BRITISH COUNCIL

Going Global Partnerships

Uzbekistan TNE Reports Review: Quality Assurance and Inclusion in the Context of Growth

May 2026

A report commissioned by British Council, based on the secondary data and reports review undertaken and written by Westminster International University in Tashkent, EduEurasia and the British Council.

Authors:

Mukhammadfoik Bakhadirov, Westminster International University in Tashkent

David Prentice, EduEurasia

Komiljon Karimov, Westminster International University in Tashkent

Jamilya Gulyamova, British Council Uzbekistan

Indira Ikhlasova, British Council Uzbekistan

Akhtem Useinov, Westminster International University in Tashkent

Recommended citation:

Bakhadirov, M., Prentice, D., Karimov, K., Gulyamova, J., Ikhlasova, I. and Useinov, A. (2026). Uzbekistan TNE Reports Review: Quality Assurance and Inclusion in the Context of Growth. British Council.

Background

Uzbekistan has strengthened its focus on higher education in its economic and social development. The country has emerged as a rapidly growing location for UK TNE. According to data published by the HESA Aggregate Offshore Record, in the 2024/25 academic year, Uzbekistan recorded 10,740 UK TNE enrolments.[1] This represents a 37 per cent increase over the past five years (and 139 per cent over ten years), placing Uzbekistan among the top 20 largest TNE markets by enrolments. It is now comparable in size to other popular, growing TNE markets for UK institutions, such as Vietnam (13,315 enrolments) and Nigeria (8,830 enrolments).

In 2019, the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'Concept of Development of Higher Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030' was approved. Uzbekistan's Development Strategies include strategic goals on: internationalisation, improving access and increasing participation in higher education (Development Strategy 2022-2026); raising university enrolment rates, which has already been achieved – university enrolment rates of youth aged 18 – 23 at the beginning of the 2024/2025 academic year was 47.7%; granting public universities financial autonomy and academic freedom, and increasing the private sector's involvement in higher education (Development Strategy 2030).

In 2013-14, there were 66 higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. In 2026, the number was 207, with enrolments being 1.6 million. An important part of this growth has been the expansion of non-governmental and foreign higher education institutions, which are equal to 74 and 32, respectively. The government has promoted public-private partnerships (PPPs) under the Education Law (2020), which provides for the creation of non-governmental educational organisations.

1. TNE in Uzbekistan: Trends and Development

At the start of 2024, Uzbekistan hosted 30 international branch campuses (IBCs), making it the third-largest host country globally in terms of number of international branch campuses, behind only China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). 23 institutions opened a campus in the country between 2018 and 2022. The motivations go beyond financial considerations and include Internationalisation, social equity, and global brand-building objectives. Hence, Uzbekistan is quickly being recognised as an emerging higher education hub.

The exact number of UK TNE providers operating in Uzbekistan is difficult to determine. In part, this is due to new providers entering the market and other UK providers actively seeking opportunities. Based on a review of the reports, there has been a gradual increase over the past several years, but the lag in the data means the latest TNE data, which shows 7 UK providers in 2023 and a student population of approximately 10K, underrepresents the current situation (Table 1).

Table 1: UK TNE providers and their student numbers

Name of provider	Number of students

[1] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/transnational

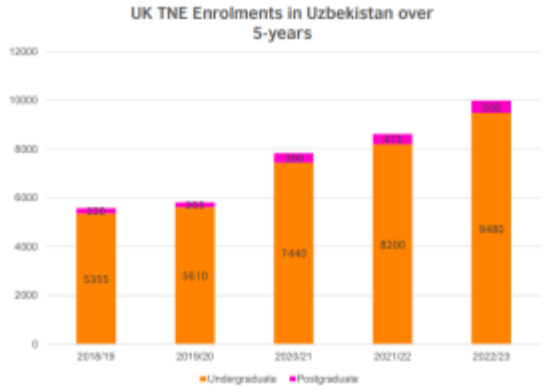
University of Westminster	5,535
University of Sunderland	2,530
Bangor University	1,835
Royal Agricultural University	175
London South Bank University	155
Teesside University	90
University of London	60

Source: HESA Aggregate Offshore Return (2024)

The University of Westminster accounts for approximately half of the students (52%) of UK transnational education provision in Uzbekistan, delivered through collaborative arrangements with WIUT. Established in 2002 as the first international university in Uzbekistan, WIUT operates under programmes validated by the University of Westminster to ensure equivalence with UK academic standards.

