

News story: £2.5 million to boost international exchanges for schools

Thousands more young people will have the chance to take part in international exchanges and visits thanks to a new £2.5 million programme, the Education Secretary announced today (19 January).

Schools in England will be able to apply for grants to take pupils aged 11 and above to visit partner schools around the world, giving them the chance to experience different cultures, improve language skills and build independence, character and resilience.

The programme, which will be principally focused on supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, will be run in partnership with the British Council – whose [own research](#) has found that only 39% of secondary schools run international exchanges. For independent schools, the figure is 77%.

As education ministers from around the world prepare to gather in London for the Education World Forum, Damian Hinds has stressed the importance of ensuring disadvantaged young people don't miss out on the life-changing experiences and academic opportunities offered by overseas visits.

Evidence shows that businesses are increasingly looking for employees with international experience and language skills – and, according to a British Council survey, almost two-thirds of university language students said that an international exchange helped inspire them to choose their degree course.

The programme will build on the government's work to encourage more pupils to study a foreign language, including their inclusion in the English Baccalaureate. Since 2010 we have seen 45% more entries in GCSE Chinese and 51% more entries in GCSE Spanish.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

I want every child to have a world-class education, and that includes the opportunity to experience other cultures and go to places they wouldn't normally visit – whether that's practising their Mandarin in China or learning about American history in the US.

School exchanges are so valuable, bringing subjects such as modern languages and international history to life as well as helping pupils develop into confident, independent and well-rounded young people.

As Britain leaves the European Union, it's more important than ever to show how much we value international opportunities, language-learning, and ensuring our young people have a global outlook – something I'll be discussing with education ministers from around the world at Education World Forum.

This investment will help schools who may not have much experience organising trips abroad to ensure their pupils don't miss out on all the fantastic benefits these experiences can bring, encouraging children to broaden their horizons and aim high throughout their education and beyond.

Sir Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive of the British Council, said:

Pupils keep the memory of a school trip abroad for the rest of their lives – it is an important first step in understanding the world. It encourages children to think about working and studying overseas and sows the seeds of international co-operation that we encourage in young people all around the world.

The programme's focus on disadvantaged pupils was also welcomed by schools.

Geoff Lumsdon, headteacher at Seaham High School in County Durham, said:

This programme will expand students' international horizons and experience, delivering on our school's vision to help the young people of Seaham to achieve the highest possible outcomes and to make a valuable contribution to the global society in which we all now live.

Many of our students receive the Pupil Premium and we do our utmost to ensure equality of opportunity so that all of our pupils feel safe, secure, and are free from prejudice and able to develop a mutual respect for others. This is an exciting opportunity to ensure every young person can access international and multicultural experiences so they are ready to take on the challenges of the 21st century – and we would be delighted to participate.

Funding will be targeted at schools with above-average numbers of pupil-premium students. Over the course of the programme, it is estimated that trips could be funded for 2,900 pupils. Young people will be encouraged to stay with host families abroad where possible, maximising their opportunity to practise language skills and be fully immersed in another culture.

To make the scheme as easy as possible for schools to take part in, there will be a simple application process, grants to cover the administrative cost of organising trips, and seminars to help schools without much experience of international visits find partner institutions abroad – in Europe or further afield.

Schools will be able to register their interest on the British Council website from Monday.

News story: Review of UK university rating system launched

A review is being launched today (18 January) to ensure the Government's flagship higher education rating system continues to support high quality teaching so students have the information they need to choose the best university for them.

The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) shines a light on higher education providers that offer excellent teaching and good student outcomes, through awards of gold, silver or bronze.

[Research](#) out today shows that the TEF has already been an important driver of quality in higher education, leading providers to invest in training schemes and develop initiatives to improve teaching standards, and that applicants are using the ratings to inform their university choices.

In order to ensure the rating system continues to be effective as it can be, Dame Shirley Pearce is leading an independent review to make sure it is fit for purpose, starting with a public call for views opening today to hear how the potential of the system can be maximised.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

As Universities Minister I want you, the experts, to take part in Dame Shirley's call for views and to give your thoughts so the TEF can work as well as it possibly can. It is important that we maximise the potential of this system and can only do that by getting invaluable insights from the sector.

We all know that choosing a university is one of the biggest decisions that many people will make in their lives, and the information that TEF provides is helping students make the best choice for them.

Of course, this framework is just one part of the wide range of

information we are making available on institutions and courses, including employability and likely earnings, to help students them make the a choice which can boost their future prospects.

