

UCAS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026: TURNING GLOBAL INSIGHT INTO RECRUITMENT ACTION

Harnessing worldwide knowledge to enhance student recruitment strategies.

Hosted by Felicity Lloyd and Dwayne Jones

WHO CAME & WHAT ARE WE GOING TO TALK ABOUT TODAY?

Day 1 & 2

- 160 teachers & advisors from all over the world. This included school counsellors, agents and independent counselors.

Over 40 countries were represented

- Everywhere from Australia to Azerbaijan. Biggest numbers from China, India, Turkey, Switzerland, Pakistan & the USA. 36 universities joined us for the Networking.

Day 3

- 63 delegates from 50 UK providers

Global Educator Perspectives

- International teachers and advisers from over 40 countries offer broad insights into student guidance and destination choices globally.

UK Providers' Focus

- UK recruitment, admissions, marketing, and compliance teams identify shared sector challenges and priorities.

Holistic Recruitment Insight

- Combining perspectives enables a full understanding of the international recruitment journey from exploration to delivery.

Sector-wide Evidence

- Insights reflect broad global patterns, supporting informed decisions beyond isolated regional experiences.

CURRENT CONTEXT — WHY DECISIONS ARE BECOMING MORE COMPLEX



EXPANDED STUDENT CHOICES

Students access more global destinations and information, making their decisions comparison-driven and less linear.



ADVISORY CHALLENGES

Advisers support students across multiple countries and systems.



EXTERNAL PRESSURES

Rising costs, visa policy shifts, and employability concerns add complexity to recruitment decisions.



PROVIDER PRESSURES

Providers face budget constraints and must compete on value and outcomes beyond reputation.

ADVISER AND STUDENT INSIGHT

THE SHIFT TOWARD MULTI-DESTINATION DECISION-MAKING

Multi-Destination Decision Model

- Students now consider three to five countries simultaneously, reflecting increased global competition.

Role of Advisers

- Advisers assist students in exploring, comparing, and narrowing options by clarifying requirements, costs, and timelines.

Implications for Providers

- Providers must offer comparative messaging and engagement as decision journeys are no longer linear or early-committed.

Longer Decision Timelines

- Longer decision timelines and later commitments affect forecasting, conversion, and resource planning for providers.



A close-up photograph of three young women smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman on the left is wearing a white top, the woman in the middle is wearing an orange top, and the woman on the right is wearing a blue denim jacket and glasses. They are outdoors under a clear blue sky.

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ADVISERS

Advisers' Proactive Role

- Advisers actively guide and influence students' exploration and final study destination decisions.

Use of Tools and Resources

- Advisers employ UCAS tools and external resources to track progress and support decision-making.

Navigating Complexity

- Advisers manage evolving policies and diverse destinations to provide accurate guidance.

Supporting Adviser Confidence

- Clear, accessible information empowers advisers to advocate effectively for suitable study options.

WHAT ADVISERS PRIORITISE IN STUDENT CONVERSATIONS



COST AND AFFORDABILITY FOCUS

Cost, affordability, and living expenses are central in adviser-student conversations due to economic pressures.



EMPLOYABILITY & ROI

Employability and return on investment guide advice as students seek education with long-term benefits.



REPUTATION & COURSE FIT

Rankings, reputation, and course fit remain important but are weighed alongside financial and outcome factors.



STUDENT EXPERIENCE & SUPPORT

Safety, wellbeing, support services, and campus environment are key concerns for families and students.

WHAT ADVISERS NEED FROM PROVIDERS RIGHT NOW



CLEAR ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Advisers need transparent, accessible information on entry requirements and eligibility across international qualifications.



PROCESS CLARITY AND TIMELINES

Advisers seek clarity about timelines, decision points, and application processes to guide students confidently.



FUNDING AND COST TRANSPARENCY

Visibility of scholarships, funding options, and full study costs is essential for advisers supporting financial planning.



SIMPLICITY AND CONSISTENCY

Consistent, simple presentation across platforms reduces friction for advisers managing multiple systems.

LIVE SLIDO QUESTIONS: EVIDENCE OF CLARITY GAPS



COMMON ADVISER QUESTIONS

Advisers frequently ask about personal statements, AI detection, application timing, and changes after submission.



AREAS OF UNCERTAINTY

Persistent questions reflect widespread confusion affecting advisers' confidence in guiding students.