Most UK TNE provision in Uzbekistan is at the undergraduate level, and this number is increasing quickly. Although undergraduate degrees and foundation programmes account for only one-third of the 70 partner-led, or collaborative TNE programmes, the admission numbers suggest significant interest in TNE among the undergraduate student population. The postgraduate provision is comparatively static at approximately 6 per cent (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. UK TNE student numbers by provision type



Source: Uzbekistan's Rise: A regional TNE Perspective (2024)

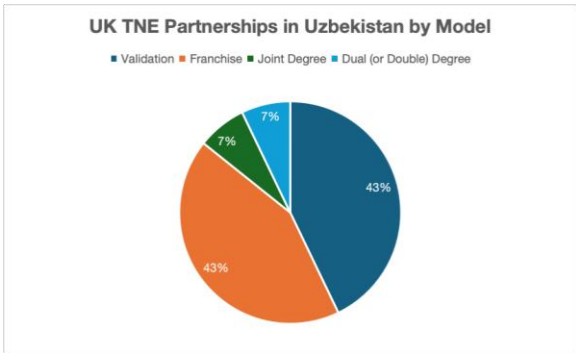
There are many reasons for this, including TNE providers' preference for establishing undergraduate provision before moving into the postgraduate market, the international recognition of postgraduate qualifications, and the need to modernise the curriculum to meet international standards and teaching approaches.

When considered alongside overall UK TNE enrolments by level of study, the data indicate that although postgraduate programmes are widely available to Uzbekistan students, enrolment at this level remains comparatively low. Only 5 per cent of students enrolled in UK TNE programmes were studying at the postgraduate level. Notably, a similar distribution is observed at the national level, where 6 per cent of all students in Uzbekistan are enrolled in postgraduate study. This suggests that the distribution of TNE provision reflects broader enrolment trends within Uzbekistan's higher education system.

The growth of TNE enrollments has been driven primarily by an increase in partner-delivered TNE, i.e. Franchise Agreements and Validation Programmes, with new UK providers entering Uzbekistan and establishing TNE programmes over the past five years in collaboration with Uzbekistan partners. This expansion has been

supported further by sector-led initiatives, including the British Council's TNE Good Practice Network Uzbekistan, [2] which promotes dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of experience among institutions operating in Uzbekistan (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. UK TNE in Uzbekistan by Partnership Models



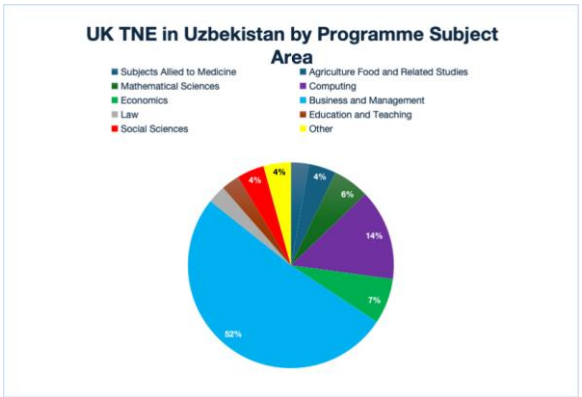
Source: HESA Statistics (2025)

Globally, UK TNE delivered under the validation model accounts for 25.9 per cent of all TNE student enrolments. [3] In Uzbekistan, validation-based partnerships account for almost half of all identified agreements, suggesting that a higher proportion of students are enrolled through this model than the global average.