The [call for views](#) will close on Friday 1 March and asks the higher education sector, students, graduates, parents, careers advisers, employers and the general public about the effectiveness of the scheme. Anyone with suggestions of how the scheme can be enhanced is urged to take part.

The current framework for the TEF aims to provide information for students and employers and to drive world-class standards and quality in higher education.

Dame Shirley will consider, among other things, whether the information used for the current rating system is appropriate, the names of the rating categories, the impact of the rating system on providers and whether it is in the public interest.

The TEF is just one measure as part of the department's priority to drive high-quality teaching in higher education and ensure students have access to the information they need to make the best decision for their future careers. Last year the department announced a second year of pilots for the subject-level TEF rating system, which will include 'grade inflation' as one of the key criteria that institutions will be measured against.

At the same time, the Government is improving student information and choice by increasing transparency in higher education data, publishing a wide range of data on likely earnings, employability, and teaching quality at universities.

Dame Shirley Pearce DBE said:

This independent review is an important and exciting opportunity to make recommendations to government about the future of TEF. I want these recommendations to be informed by the views of all involved in TEF providers of higher education, students, applicants as well as employers.

I hope all will respond to this Call for Views so that we can ensure your ideas are able to influence TEF's future development.

Dame Shirley has appointed her own expert group to advise her on her review, which will conclude in summer 2019.

Alongside the launch of the review today, the Department for Education has published research, showing findings from the initial impact of the TEF on applicants and higher education providers.

The TEF was introduced in 2016 and its full impact will not yet be felt, however the research shows that it has already contributed to higher

education providers driving improvements, particularly in the quality of their teaching, and for student employability.

This research will form part of the evidence base that the review will consider.

News story: Review of UK university rating system launched

A call for views opens today to hear from the universities sector on how the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework can be maximised.

Speech: The need for a sustainable security infrastructure in Libya

Thank you very much Mr President. Thank you for scheduling this briefing. Very good to hear from the SRSG so thank you, Ghassan for everything you've said. I wanted to start by thanking you also for restructuring the mission and for the enormous progress made on opening the offices. I think that's really important. As you were saying it's a good signal of the international community's engagement with the people of Libya and what is happening there so thank you for that. And many thanks to the German Ambassador as well for the sanctions report. Germany is now co-penholder with us on Libya so obviously we look forward to working even more closely together.

I wanted to start Mr President by reiterating my government's strong support for what the SRSG is doing and what the UN are doing on the ground. And our thanks to them for all their efforts. In particular, we support the SRSG's approach to the National Conference. We believe it's the best way of reaching an inclusive political settlement and one which stabilises the country and we hope that all Libyans should come together and engage in this process. And in particular, Mr President, we hope that a broad spectrum of Libyan society is represented at the National Conference. And we think we should work to ensure that and we look for participants to be drawn from as broader political, regional, tribal and ethnic spectrum as possible. And of course, as this Council always says on these occasions, we look for a proper representation of women. The Council has been united pretty well so far, Mr President, and we hope that we can rally to the UN action plan and we hope that we can help other members of the international community and ensure that the UN mission

is able to implement the outcomes of the National Conference.

The SRSG referred several times to spoilers. And I think what the pattern of attacks he described and the sporadic clashes throughout the country obviously of great concern. I think the Council needs to be very clear, Mr President, Libya's future cannot and will not be determined by spoilers who wish to maintain the status quo purely for their own gain while ordinary Libyan citizens continue to suffer. And the deteriorating situation on security that the SRSG described simply underscores how unsustainable the status quo is. So we believe, Mr President, that Libya's political institutions need to work with the National Conference and take account of its outcomes. This will signal they have the best interests of the Libyan people at heart and that they're committed to finding a durable political solution to the crisis. The Libyan people will find it very hard to understand if those institutions continue to fail to do what's been asked of them.

I think, on the economy, I was very interested in what the SRSG said about oil. I think again we've got to support the UN mission and the international financial institutions in putting in place further economic reforms. I think we need even more targeted and effective sanctions against spoilers. The progress that's been made with the Central Bank of Libya is also very welcome but obviously it needs to take place in parallel with work to reunify the Central Bank and the Central Bank in the east.

And finally, Mr President, on security, we do think the ceasefire is welcome, but it does look fragile. A sustainable security architecture right across the country will be necessary for Libya's stability.

Thank you very much, Mr President.

Press release: Pinner woman sentenced for providing unlawful immigration advice.

OISC Prosecution