NEED FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION

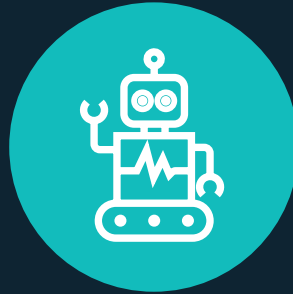
Institutions should improve communication, align messaging, and offer proactive guidance to reduce confusion.

TRUST, TRANSPARENCY, AND EMERGING UNCERTAINTY



IMPORTANCE OF TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

Reliable information on visas, safety, and consistent processes is crucial to build trust amid changing policies.



CONCERNS ABOUT AI IN APPLICATIONS

Advisers worry about AI fairness, detection, and false positives in application processing.



NEED FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Open communication about processes, expectations, and limitations helps build confidence and reduce uncertainty.

PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE

SHARED CHALLENGES RAISED BY UK PROVIDERS



COST AND AFFORDABILITY PRESSURES

Currency fluctuations and rising costs challenge institutional planning and student affordability.



VERIFICATION AND PROCESS EFFICIENCY

Concerns about document verification, data accuracy, and process efficiency are widespread.



COMPLIANCE AND RECRUITMENT IMPACT

Tighter Basic Compliance Assessments affect market selection and recruitment strategies significantly.



SECTOR-WIDE SHARED EXPERIENCE

Challenges are sector-wide, fostering mutual reassurance and collective strategic insight.

HOW PROVIDERS ARE ADAPTING THEIR APPROACHES



DATA-LED RECRUITMENT

Institutions focus recruitment on markets with clearer potential using data to optimize limited resources and reduce risk.



PRIORITISING UNDERGRADUATE RECRUITMENT

Providers prioritise undergraduate international recruitment to support sustainability and long-term institutional goals.



RISK MANAGEMENT IN PLANNING

Risk management influences decisions on partnerships, market engagement, and admissions practices to ensure stability.



IMPROVING ADMISSIONS EFFICIENCY

Efforts to enhance admissions clarity and efficiency help improve compliance and student confidence.

IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIONS

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT STRATEGY



COMPETITIVE EVALUATION

Providers face comparison-driven decision-making and must stand out against global competitors at every juncture.



COST AND TRANSPARENCY FOCUS

Strategies should emphasise cost-effectiveness, employability, and transparency over just reputation or rankings.



MESSAGING AND ENGAGEMENT

Effective messaging must highlight strengths, value, and outcomes to resonate in a competitive context.



INSIGHT-LED PRIORITISATION

Deploy limited resources strategically by prioritizing actions with greatest impact based on insights.

SIX PRACTICAL ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS

1.

LEAD WITH VALUE

Clearly articulate return on investment, employability, and long-term benefits to demonstrate value to stakeholders.

2.

SIMPLIFY INFORMATION

Reduce friction by simplifying entry requirements, timelines, and costs for advisers and students.

3.

SUPPORT ADVISERS

Provide clear and accessible resources to help advisers perform their roles more effectively.

4.

COMPETE COMPARATIVELY

Position institutions against global alternatives to strengthen competitive advantage in international recruitment.

5.

BUILD TRUST

Ensure transparency and consistency in processes, fees, and communications to build trust with stakeholders.

6.

FOCUS RESOURCES STRATEGICALLY

Prioritise markets, channels, and activities aligned with goals and risk appetite using insight.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THE 2026— 27 CYCLE



COMPETITIVE RECRUITMENT LANDSCAPE

The 2026–27 recruitment cycle faces greater competition and complexity among international education providers.



ADVISER INFLUENCE AND DECISION FACTORS

Advisers play a more influential role while students weigh multiple factors before choosing destinations.



FOCUS ON CLARITY AND TRUST

Clarity, transparency, and focus are key to building adviser confidence and student trust in recruitment strategies.



STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR UNCERTAINTY

Shared sector insights enable providers to navigate uncertainty and compete effectively in a global market.



CLOSING REFLECTION: CONNECTING INSIGHT TO ACTION



VALUE OF DIVERSE FEEDBACK

Feedback from advisers and students offers critical insight on perceptions of the UK and education providers.



COLLABORATIVE ECOSYSTEM

UCAS connects perspectives to create a shared ecosystem for testing and applying recruitment insights.



STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

Using evidence-based understanding enables confident, strategic decisions in a changing global education environment.

USEFUL LINKS



UCAS BUDGET INFORMATION — [CLICK HERE](#)



UCAS SCHOLARSHIPS TOOL — [CLICK HERE](#)



BOOK WITH FELICITY LLOYD — [CLICK HERE](#)



THANK YOU