While many transnational education providers in other education hubs focus on business, computer science, and engineering programs, international partnerships in Uzbekistan align closely with the country's national priorities by contributing to economic diversification, enhancing workforce skills, expanding access to quality education, and increasing participation in higher education. Analysis of UK TNE provision in Uzbekistan by subject area shows that over half (52 per cent) of provision is concentrated in Business and Management. Figure 4 below illustrates the distribution of TNE provision across subject areas, classified using HESA's CAH1 framework of 25 recognised subject groupings.[4]

Computing is the next most represented subject area among students enrolled on UK TNE programmes (14 per cent), followed by Economics (7 per cent), indicating a marked drop-off beyond Business and Management. Three additional subject areas are represented by a single course each, which together account for a further 4 per cent of the overall provision (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. UK TNE in Uzbekistan by Subject Areas

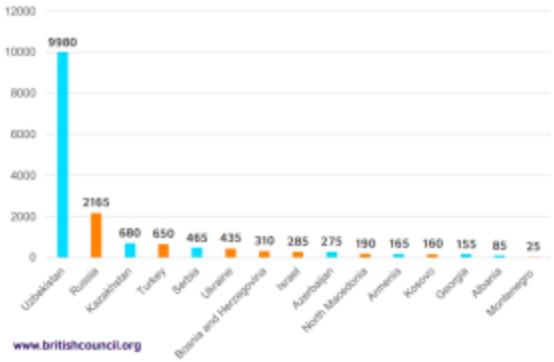


Source: HESA Statistics (2025)

UK-Uzbekistan TNE accounts for 85% of all TNE enrolments within the British Council's Wider Europe region as can be seen in more detail on figure 5.

[2] https://www.wiut.uz/about-us/our-initiatives/tne-network
[3] https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/international/scale-uk-higher-education-transnational-0
[4] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/coding-manual-tools/hecoscahdata/cah

Figure 5. UK TNE Across the Wider Europe Region



Source: Uzbekistan's Rise: A regional TNE Perspective (2024)

2. Opportunities for UK TNE providers

The opportunities for TNE collaboration in Uzbekistan are significant. There is a growing demand for higher education reflected in rising enrollment rates and a focus on expanding access. At the same time, the government in Uzbekistan is prioritising education reform and international collaboration, creating a favourable environment for UK universities. UK universities can tap into this demand by offering high-quality programs and establishing a strong presence in the market.

There are opportunities to influence and contribute to the development of higher education policies in Uzbekistan, such as the ongoing work to develop a National Quality Code. Other opportunities exist to form partnerships with Uzbekistan universities and institutions to offer joint programmes, research initiatives, and faculty exchanges. There is also the opportunity to provide training and development programmes to support the quality of education and strengthen institutional capabilities in Uzbekistan.

The British Council's 2024 study, Transnational Education Partnerships in Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western Balkans [5] , identified three important opportunities for UK TNE providers in Uzbekistan which remains relevant in the current landscape (2026). These opportunities are summarised below.

1. *TNE agreements between UK HEIs and Uzbekistan's booming private university sector, backed by private investment, should be fully leveraged*

Following the reforms promoting private higher education institutions, Uzbekistan has experienced rapid growth in this sector. One example is the University of Digital Economies and Agrotechnologies in Tashkent, launched in 2022 with investment from Agrobank and welcoming its first students in 2023. Its programmes are developed and validated in partnership with Coventry University, with content adapted to local needs. This model offers clear advantages, including shared infrastructure costs, reduced financial risk, and sustained funding support – such as scholarships covering tuition and accommodation – while contributing to workforce development in key sectors. It illustrates a sustainable and scalable approach to TNE. To expand TNE in Uzbekistan, UK institutions should strengthen collaborations with local universities, co-develop context-specific programmes, and engage private investors

[5] https://opportunities-insight.britishcouncil.org/short-articles/reports/tne-central-asia-south-caucasus-and-western-balkans

to secure funding. Emphasis should also be placed on quality-driven, gradual growth with smaller, high-achieving student cohorts to maintain strong academic standards and long-term sustainability.

