme helped you in the following areas: [0=not very helpful,10=very helpful] <i>Development of professional networks</i> <i>Professional learning and skills development</i> <i>Career progression</i>		
	29	Please share with us if your participation in Alumni UK has empowered you to make a difference in your local community or area of work [optional free text]		

Section	Q#	Questions	Repeat respondents	China
World today	30	Which of the following planned services would interest you most? [please select up to 3 options or just the last option] • Career coaching and mentoring • Information about working in the UK • Updates on UK university courses, fees, scholarships, and university news • Information on returning to your home country or working in a third country • Joining special interest communities (e.g., Climate, Disability Inclusion) • Sector-specific events and initiatives • Other (please specify) • I prefer not to say		
	31	In the last 12 months, have you recommended the Alumni UK programme to other international UK graduates that you know? [choose one] a. Yes, several times b. Yes, once or twice c. No, I have had no opportunity to do so d. No, I would not recommend it e. I prefer not to say		
	31a	[For those who answer d to q 31, optional] Please tell us why you would not recommend the Alumni UK programme [free text]		
	Intro	We are really grateful for your time and input, this is the final section of the survey. We'd now like to ask you a few questions about your opinions of the UK.		
	32	As a result of your participation in the Alumni UK programme, how favourably or unfavourably do you view the UK? [0=extremely favourably, 10=extremely unfavourably]		
	33	Thinking about the UK, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements [0=strongly disagree, 10=strongly agree] <i>The UK offers the skills and qualifications people like me need for a successful career</i> <i>People from the UK are open and welcoming</i> <i>The UK has world leading arts and cultural institutions and attractions (e.g. classical/ popular music, digital arts, theatre, literature, visual arts, film, museums and galleries)</i> <i>UK government contributes its fair share to aiding development in poorer countries</i> <i>The UK's government works constructively with other governments around the world</i> <i>UK is a force for good in the world</i>		

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