2. *Strong government-level support for integration into the global education system and a shortage of domestic provision create opportunities for UK TNE expansion*

Uzbekistan is actively aligning its higher education system with international standards, supported by government reforms and growing global engagement. There is strong demand for expanded transnational education, particularly through partnerships with UK institutions, which are seen as key to enhancing quality, research collaboration, and global competitiveness. Flexible TNE models, existing successful partnerships (e.g. Royal Agricultural University and London South Bank University), and rising student demand – both domestically and among those studying abroad – indicate significant potential for further expansion of UK TNE provision in Uzbekistan.

3. *UK TNE partners should pursue TNE collaborations based on wider economic development trends*

UK transnational education partnerships in Uzbekistan should prioritise subject-specific teaching and research aligned with national economic priorities and labour market needs. The experience of Westminster International University in Tashkent illustrates this approach, with programmes evolving from a business-focused foundation to include new fields such as public health in response to demand. Overall, aligning higher education with economic development creates strong opportunities for UK institutions to expand relevant, impact-driven collaborations in Uzbekistan.

Mapping of the TNE reports reviewed for this study					
Title of project/report	**Authors**	**Publishing organisation**	**Year**	**Summary of the report**	**References**
TNE in Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western Balkans	British Council	British Council	2024	This study explores the transnational education (TNE) landscape in seven countries in the 'Wider Europe' region, including Uzbekistan. The study was carried out with a combination of data mapping, desk research and interviews with stakeholders (local and UK) who were key to the existing TNE landscape in each Uzbekistan.	British Council. (2024). Transnational education partnerships in Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western Balkans. British Council[6]
Uzbekistan`s Rise: A Regional TNE Perspective	Denise Waddingham (Country Director Uzbekistan, British Council)	British Council / Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT)	2024	A study of UK transnational education in Uzbekistan as part of the British Council's Wider Europe TNE research. It provides data on UK TNE enrolments, types, leading providers, and the policy environment, highlighting opportunities and challenges for expanding UK TNE.	Waddingham, D. (2024). TNE Mapping Final Report: Uzbekistan. British Council / WIUT[7].
Uzbekistan Ranks Third Globally as Host of International Branch Campuses	Stephen Wilkins and Bobir Muratov	International Higher Education	2024	A brief article in the International Higher Education journal explores Uzbekistan's rapid rise as the third-largest host of international branch campuses. To achieve its economic and social development goals, the Uzbek government has established a vibrant transnational education sector. At the start of 2024, Uzbekistan had 38 transnational higher education institutions, including 30 international branch campuses. This has resulted in the country becoming host to the third largest number of international branch campuses globally, behind only China and the United Arab Emirates. This article considers why and how Uzbekistan implemented its transnational education strategy.	Wilkins, S. and Muratov, B. (2024). Uzbekistan Ranks Third Globally as Host of International Branch Campuses. International Higher Education, 118[8].
The Value of Transnational Education to the UK	Janet Ilieva, and others	British Council	2022	This research aims to understand the value of transnational education (TNE) partnerships to a range of higher education stakeholders in the UK and partner countries. These include policymakers, sector agencies and higher education institutions. The report provides strong evidence that TNE partnerships make significant contributions to global and national agendas and the UN SDGs. It further suggests that, given the right conditions, TNE has considerable potential to deliver much greater value.	Ilieva, J., et al. (2022). The Value of Transnational Education to the UK. British Council[9].

[6] https://opportunities-insight.britishcouncil.org/short-articles/reports/tne-central-asia-south-caucasus-and-western-balkans
[7] https://www.wiut.uz/images/documents/20241106_WE_TNE_Mapping_final_report_Uzbekistan.pdf
[8] https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ihe/article/view/18025/12399
[9] https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/value_tne_fullreport.pdf

				Insights from the evidence are important in considering how TNE partnerships can be developed and delivered to maximise this value.	
The Development of Uzbekistan as a Transnational Higher Education Hub: Government and Institution Rationales, and Early Outcomes	Bobir Muratov, Stephen Wilkins	Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management	2024	Between 2018 and 2022, 23 foreign higher education institutions established a campus in Uzbekistan, resulting in it becoming the nation with the third largest number of international branch campuses globally, behind China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The purpose of this research is to understand the Uzbek government's and foreign institutions' rationales for engaging with transnational education (TNE) in Uzbekistan, as well as the founding and operational challenges, and the early outcomes. The data used in this study were obtained primarily from a range of expert stakeholders, who have expert and up-to-date knowledge on the development and operation of TNE institutions in Uzbekistan. Guided by our participants' views and the secondary data examined, an optimistic outlook is anticipated for higher education development in Uzbekistan. The paper concludes with sets of recommendations for local policy makers, TNE institutions, and host countries aspiring to elevate their higher education through TNE.	Bobir Muratov & Stephen Wilkins (14 Mar 2024): The development of Uzbekistan as a transnational higher education hub: government and institution rationales, and early outcomes, Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, DOI: 10.1080/1360080X.2024.2324404[10]
Country Report: Uzbekistan (QAA International Insights)	QAA (institutional author)	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	2024	This report is part of a series of Country and Territory Reports that QAA regularly produces to offer higher education providers who are International Insight Members an overview of the higher education landscape of key countries for UK transnational education (TNE), partnerships and collaboration. The reports offer high-level information and intelligence about regulations, challenges, opportunities, sector-related activity and signposting to sources of further information. The report also looks at key areas such as skills needs, quality frameworks and the major players in transnational partnerships in Uzbekistan.	QAA. (2024). Country Report: Uzbekistan. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.[11]
DBT Uzbekistan Project: Exploring the opportunities and barriers to UK TNE in Uzbekistan	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, UK)	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, UK)	2025	This report sets out the finding and recommendations following work undertaken by QAA on behalf of the Department for Business and Trade looking at opportunities and barriers to UK transnational education (TNE) in Uzbekistan. The report looks to highlight the differences between the higher education systems in the UK and Uzbekistan by comparing approaches to degree structures and recognition requirements in the public and private higher education sectors. It also highlights collaboration opportunities, identifies barriers, and explores TNE opportunities aiming to inspire further growth and address barriers in TNE provisions. The report found the regulatory environment for higher education in Uzbekistan is undergoing significant reforms, which can create uncertainty	QAA. (2025). Exploring the opportunities and barriers to UK TNE in Uzbekistan. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

[10] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1360080X.2024.2324404
[11] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/new-country-report-published--uzbekistan

				for UK universities looking to establish partnerships or campuses. Greater clarity about the regulatory environment would therefore help build understanding and facilitate greater opportunities for collaboration. The report found that aligning Uzbekistan's evolving quality assurance framework with the approach in the UK and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) European standards would help UK and Uzbekistan providers have confidence about establishing and maintaining high-quality education standards in a different regulatory environment. Related to quality assurance considerations is the need for UK providers to ensure that the curriculum on offer meets local expectations.	
Transnational education strategy: 2023–25	The British Council	The British Council	2023	This document outlines the British Council's new transnational education (TNE) strategy, which supports our aim to facilitate and develop scalable and sustainable UK transnational education globally. The strategy builds on our knowledge and experience of supporting and enabling TNE globally. It draws on advice and feedback from our UK sector partners, in-country stakeholders and colleagues around the world.	The British Council (2023). Transnational education strategy: 2023–25.[12]
Transnational education strategy 2025–27	The British Council	The British Council	2025	The British Council's Transnational Education Strategy 2025–27 aims to support further growth and diversification in UK TNE globally. Building on the success of our 2023–25 strategy, and aligned with the UK's International Education Strategy, internationalisation initiatives in the four nations of the UK and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we will contribute to the delivery of transformative outcomes for countries, institutions and students. The strategy is underpinned by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework and a commitment to stakeholder engagement. It also positions the British Council as a trusted partner for TNE.	The British Council (2025). Transnational education strategy: 2025–27.[13]

[12] https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/transnationaleducationstrategy.pdf
[13] https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/british_council_tne_strategy.pdf